

Risks in the Middle East Peace

Treaty Would Increase Potential for Trouble by the 'Rejection Front'

BY HENRY A. WAXMAN

For centuries, peace in the Middle East has been a cherished concept. From the moment of Israel's birth 31 years ago, it has been the most elusive goal. At last, a peace treaty is at hand between Israel and the most powerful Arab nation, but the impulse for rejoicing must be tempered by an understanding of the difficulties ahead. The future of all who invested in peace may not be as bright, nor the prospects of those working against it so bleak, as some would think.

Although the treaty would promote greater stability in the Middle East by bringing Israel and Egypt together under the influence of the United States, it would also increase the potential for further radicalization in the area by the "rejection front"—Syria, Iraq and the Palestine Liberation Organization, which have not tempered their opposition to Israel's right to exist.

As for those who have been so frustrated with Israel's so-called intransigence and obstinacy, a careful review of the treaty's terms reveals that Israel yielded territory in exchange for the word of one man who says that he is ready to coexist in peace. Should the treaty somehow collapse, Egypt would be in a most improved strategic and military situation, and Israel would be more vulnerable than it has been for more than a decade. This is but one measure of the enormous sacrifices that Israel has made.

The greatest future threat, however, would be from opponents of the peace process. There are several emergent themes:

—*The hardening of the "rejection front" of Syria, Iraq and the PLO.* Egypt's President Anwar Sadat has taken great personal risks that increase the potential for his isolation in the Arab world at a time when extremist Moslem fundamentalism is sweeping the area. Staking his country's future economic development on ties to the United States, he risks a cutoff of help from Saudi Arabia and other Arab supporters. The "rejection front" is in the forefront of these efforts. It expects increased aid from Saudi Arabia, which is still shaken by the upheaval in Iran, and will be drawn even closer into alliance with the Soviet Union. Syria and the PLO will also place stronger checks against King Hussein's joining the Mideast peace negotiations, which would make a comprehensive settlement



impossible. The PLO, in addition, will surely use the treaty as an excuse to "justify" a new round of terrorist incidents—against Egypt as well as Israel.

—*The pivotal role of Saudi Arabia.* President Carter has informed the Saudi government in the stiffest terms that the United States expects it to back the peace treaty and not undercut Sadat. But the "rejection front" is also turning to Saudi Arabia for unity against Egypt's alleged "treason." As a consequence, the Saudis have again assumed a critical position. They will enjoy enhanced stature and influence with the Arab world's radical forces. They will be under increased pressure to use oil as a political weapon against the West. Finally, although the peace treaty would lessen Soviet influence in the area (to the extent that U.S. influence is increased), it does present the Saudis with the possibility of

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exploiting Soviet influence to their advantage, such as by choosing to stay neutral on the treaty by playing off radicals—and their Soviet backers—against Egypt and the United States.

—*The challenges before the United States.* We are heavily committed—in \$5 billion in economic and military assistance—to underwriting and guaranteeing the treaty. All of our ingenuity, patience and determination will be tested in seeing the "next" steps successfully concluded, especially the negotiations on autonomy for the West Bank and Gaza. We also face immediate diplomatic challenges: a potential decline in relations with Saudi Arabia, further estrangement from Jordan, the continuing enmity of Syria and the PLO, and greater resentment from the Soviet Union.

The United States may be granted the use of an air base in the Sinai or the Mediterranean port of Haifa, either of which could prove critical in responding to geopolitical crises that could threaten our security. On balance, the treaty would surely provide us with greater strategic, political and military influence throughout the entire Middle East.

But, most important, we would have removed the possibility of war between Egypt and Israel. And Syria and Jordan would be less capable of initiating another war against Israel if the Arab world's most powerful military force were not also engaged against Israel.

The tragic cycle of violence in the Middle East may have been broken. But the treaty does contain risks that cannot be ignored, and that deserve sober reflection. □

WHEN YOU LO

Iran's SAVAK:

BY BEHROUZ SABA

As an Iranian, I personally never had to dread what the American press usually refers to as "the dreaded SAVAK," the secret police force that brutally suppressed even the mildest dissent to the shah's regime.

Once in Iran a man was pointed out to me as a SAVAK agent. He was diminutive and well-dressed. Later I learned that he had a European education and wrote free verse. There seemed little about him to dread.

My first and last direct contact with a SAVAK agent came on my first day in the United States 12 years ago.

I was staying with my brother—a college student—and his roommate. An Iranian came to their apartment, mentioned a Farsi name and asked if that person lived there.

On ERA's Seventh Birthday, It's More Dead Than Alive

BY JAMES I. KURATRYK