

**Memorandum of Conversation between US President Jimmy Carter and Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin and their Delegations  
(21 March 1978)**

Foreign Relations of the United States, 1977-1980, Vol. VIII, Arab Israeli Dispute, Document 232.

*After a year in office, the Carter administration's initiative to achieve a comprehensive Middle East peace between Israel and her Arab neighbors had stalled. Egyptian President Anwar Sadat's unexpected visit to Jerusalem (November, 1977) pushed the prospects of a bilateral Egyptian-Israeli agreement to the forefront. What had not changed in Carter's foreign policy was a systematic effort to improve US relations with Arab states while simultaneously indicating that Israel's special relationship with the United States was in decline. Carter made overtures to the PLO, restricted Israel's access to promised weapons, and voted at the UN against Israel's use of force in response to a PLO terrorist attack. In early 1978, the Carter administration also presented a highly controversial Egyptian-Israeli-Saudi plane deal to Congress. The plane deal sought to provide sophisticated offensively-oriented F-15 aircraft to Saudi Arabia (it would pass three months later). At this White House meeting, Israeli Foreign Minister Moshe Dayan provided a lucid review of Israel's concerns about the West Bank falling under foreign sovereignty. Carter's National Security Adviser, Zbigniew Brzezinski, revealed a clear animus toward Israel's policy in the West Bank by stating that Israel only wanted a continuation of their "military and political control" over the territories. He also criticized Prime Minister Menachem Begin's autonomy plan for the Palestinians, categorizing it as an effort to "perpetuate [Israeli] control." Like Carter, Brzezinski wanted the West Bank to become a Palestinian state. Given that Israel and Egypt were finding areas of agreement, the administration's objective of a comprehensive negotiating outcome was becoming increasingly unlikely. Begin and Carter's mutual dislike over policy decisions continued to rise.*



**Prime Minister Menachem Begin and President Jimmy Carter at the White House, March 21, 1978.  
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Washington, March 21, 1978. 10:50 a.m.–12:55 p.m.

Subject: President's Meeting with Prime Minister Begin

Participants:

UNITED STATES

Jimmy Carter  
Walter Mondale  
Cyrus Vance  
Zbigniew Brzezinski  
Samuel Lewis  
Alfred Atherton  
Harold Saunders  
Robert Lipshutz  
Hamilton Jordan  
Rex Granum  
Jerrold Schecter,  
William B. Quandt

ISRAEL

Menachem Begin  
Moshe Dayan  
Simcha Dinitz  
Aharon Barak  
Meir Rosenne  
Yehiel Kadishai  
Yehuda Avner  
Joseph Ciechanover  
Ephraim Poran  
Dan Pattir

**Carter:** I am delighted to have you here for close consultations. It is important that we try to stay in harmony as we develop plans for the future. I want to repeat to you the very deep regret that we all felt over the terrorists' attack. The purpose of that attack was to destroy the progress toward peace, and we must be determined to do everything possible to keep the momentum going forward in the peace initiative. I am grateful to you for coming and I hope that we will make real progress today and tomorrow.

I might begin by reviewing our own deep interest in the Middle East. Our overriding commitment is to guarantee the security of Israel, and we will do all in our power to prevent transient differences from becoming serious. We've been successful, as were my predecessors, in keeping US-Israeli relations good. This has been to our mutual benefit. We also have a deep national interest in seeing progress toward peace, and in providing Israel with the strength to protect herself. We were optimistic at the time of President Sadat's visit to Jerusalem, and we were relieved to be out of the intermediary role, and to see direct discussions underway. I have been disturbed that momentum has been stopped. It is no one's fault.

When I met President Sadat one year ago, I told him that Israel, above all, wants to negotiate directly with her Arab neighbors and wants to be acknowledged by Egypt as a permanent nation, a nation which has a role in the Middle East, and which is accepted by the Arabs. I told him that Israel wants real peace, not just non-belligerency. Sadat said that was impossible in his life time. He said the Egyptian people would not accept Israel's right to exist. He said normal ties could not be developed. When I saw him at Aswan, he told me that he had been wrong. He had found that there was a deep desire for peace among his people, and for normal relationships. I believe that his commitment to peace still exists, as does yours.

We've seen recently, in talks with Sadat, with the Jordanians, with the Saudis, and even with the Shah, a willingness to modify previous views. The Arabs have dropped the idea of a fully independent Palestinian state, and they have abandoned the demand for full Israeli withdrawal from all of the territory occupied in 1967. The PLO, because of its opposition to peace, has excluded itself from the negotiations. We have recently seen a new disturbance to peace in the Middle East in the form of Palestinian terrorism and the Israeli response. After consulting with you, we sponsored a UN Resolution which was adopted unanimously, and we are sure that it is acceptable to you. We hope for its rapid implementation.

In our December meeting, you put forward your self-rule proposal, and I viewed it then as a major step in the right direction. It was a major response to Sadat. I felt that it could be built upon in talks with Egypt and Jordan, and that it could lead to a comprehensive peace. Before I go on to make more specific points, you might want to assess the present prospects for the peace negotiations. We are eager to work closely with you, and we want to retain mutual respect and trust. It is rare that we have the opportunity to meet, and I hope we will use the time well. I hope for a completely successful meeting.

**Begin:** When President Sadat came to Jerusalem, and I went to Ismailia, there was a spirit of optimism and friendship. Sadat told me in Jerusalem "You are my friend," and he agreed at that time to the demilitarization of Sinai beyond the Giddi and Mitla Passes up to the international border. Sadat at that time did not refer only to keeping his main forces behind the passes. He said the Egyptian army will not go beyond the passes. I reported this to my colleagues while it was still fresh in my mind, and we built our peace plan for Sinai on the premise. This would have provided a demilitarized zone of 180 to 200 kilometers in width. On that basis we elaborated our plan for Sinai, and it was more forthcoming than the plan of any previous Israeli government. It abolished the prior Israeli decision of 1968 to keep a strip of land from Elath to Sharm Al-Shaykh. We suggested that there be two UN zones, and in the Yamit-Rafah area we would retain settlements in the UN zone.

When I came with that plan to Ismailia, Sadat said that he could not agree on the UN zones including the settlements, but he summed up the meeting with praise for the spirit of the plan, and he said that we should negotiate. We agreed to establish political and military committees. We were very near agreement on a declaration of principles at Ismailia. We had actually agreed. The Foreign Minister and Attorney General Barak were there. Sadat was willing to accept our proposal, but we did not agree on the Palestinian question. President Sadat's advisers used this as a reason for not publishing our agreement on the declaration of principles, although we had

agreed on the spot. We suggested that each side use its own language, as had been done in the US-Chinese communique and President Sadat therefore read out our respective positions in the joint statement. There was Egyptian language and Israeli language. The Egyptians called for a Palestinian state in the West Bank, and Israel said that the Palestinian Arabs in Judea, Samaria, and Gaza will enjoy self-rule. We had an agreement to differ on this. Then we presented our plan to the public and to the world. We left Ismailia in this spirit.

President Sadat said that our autonomy proposal was a “step forward.”

What happened after Ismailia and up until today? I have an explanation. I saw the situation. Sadat was willing to agree earlier, but then his advisers persuaded him not to agree. Sadat does not show much attention to detail. For example, the Egyptians initially gave us a proposal calling for withdrawal from Sinai, the West Bank, Gaza and Golan. We said this was impossible. We said that 242 does not call for total withdrawal. Sadat agreed to drop this demand. On the Palestinian state, Sadat referred to it from time to time, but he also used the word “self-determination.” We told him that self-determination meant a state, and that Israel could not accept this.

After Ismailia, something happened. There were insults directed at us, but we can gloss over that. Again and again, in all the language that they use on the declaration of principles, the Egyptians return to their demand for total withdrawal and for self-determination for the Palestinians, which eventually will mean a state. We tried to explain to Sadat that these two demands are unacceptable, and Israel will not commit itself to them. Palestinian Arabs are not mentioned in Resolution 242 at all. On the question of withdrawal, we are completely prepared to use the language of 242, as it was adopted, but if Sadat asks for total withdrawal, we cannot accept it. We told Mr. Atherton that any language that does not include these two demands will be either acceptable or negotiable from our point of view. (Prime Minister Begin then reads from the text of Israel’s most recent proposals for a declaration of principles, concentrating on the paragraph dealing with acceptance of all the principles of Resolution 242, the paragraph on withdrawal and the establishment of secure and recognized borders, and noting that Israel’s suggested language incorporates precisely the language of Resolution 242.) If Egypt agrees, and it can, we can use the language of Resolution 242. Then there will be no difficulties on the declaration of principles.

Maybe there will be a problem on the question of the Palestinian Arabs. There has already been some progress. We have agreed to speak of their “right to participate in the determination of their own future.” Egypt was once agreeable to this. Mr. President, there are no insurmountable differences in the declaration of principles, unless Egypt demands a commitment to total withdrawal and the creation of a Palestinian state, however that may be phrased in the declaration. President Sadat has now put out these two demands, and this is now the obstacle to negotiations, no other. We accept Resolution 242 as written, completely. If Egypt also accepts, then Egypt’s interpretation of total withdrawal does not have our approval or that of the United States. The real hurdle in the declaration of principles is these Egyptian demands. Israel cannot give these two commitments, and so there is no progress. Also there was the unwarranted disruption of the talks in the Political Committee. We have no recriminations on our part. But the crux of the problem is this: We are asked to give two commitments that we are not obliged to

give, and that touch on the vital interests of our people. In the framework of Resolution 242 we can reach agreement. If Egypt suggests amendments to our language, this will be all right, and we can negotiate. We hope you will make it clear to Sadat, perhaps directly or through Mr. Atherton, that he cannot put forward these two demands. Israel is entitled not to accept those demands.

**Carter:** Let me respond. I can say unequivocally and accurately that President Sadat does not insist on complete withdrawal, and that he is prepared to see some modifications in the 1967 lines, on a negotiated basis. This could be done following a peace treaty between Egypt and Israel. Also he does not insist on an independent Palestinian state on the West Bank and Gaza.

When I read the Egyptian language in the declaration, and your language, it is hard to see the differences. We've tried to suggest some language that would bridge the gap. On Resolution 242, you say that negotiations should be on the basis of 242, and Egypt says they should bring about the implementation of 242. I can't see a major difference. Our suggested compromise calls for the fulfillment of the principles of Resolution 242. I can't tell the difference. There are only slight nuances. We've tried to develop a compromise to bridge the gap. To hold up the chance for peace by arguing over these words which have no basic significance, and which can be interpreted in several ways, is incomprehensible. On the Palestinian issue, we've put forward some suggestions. Both governments agree that there should be a "just solution." You can define that how you wish, as can Sadat. These are innocuous words. We are trying to find a compromise. Atherton has been in the Middle East for weeks. We have now come down to the two basic questions of the Palestinians and withdrawal.

The question of Israeli withdrawal from any part of the West Bank and Gaza is now in doubt. We feel the need to clarify this point, and I would like you to tell me how you define Israel's security needs. I would also like you to show more flexibility on the political claims that you maintain under your self-rule proposal. We believe in the need for Israeli security. Maybe there will be a need for military encampments and their location and their function can be discussed. Perhaps the UN or the US could work out the type of presence that would be required. We are just trying to break a deadlock. We can see your maintenance of security forces for an interim period, or perhaps longer, and this should be kept distinct from your political claims. These issues are at the crux of the negotiations. We think that you should withdraw your political claims, and concentrate on your security needs. Then you and others can work out a resolution of the Palestinian question.

**Vance:** I want to clarify that President Sadat's willingness to see border changes is limited to the West Bank, not Sinai.

**Carter:** I think you understand that. Earlier, Foreign Minister Dayan raised the question of whether President Sadat requires Jordanian participation in the negotiations as a prerequisite for continuation of his own talks with Israel. I sent Sadat a message, and he said that he wanted Jordan to join the talks, but that if Egypt and Israel could agree on the Sinai question—the settlements, the force levels, the airfields—and if agreement could be reached on a statement of principles, he would then move on to a peace agreement with Israel, even if Jordan stays out. If Jordan does not participate, this would not be an obstacle to a comprehensive settlement



between Egypt and Israel. Now we see that Sadat is unwilling to talk because of the settlements in Sinai, and I deplore this attitude. I wish that he would go to Jerusalem, and that you could go to Cairo, and that you could reach an agreement. I think that Secretary Atherton, and your people, and you and I tonight, should try to get some language to reach agreement. Sadat is not demanding full withdrawal or an independent Palestinian state, or that Jordan must join the negotiations before a peace treaty with Israel can be reached. Within that framework, there should be a means to find solutions.

**Vance:** There has been a question raised in President Sadat's mind as to whether you believe that Resolution 242 applies to the West Bank. We need to get this question of withdrawal from the West Bank out on the table and to understand your position.

**Carter:** This is of fundamental importance to us as well. For ten years, your acceptance of 242 has been the basis of many of our commitments to you and has been the basis of our discussions with other Arab leaders. This is a fundamental issue.

**Dayan:** You have given us good news about Sadat's attitude. Some of what you say is familiar to us, but you have given us a good surprise about Jordan. But I want to understand that Sadat is not calling for total withdrawal to the old lines. When he says that, would he agree to changes in Sinai also?

**Carter:** No. He doesn't see Israel occupying any part of Sinai. The proposal that you put forward of leaving the area from Elath to Sharm al-Shaykh under UN control, and of establishing demilitarized zones, seems to be acceptable to him. These demilitarized zones can be larger in Egypt than they would be in Israel. There is the question of the airfields, and I understand that these have been discussed between Weizman and Gamasy. Sadat tells me that he said that Egyptian main forces would not go beyond the passes, but he did not preclude some peacekeeping units to maintain security. This seems like an honest difference of interpretation. He feels he needs some security forces, and he also says that he is not prepared to give up any Sinai territory. I understood that withdrawal from all of Sinai was part of the Israeli proposal.

**Dayan:** Our basic problem with Sadat over Sinai concerns the status of Sharm al-Shaykh, the Israeli settlements, the demilitarization arrangements, and the airfields. My personal view is that if he rejects the Israeli settlements remaining in place under Egyptian sovereignty, protected by some Israeli defense forces, and if his only alternative is that we clear out of the entire area, with our settlements and our airfields, and this is not required by resolution 242, then we will go back to Resolution 242 and say that we have a right not to go all the way back to the international border. Then we will forget our proposal, because after three wars, we just can't leave Sharm al-Shaykh, El-Arish, and Gaza. This would mean that the Arab population in Sinai and in Gaza would be a continuous one. We also have the problem with the declaration of principles. If Hussein does not join the negotiations, but if there is a declaration of principles satisfactory to Sadat, I understand that Sadat will go forward in the negotiations. But his condition is that we reach agreement on a declaration of principles. What does he expect? One thing that you said, that there should be a "just solution for the Palestinians," is something that we suggested in Ismailia. His advisers rejected our proposal then. With your permission, we will go on to discuss Resolution 242. I suggest that Attorney General Barak read our definition of the meaning of Resolution 242.

**Barak:** “The Government of Israel expresses its willingness to negotiate peace treaties on the basis of all of the principles of UN Security Council Resolution 242. As is known, there are different interpretations of this resolution. It is the view of the Israeli Government that nothing in the Israeli peace plan concerning Sinai and self-rule to the Palestinian Arabs as presented to President Sadat at Ismailia contradicts the terms of Resolution 242. Within the framework of peace negotiations, everything is negotiable without any preconditions. Resolution 242 envisages an agreed and acceptable peace settlement between the parties based upon such negotiations.”

**Begin:** Sadat’s view on almost total withdrawal, and on a Palestinian state, you have now told us are not his demands. Then why does he not accept proper language in the Egyptian proposals? In the second point of the declaration of principles, this is not a decisive question. We can find a way to get agreement. But the hurdle lies in Sadat’s proposal. He wants a statement on Israeli withdrawal from occupied territory in accordance with the principle of the non-acquisition of territory by war. That is the Egyptian position. That means total withdrawal. We have analyzed this, and we have concluded that it is not proper to join the preamble language with the operational language of the UN Resolution. The preamble language only deals with offensive wars. We cannot take this language from the preamble. It would mean full withdrawal. This should be clarified. If Egypt is not asking for full withdrawal, and if it is not asking for a Palestinian state, then Sadat should change the language of his proposals. This should be clarified with Sadat. The state of Israel has never been branded as an aggressor in the 1967 war. The Security Council never made such a determination. So changes in borders are permissible and should be agreed upon. Egypt says there can be no changes. If the Egyptian position is clear, they should use language which expresses that they are not asking for total withdrawal and that they are not asking for a Palestinian state. Our language is appropriate and they should reconsider our proposals. The United States suggested language on withdrawal and on the establishment of secure and recognized borders. We could agree with that language.

**Dayan:** Maybe it would be advisable for Attorney General Barak to explain the elements of the concepts in our paper, because we believe that they contain all of the elements that Egypt needs.

**Carter:** I believe that the question that is causing Sadat concern is the allegation by some, even the Prime Minister that Resolution 242 does not apply to the West Bank and Gaza. Israel is seen as not being prepared to withdraw from the West Bank and Gaza. This has not yet been clarified. This has created a cloud over the language. Sadat feels that you only intend to withdraw from the Sinai and Golan. He believes that you think the withdrawal language of 242 does not apply to the West Bank.

**Barak:** In our view Resolution 242 does apply to all of the occupied territories. The problem is with the language on withdrawal. We accept Resolution 242, but we have a question about withdrawal. We have a self-rule plan. Our self-rule plan is not in contradiction to Resolution 242. If others present plans, everything is negotiable. They can offer plans of their own. Our self-rule is not in contradiction to 242. Even your own view of Resolution 242 allows for options such as continuation of the self-rule administration or links to Israel. And you do not view those as being in conflict with 242. Those include no withdrawal. Our point is that our proposal is not in contradiction with Resolution 242. It is in conformity.

**Dayan:** And we are prepared to discuss other plans. We are posing no preconditions, and we say that everything is negotiable. If they don't accept, they can present their own plan. We can't go into all the details, but we are prepared to abolish military rule there and we won't decide now on sovereignty. That question will stay open. We are not going to impose Israeli sovereignty, and we are proposing the abolition of military rule. The withdrawal of military forces is somewhat like the abolition of military rule. Israeli forces will stay there to defend Israel, but not to rule the Palestinians. This is equivalent to withdrawal, not in a territorial sense, but in substance. They may reject this, and they can put forward their own proposal.

There is nothing in 242 that says it applies "on all three fronts." Atherton has asked us about this, but nowhere does it say on all three fronts. We were not asked to include this in the declaration of principles. We were told that it was not necessary. It is our view that the abolition of military rule, and our willingness to discuss other plans, is a good concept. We accept 242 totally. We do accept it, but we want to just use the wording of 242. We do say that everything is negotiable. But we should be free to present our plans. For ten years we've negotiated with Jordan on the basis of the Allon Plan, which called for partition of the West Bank. That was rejected totally. The Arabs can bring us such a plan, but to ask us for such language is unfair, and we should be free not to do that.

**Carter:** The reason for raising this is that the Israeli position in the past was that they would withdraw from the West Bank, and I believe that Prime Minister Begin left the Cabinet over this issue. Now for Israel to change her position makes an issue out of this.

**Vance:** The issue does exist. There is a lack of clarity. Has the position of this government changed compared to previous governments?

**Begin:** I have told you and the Secretary of State my views on this issue. We decided in July to talk frankly. You remember in July that you read five points to me. The fourth point included language about withdrawal "on all fronts." I said that I would speak to the President privately about this. When I saw the President, I read to him a document, and later we sent this to you, and we said that we would not agree to your fourth and fifth points. These three words "on all fronts" could not be used on Israel's behalf. In December, I said we had a claim and a right to sovereignty in Judea, Samaria, and Gaza, but that we would leave that claim open. We did two things to make agreement possible: First, we did not apply Israeli law to Judea, Samaria, and Gaza, and we suggested that the question of sovereignty be left open. We went as far as possible to make agreement reachable. We said that the self-rule proposal might be reviewed, and we changed that to "will" be reviewed at your suggestion. All questions will be open after five years. All parties can reserve their claims. For the time being, the question of sovereignty should be left open. The phrase "on all fronts" is not used in Resolution 242. We have a right not to add words to that Resolution. We have worked out a plan that makes agreement possible. With the review clause, there is no contradiction between our proposal and Resolution 242. It is a far-reaching proposal. Dr. Brzezinski said that the question of sovereignty would be left open and would be subject to review when we met in December. If you want to add these three words about "on all fronts," that is OK, but we won't accept it.

**Carter:** This is a change in the position of the Israeli Government.



**Begin:** Yes, but not completely. Under the previous government, the Jordan River was to be the security border. There would be no withdrawal from the river. They planned to evacuate part of the West Bank. There were differences internally within the previous government, but no one wanted to withdraw from the Jordan River. The Israeli army would remain on the river.

**Carter:** Could you envisage, in order to break the deadlock, that Israeli security might be protected by military forces in the occupied territories for a period of five years, or perhaps longer, by maintaining some military positions on the river or in the hills around Jerusalem?

You would withdraw into cantonments and that would satisfy Arab demands and would preserve your security. Is that a possibility?

**Begin:** I don't know about the word cantonments. We could consider withdrawal into emplacements. But our forces must stay.

**Carter:** But just in certain.

**Begin:** We agreed in December that we can consider this. We can stand on that position.

**Carter:** The political administration of the territories would be much as you've described it in your self-rule plan. I think there is some prospect for agreement between Egypt and Israel, and later between Jordan and Israel, if that could be the basis. This would provide an ultimate resolution, I think, for this present obstacle. You would have security outposts, and commitments from the United States to you, and the political administration of the territories would be distinct. This could meet Arab demands, and could provide you with the requirements you need for your own security. We are eager to find common ground and to find a solution.

**Dayan:** I would like to speak about whether there has been a change in the present government. I was in the previous government.

**Carter:** I've heard about that!

**Dayan:** Not too much, I hope. For several months after the Six-Day War, the position of Israel was that it would return all of Sinai and Golan in return for some assurances, but we totally excluded the West Bank. This was before 242 was adopted. That was the Israeli concept. That was how we thought of Israel at the time, and we did not want to give up one inch of the West Bank. So there has not been such a sharp change of concept. Then the Allon Plan was considered, but it was never approved by the government. It was a kind of plan, and it was rather complicated. I said that it would never work, and that it would not be accepted. It provided a narrow corridor between Jordan and the West Bank. This government has a different plan.

There are two different plans. If I were to say where there was more real self-expression for the Arabs, I would say it is in our plan for self-rule. It is better than the Allon Plan. You cannot say that this government has gone back on its commitments. The other plan did not work. On the security question, we have to start with the proposition that we don't want our forces there to rule the Arabs. We don't want that for them, and we don't want it for us. We don't want to

impose ourselves. There are 400,000 Arabs in Gaza. We do not want to tell them how to run their business. But we must have a line to check movement of who comes into Israel. There are refugees and terrorists and Arab workers. As an ex-soldier, I want to ask who would take care of people crossing over from Jordan or Syria into the Palestinian-Israeli area.

Who controls the crossing points? If our own soldiers are not there, then they can move freely into the Arab part. Should we then put up the barbed wire? It is inconceivable that we would put barbed wire up around Gaza and the West Bank. If there is no line between Gaza and Israel, and if there is no line between Gaza and El-Arish, where is our defense line? Then anyone can go all the way to Tel Aviv from the Sinai, and one has to ask where the Israeli soldiers will be. Who will guard the borders? Will there be a UN force? I don't know, but I would hate that after 30 years of experience with Swedes and Nepalese and so forth. We should live together, and not be isolated by policemen who come from somewhere else. I do not want an isolated Israel. This is complicated, but it can be worked out. This is not the most difficult problem, just like Jerusalem is not the most complicated problem. But there are practical requirements. We don't want to impose ourselves on the Arabs, and they should have freedom to run their own lives. We will only put our soldiers where we need them for our defense.

**Carter:** Let me repeat one thing. I have no doubt that Sadat really wants a peace agreement with Israel, and that he is genuine in this attitude. I have had hours of private talks with him, and he is flexible on the issues. He has some obligations to the other Arabs, and he acts as a spokesman for their interests. He is the best Arab leader with whom you can negotiate. You have some differences in Sinai, but when he was here he thought that Weizman and Gamasy had worked out most of the differences except for those on the settlements. On the West Bank and Gaza, Prime Minister Begin put forward a proposal which could be the core around which an agreement could be reached. I think those areas should be demilitarized, and that there should be local self-government. This should be worked out by Jordan, Israel, and the Palestinian Arabs.

Israel should be able to keep military forces in that region, as you determined in negotiations. You can work out where you need outposts for your security, along the borders, or perhaps in the hills around Jerusalem. Then the administrative structure in the area could be based on Prime Minister Begin's proposals, with some slight flexibility needed in order to reach agreement.

Because of the pressure of the terrorists, and the pressures on Sadat, I am afraid that the chance for agreement will slip away. Eventually we will see that the prospects for peace are lost. We are eager to help, and if you permit, I would like to let our people work on this in the afternoon. Maybe before supper we can compare notes, and then we can talk over dinner. A settlement in Sinai is important and difficult. You have problems over the airfields and over the force levels. In the West Bank, we conceive of demilitarization, along with some Israeli outposts, and we believe this can meet your security needs. The political administration should be basically one of self-rule, and you are perhaps a bit more optimistic about Jerusalem than I am, but if we are not all brought together in a short time, we could lose the chance for peace.

**Vance:** I would like to make a point. Your idea of self-rule can be the core of an agreement. Sadat might see it as a positive step, if in the context of a declaration of principles it says 242 applies on all three fronts.

**Carter:** I think they could say that 242 applies on all three fronts. I was trying to resolve the withdrawal problem by saying that withdrawal to outposts would be adequate.

**Begin:** I said in December that I would not use that language, but that it could be used. If Sadat wants to add those words, he can, but we cannot. We will ponder on its merits, the issue, and if we can leave our forces in Judea, Samaria, and Gaza, with the man in charge of our security saying where those forces should be, it could be accepted by us.

**Carter:** Do you see the possibility of Israeli armed forces withdrawing to outposts?

**Begin:** The language of withdrawal to encampments is not to my liking, but the plan itself is acceptable, if the Israeli armed forces as established by the man in charge of our security can stay. You do agree that it is vital for us, and for our civilian population, to keep these security positions. Imagine what would have happened ten days ago if there had been thousands of terrorists in charge of Judea and Samaria. They came from the sea and they created a tragic event, and if the same people had been on the mountains, it would have been hell. In the last two years, this has happened only once, but if they were on the mountains, we could not stop them. We need security. If there can be agreement that Israeli military forces will stay, and then the language is not decisive. Then the United States and Israel can agree.

**Mondale:** The Foreign Minister made an unambiguous point about occupation forces and their effect on local populations. They obviously create resentment. The Prime Minister said that Israel needs security, and he argued this in compelling terms. Both points are powerful, and the question is how they can be resolved in negotiations.

It seems to me that the answer is to separate the issue of sovereignty and occupation from the question of security. This way you can avoid the problem referred to by the Prime Minister and you can make solid, clear, and I hope permanent arrangements for Israeli security in order to achieve the Prime Minister's objectives. If sovereignty and occupation are linked to Israeli security needs, and if they are seen as the same, then the chances for a breakthrough are slim. I am not an expert, but I have heard the views of the Arab leaders, and I have talked with them, and it seems to me that this is the sticking point. The meaning of 242 is crucial here. Our experts see 242 as consisting of an exchange of territory for non-belligerency and peace, and the establishment of secure and recognized borders. The Labor Government always saw withdrawal from part of the West Bank. The question was how much. This was vague, and there were no negotiations underway, but they always were prepared for withdrawal in return for non-belligerency and peace. If that principle is not recognized, this chance to move on the track for peace is slim. But the Attorney General's statement raises doubts about withdrawal, and this will be a sticky point, and it could imperil the chance for peace.

**Begin:** We can say that the plan you spoke of, the Allon Plan, was unacceptable to Jordan. King Hussein said that it was...

**Dayan:** Totally unacceptable.

**Begin:** This is conclusive. This theory has been tested

**Mondale:** I'm not pushing for the Allon Plan, but rather for the idea of territorial withdrawal.

**Begin:** We want peace, but that plan was tested, with Hussein and Sadat, and they asked for total withdrawal. But Sadat is now only prepared to accept minor changes in the earlier line.

**Brzezinski:** As we try to advance toward a solution, it is important to note that your self-rule proposal can be seen in different ways. To put it bluntly, one way it can be seen is as a continuation of your military and political control over the West Bank and Gaza. This would make it clearly unacceptable. This would stem from ambiguity about the meaning of 242, an unwillingness of Israel to use the term withdrawal in connection with the West Bank and Gaza, these are the points that would give rise to that interpretation. But the same plan, with most of its elements intact, could be tied to Resolution 242, and to the principle of withdrawal, and to the principle of participation in the determination by the Palestinians of their own future, and if Israel were to speak of its forces being withdrawn from control of the West Bank and Gaza to agreed emplacements, and if authority were to devolve from Israel and Jordan, then your own plan could be the basis for a solution and could open the way to peace. Alternatively there could be strong suspicions that you intend to perpetuate your control, and that you intend to deal very differently with the Sinai and with the West Bank. We need a solution to make clear that your plan can be the basis for peace. Then Egypt, Jordan, and moderate Palestinians who want to coexist with Israel can move forward, and provisions can be made to keep an open relationship between Israel and the West Bank and Gaza.

The Middle East, in its larger dimensions, is an essential area of interest to us. It is vital that the Middle East be engaged with the West, be set on a course of moderation, and the opportunities for the Soviets and the radicals be minimized, so that the Middle East can move towards stability. This is in your interest, and it is in our interest. We need to consider how your plan can be used to move toward a stable and peaceful Middle East.

**Begin:** We all understand the need for agreement with the Arabs. But this should not weaken the meaning of agreement between our two governments. Since December we have had agreement on these points. If the plan we expounded in December was a positive plan, we should look at its elements. The Palestinian Arabs will elect their own administrative council to run their daily lives. There will be no interference. There will be eleven departments, dealing with all issues. We reserve security and public order. Everything depends upon the security. It can be understood why we are preoccupied by security.

**Carter:** Are you adding to security forces the need for police forces?

**Begin:** There will be a Department of Police which will be made up of local Arabs. There were other points of agreement. If there are other formulations, we will consider them. But we agree that our forces should stay on, and that their location should be decided by the man in charge of security and through negotiations. We agree there should be a review after five years, and maybe they will propose changes, and maybe we will. This is not a plan to last forever. All of the parties can bring forward proposals for change after five years. So we have a measure of agreement.

**Carter:** What happens in five years? Will they have the right to choose between a link to Israel, a continuation of the interim agreement, and a link to Jordan?

**Begin:** We have considered the question of plebiscite very seriously. If we give them three possibilities—the status quo, Jordan, or Israel—and no fourth choice, with the pistols of the PLO at their heads, and with the recent assassinations on the West Bank, and with all of the threats that they hear, the PLO will force them to boycott the plebiscite or to write in that they support a Palestinian state. There will be overwhelming pressure. With those pistols, a plebiscite would not lead to the results that you expect. Instead, a so-called decision would be made for a Palestinian state, under threat. We should let our proposal go for five years, and see how it works. They will elect the representatives, and the representatives can speak for them. We should let reality work, and we will cooperate, and we should not prejudice the outcome.

**Brzezinski:** Who will discuss with you after five years?

**Begin:** Israel, the Administrative Council, and Jordan. Jordan has been brought into the proposal. It will be in a position to say that it wants a change.

**Carter:** It is my understanding that you made some slight modifications in your proposal. Israel, Jordan, and the local authorities will all have to agree before decisions can be made. This gives Israel a veto over future change. She even has a veto over administrative decisions. This is a profound point. It keeps Israel in control over the West Bank area. Without Israeli willingness to give the Palestinian Arabs in the West Bank and Gaza any voice in determining their own future, such as the three choices that I mentioned of a joint administration, a tie to Israel, or a tie to Jordan, there is no chance for a peace settlement. I know that Sadat won't agree to the perpetuation of Israeli control over the West Bank if the Palestinian Arabs are not given any chance to choose their future. If Israel insists that they have no voice, there will be no chance for a peace settlement. What Sadat and Hussein do is up to them, but this issue is crucial. There is no possibility of agreement, even between Israel and Egypt, if the prospect of choice is foreclosed.

**Barak:** But the Palestinian Arabs will have the right to participate.

**Vance:** Not unless there is a real choice.

**Carter:** And with the Israeli veto, and with no choice at the end, what is left for them? I wouldn't want that situation if Israel could veto everything.

**Dayan:** I want to respond to Dr. Brzezinski.

**Carter:** You get more and more demanding and you are closing the door.

**Brzezinski:** There have been some changes in the plan.

**Begin:** The veto right is mutual.



**Dayan:** There is no word of veto. There will be a working group of Egypt, Jordan, Israel and the Palestinian Arabs. There can be no vote by majority in that group, because we know what the results would be in advance. Dr. Brzezinski's remarks asked us to distinguish between the withdrawal of our military forces from controlling the Arab population. There is no question of that. They will have their own local police. But we will not withdraw from all of the territories. If military forces should be on the Jordan River or on the ridge, from a military standpoint, even though there has been withdrawal from the Nablus and Gaza areas, we won't interfere with their lives. But this is not withdrawal from the territories. They will not just be totally free to do anything. We do intend to withdraw from control over their lives, but we are reluctant to say that we will withdraw our forces from the Jordan River, from the ridge, or from the sky. We are not withdrawing from control over the land.

**Carter:** There is no dispute over that.

**Dayan:** We need to look for words to find a solution.

**Brzezinski:** We want an agreement that is satisfactory to you on security grounds, but is politically realistic. If you want a Basutoland for the Arabs, with your control, it won't work. If you want genuine security, with real self-rule, and identity, and with an affiliation between the Palestinians and Jordan, that can work. We look at your plan and see many good elements, but there are others that are restrictive, and which give you political control. We want you to get your security, but this can be separated from political control.

**Begin:** That is a hard word that you used—Basutoland. It was very blunt. No one can say that our plan is for a Basutoland. We give the Arabs the option of citizenship. We suggest the option, and they can even be our own citizens, and they can vote.

**Brzezinski:** But Israelis are allowed to buy land in the West Bank, but there is no reciprocity. There is an unequal status.

**Begin:** That is the right of our citizens.

**Brzezinski:** But Israelis are not citizens of the West Bank.

**Begin:** We give them an option. We were attacked in our Foreign Affairs Committee because our proposal was so generous. We are not talking of a Basutoland. This is a peace proposal.

**Dayan:** Palestinian Arabs can have either Jordanian or Israeli citizenship, or they can keep their own local identity cards. The citizens of the Gaza Strip will have a way of showing how they feel by deciding to remain citizens of the Gaza Strip, or choosing Israeli or Jordanian citizenship. We will make no obstacle to their decision. If they are Jordanian citizens, they can send representatives to the Jordanian parliament. If not, they can stay Palestinians in Gaza, and they will just be citizens of Gaza.

**Begin:** Residents of Gaza.

**Dayan:** They will have papers, and identity cards. If there is no change, OK. They can stay what

they are. But there is no lack of choice for them to show how they feel. The main point about any referendum in the future is really to allow individuals to decide their citizenship, but not to decide what happens to the land in Judea, Samaria, and Gaza. The kind of plebiscite you are talking about will decide about territory, not about people. They will decide not only their future, but our future. If they have a right to decide whether Israel gets out of the territory, and if that area becomes part of their entity, then they are deciding our future.

**Carter:** Not if you . . .

**Dayan:** We distinguish between their right to decide their future, and their right to decide what happens west of the Jordan River. Labor had a view of a compromise on territory for peace. But they also had the idea of a functional compromise. The territory would not be divided, but the functions would be.

**Vance:** As several people have said, the question of security is paramount. But you say that if you rule out the determination of sovereignty for the future, the only solution is what you have today.

**Begin:** Nothing is excluded. There will be a review in five years. But we don't say now that there will be a referendum which will lead to a Palestinian state.

**Carter:** How can there be a Palestinian state if you, and we, and Sadat agree to preclude it?

**Begin:** The referendum itself, under the prevailing situation, which is not peaceful, and in which there are threats to everyone, and in which there is a psychological threat.

**Carter:** But the security force in the West Bank and Gaza would be Israeli.

**Begin:** But there are threats and murders, and we suggest that things be left open for review, but that we not say anything now about a plebiscite. There could be unpredictable results.

**Carter:** But you retain the right to veto the referendum if you don't want one.

**Begin:** There are two or three committees which require unanimous decisions. The Administrative Council will also have a veto right.

**Carter:** That has the effect of keeping the status quo.

**Begin:** It may, but not necessarily. We will listen. We will look at realities. If there is peace, and there are no incursions, there will be a chance for agreement. The same right will go to the others.

**Carter:** Mr. Prime Minister, we'll talk at greater length tonight. And I will see you tomorrow. In my view, the obstacle to peace, to a peace treaty with Egypt, is Israel's determination to keep political control over the West Bank and Gaza, not just now, but to perpetuate it even after five years. This might cause us to lose the opportunity for peace that you want. My hope is still that you will exchange this political control for your right to keep adequate security forces in the

West Bank area. We don't have a specific position as a nation to put forward. We are arbitrators and intermediaries and we carry messages, but I think that this is the best way for Israel to achieve its security. We have reached the point of possible success. But we are on the verge of seeing that lost. I hope that this afternoon and tomorrow, that we and you can back off and reassess positions and look for common ground. Then we will try to present your views to Sadat and Hussein. We have been close to agreement. There was a constructive attitude in your Sinai proposal, and in your ideas on self-rule. There has been some retrogression on the question of withdrawal and the West Bank. At the same time Sadat has been willing to recognize Israel and Israel's right to exist in peace, and to offer full peace. These few differences over what will happen in five years should be removed. There are two points that you keep insisting on: That Sadat calls for full withdrawal; and that he calls for a Palestinian state. This is not true. Not one of the Arab leaders demands this. When you raise this it is not accurate. Neither Jordan nor Sadat want this, nor do we, nor do you. Syria is a question mark, and I am not sure. Saudi Arabia will accept a proposition of no independent Palestinian state. But when we get to discussions, you raise these as obstacles, and there is no basis in fact for what you say. We need to look forward to resolve these differences of opinion, and we hope to solve most of these problems. I want to ask you to be as flexible as possible and to try to probe the answers to resolve these differences. I don't know when I will see Sadat or you again, but we need progress soon. I know that you are acting in good faith and that you want peace as does Sadat.

**Begin:** I want to respond that I will think about it and talk to you tonight.

**Carter:** Your Attorney General and Secretary Vance and Foreign Minister Dayan can work further on this. But unless you distinguish your security forces from the need to relinquish political control, then there is no possibility for a peace agreement. This is my understanding of what Israel wanted from the past. I see a hardening of positions, and I find it discouraging.