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MISCALCULATIONS AND LEGACIES: A LOOK BACK AT THE 1973 WAR HALF A CENTURY ON

Historians continue to debate “what if” scenarios about the pivotal conflict which reshaped the Middle East

By David Makovsky

The October 1973 War is bound to continue to fascinate historians and many others for a long time to come. There are countless dimensions to the last of the Arab-Israeli interstate wars. The obvious military aspects of the war alone are worth thousands of pages. Then there is the superpower dimension, given that the 1973 War was the first conflict of the new period of détente between the United States and the Soviet Union.

There is also a leadership angle, since none of the three leaders of the United States, Egypt, and Israel were around during the 1967 War, and each felt they were now being tested. There are also the public domestic dynamics and decision-making struggles each country faced, alongside other countries with various levels of engagement like Syria and Jordan. Moreover, there is the role of regional players before, during, and after the war. Needless to say, historians of the war will remain busy for quite some time.

I will explore two of these many dimensions: first, an example of the miscalculations within the United States, Israel, and Egypt that impacted the war, and second, the legacies of the 1973 War that cannot be separated from the miscalculations.

The Miscalculations Dimension

While there is no shortage of mistakes connected to the 1973 War, a few warrant special mention.

On the U.S. side, there is wide admission that those in authority deeply underestimated Egyptian President Anwar Sadat. The United States was



unfamiliar with Sadat, yet felt he could not fill the shoes of his charismatic predecessor Gamal Abdel Nasser. He was widely viewed as a placeholder until another Egyptian leader emerged. Henry Kissinger, the famed U.S. Secretary of State and National Security Adviser who would later become Sadat's interlocutor and friend, would radically shift his assessment of the Egyptian president over time.

△ Dinner with Israeli leaders at the King David Hotel in Jerusalem given in honor of Egyptian President Anwar Sadat following his visit to Jerusalem. November 1977. *Micha Bar Am/ Magnum Photos*

After working together between 1973 and 1976, Kissinger would ultimately laud Sadat for his statesmanship. In his book, *Leadership: Six Studies in World Strategy*, Kissinger declares that Sadat represented the strategy of "transcendence," meaning that his leadership transcended Arab rejectionism of the past by making peace with Israel. Kissinger contends that Sadat, in launching the 1973 attack on Israel before the peace initiative, intended "to transform the situation psychologically in order to make a sustainable peace".

Yet, this is not how the United States or Kissinger viewed him at the beginning of his presidency. Kissinger recalled being with President Richard Nixon in late September 1970 and hearing about Sadat's ascension to power. "The shared instinct of most of those present—as well as of available intelligence reports—was that Sadat would not last long as president," Kissinger wrote

in his book. “He seemed to embody continuity with Nasser’s aggressively nationalist ideology, and to boot, looked like a man of little influence or substance. One senior adviser gave him six weeks, the assessment being that his succession was ‘just a convenient way of blocking selection of a stronger rival’.” Kissinger admits that he did not properly appreciate the dramatic step of Sadat expelling Soviet military advisers in 1972 nor adequately value Sadat’s decision to dispatch his national security adviser Hafiz Ismail in February 1973 to the United States. Kissinger candidly admitted, “Sadat was still held in low regard in Washington...My personal assessment had not improved materially from the time of his ascension to the presidency.” On another occasion years later, Kissinger publicly declared, “I must say we did not take Sadat very seriously,” adding this was so because the Egyptian leader “was [always] making terrible threats, which he never implemented.”¹

The above is puzzling given that Kissinger was determined to expel Soviet influence from the Middle East. How did he miss Sadat’s signal when he expelled the Soviet advisers, or ignore Ismail’s warning that war would occur in absence of diplomatic steps? In his book *Master of the Game*, American diplomat Martin Indyk delves deeply into this period and concludes it is “a failure of imagination”. Indyk says about Kissinger: “He geared his own actions to an assessment that Sadat, whom he viewed as a ‘buffoon,’ could not resort to force, and if he did, he would find himself worse off.”

Israel’s leading miscalculation—famously called “the *konzeptzia*” (the concept)—is that Egypt could not afford to start a war it was certain to lose due to superior Israeli weaponry and Soviet refusal to provide state-of-the-art weaponry during a period of superpower *détente*. Having previously mobilized its reserves a few times before (which turned out to be false alarms) and after Sadat declared in more than one year that it was the “year of decision,” this time Israel did not act. As Mordechai Gazit, former director-general under Prime Minister Golda Meir put it, “[Defense Minister Moshe] Dayan and [Israel Defense Forces Chief of Staff David] ‘Dado’ [Elazar] should have thought it prudent to call up some reserves early in October. But it was their complete trust in the *Hasadir* [standing army] and not their addiction to the *konzeptzia*, as it is commonly argued, that prevented them from ordering mobilization.”²

Egypt’s biggest miscalculation seems to have occurred during the war itself. While the United States was stunned at the outset of the war by Egypt crossing

1 Kissinger, Remarks at a Washington Institute for Near East Policy dinner in New York coinciding with the 35th anniversary of the 1973 war, October 6, 2008.

2 Gazit, Mordechai, in *Israel in the Middle East: Documents and Readings on Society, Politics, and Foreign Relations, Pre-1948 to the Present*, Brandeis University Press, 2008, p. 271.

the Suez Canal, demolishing the Bar-Lev Line fortifications, and using SAM-3 surface-to-air missiles to shoot numerous Israeli warplanes out of the sky, Washington assumed it was only a matter of time until Israel turned the tide of the war.

Yet, after several days of fighting, this did not materialize. Egyptian National Security Adviser Hafez Ismail made clear to Kissinger in back-channel communications that Egypt had no plans to advance the fighting. Nixon and Kissinger actually considered the idea of the war ending with a limited Egyptian victory enshrined by a UN Security Council resolution put forward by Britain on October 13, a week after the start of the conflict. A ceasefire “in place” would be a critical win for the Egyptians as it would freeze the fighting with Egypt as the victor by having crossed the Suez Canal. Nixon and Kissinger saw in this an advantage for post-war diplomacy by providing Egypt with a psychological victory after the debacle of 1967, even if Israel feared this meant it would begin negotiations from a negative position.

There was only one problem. Sadat didn’t want to stop, under the assurance that more Soviet weaponry was en route. Although Nixon and Kissinger wanted to avoid a major superpower confrontation and preserve the détente that they toiled so hard for a year earlier, they were averse to an Egyptian victory attributed to Soviet weaponry. After all, their goal was to push the Soviets out of the Middle East.

Sadat made it clear that he would not accept the proposed UN Security Council resolution unless Israel yielded all of its gains from the 1967 War, something he must have known was highly unlikely. Sadat’s Foreign Minister Ismail Fahmy made clear to him that he thought the president was mistaken by pressing further. Fahmy believed Egypt needed to cash in its chips after the reason for Sadat going to war, essentially breaking the diplomatic logjam, had been achieved. Fahmy later wrote:

“Sadat, however, was overly confident by his army’s victory and [Syrian President Hafez] Assad’s assurances that Syria had no problem, and refused to accept the ceasefire in place. This was a mistake. Although under normal circumstances a prolonged war would have been in Egypt’s interests, the U.S. decision to send arms to Israel changed the situation and made an early ceasefire preferable. Sadat personally informed me that he had conveyed the Egyptian refusal to accept the ceasefire to the British ambassador in Egypt, who was pressing him to accept it. I was very upset by the decision and could not hide my distress.”³

³ Fahmy, Ismail, *Negotiating for Peace in the Middle East*, Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore, 1983, pp.

Fahmy indicated that failure to accept the ceasefire could lead Israel to cross the Suez Canal. He recalled, “my prediction was unfortunately correct. A few days

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Indeed, once Sadat balked and Washington saw it had nothing to gain from pressuring Israel further and withholding arms as it did during the first week of the war, Nixon and

Kissinger immediately switched gears. Senior Director for the Middle East at the White House National Security Council under Kissinger, William Quandt, made clear a turning point had been reached. Having noted that the withholding of weapons during the start of the war was one of the most controversial moves he had witnessed during his government service, he now saw that things were reverting back. He wrote in *Decade of Decisions*: “Now everything was coming unstuck. Kissinger was angry at Sadat, at the British, and at the Soviets...a new strategy had to be devised and quickly.” Kissinger also saw that a turning point had been reached due to Sadat’s decision not to accept the UN Security Council ceasefire. He wrote in his memoirs, *Years of Upheaval*:

“The die was now cast: matters had reached a point where maneuvering would be suicidal and hesitation, disastrous. The parties could not yet be brought to end the war—or the Soviets to support this course—by a calculation of their interests. All that was left was to force a change in the perception of their interests. We would pour in supplies. We would risk a confrontation. We would not talk again (with the Soviets) until there was no longer any doubt that no settlement could be imposed... Conciliation is meaningful only if one is thought to have an alternative... But we had no alternative anyway.”

Nixon and Kissinger met to review the course of the most recent developments. There was no going back, and there would be no more bureaucratic excuses. By all accounts, Nixon, who was previously preoccupied by the morass of Watergate, became animated and forceful on this occasion and agreed to take on the responsibility of managing the superpower confrontation that arose as a result of the massive airlift. The United States passed a 2.2-billion-dollar emergency aid package of loans and grants for Israel through Congress. The airlift that followed was considered the biggest U.S. weapons supply since the Berlin blockage of 1948: a thousand tons of weapons and materiel using C-5A and C-141 aircraft as well as C-130’s in a matter of days. Over the following

weeks, there were a total of 550 U.S. military flights to Israel. By the end of the first few days, the United States had surpassed the Soviet airlift to Egypt and Syria combined. The bottom line: Sadat should have listened to Ismail Fahmy on the fateful day of October 13, 1973.

Legacies Left Behind

The 1973 War was a seminal moment in the Middle East so it is not surprising that its legacies are manifold.

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Sadat's vindication and the limits of force

Sadat famously said that he went to war to shatter Israel's aura of "invincibility". Indeed, he achieved this. Israelis look back at 1973 as a warning that there are profound limits to the use of force. Their generals are not praised as gods like they were in 1967; the State Commission led by Israel's Chief Justice Shimon Agranat to investigate the war sought to hold the Israeli establishment accountable for being surprised and key figures were forced to resign. Mordechai Gazit, top aide to Meir, would write:

"The Yom Kippur War had a traumatic effect on Israelis. Twenty-five years later Israelis still look back on the war in anger and frustration. They consider it a low point in Israel's history. Most Israelis remain convinced that something very serious must have gone wrong in the period preceding October 1973 and firmly believe that the political and military leadership of the country was accountable for what happened."

While the Agranat Commission kept its focus on the military leadership, public protests forced the resignation of Prime Minister Golda Meir and Defense Minister Moshe Dayan as well. Meir would be replaced by Yitzhak Rabin, the hero of the 1967 War who was untainted by the strategic surprise of 1973.

It is Sadat and not the larger-than-life Nasser who was able to shatter this aura of invincibility, and it is hard to deny that this emboldened him in subsequent diplomacy, whether the Sinai I and II disengagement agreements or his iconic trip to Jerusalem in 1977.

Strategic surprise and its impact on Israel's elite

Israel was enthralled by the "konzeptzia" — the doctrine that Egypt would not go to war unless it could conduct enough deep penetration bombing that it could win the war outright. Without overwhelming military superiority, Cairo

would not dare launch a war. Major-General Eli Zeira, head of Israeli Defense Forces (IDF)'s military intelligence, was the father of the "konzeptzia" and no amount of contrary information could sway him. Egypt's gathering of forces was interpreted as a military exercise, while the evacuation of Soviet civilian personnel from Damascus on the eve of the 1973 War was also dismissed. The fact that Jordan's King Hussein warned Meir that a war could break out (from Syria's end) failed to sway Zeira. The Agranat Commission argued Zeira's assessment was key in ensuring that Israel did not mobilize its reserves or prepare for a coming war.

Once the war began, Kissinger's memoirs reflected that he thought it would be a repeat of the 1967 rout. The CIA also thought Israel would win within 48 hours, even in a two-front war. For Israel, the surprise attack led to the eclipse of the IDF as Israel's secular priesthood as per the 1967 War. The misjudgments of the military in advance of the war, such as the failure of Zeira's konzeptzia and overconfidence in the regular IDF, which led to the failure to call up reserves and IDF underperformance in the opening days of the war, shook the public's confidence in the army and assessment of Israel's strategic position.

It was not just the military whose reputation was tarnished. Since its founding in 1948, Israel had been under de facto one-party rule by the Labor party (formerly Mapai). In the 1977 election, known as HaMahapach (The Upheaval), the Labor Party was defeated for the first time in twenty-nine years and replaced with a right-wing government. Both the rabbinical establishment and West Bank settlements gained a greater hold in a traumatized country, supplanting the secular priests, the military. The vacuum in both the political and military establishments accelerated the rise of Gush Emunim—the national-religious settler movement—in the aftermath of the 1973 War.

Israel prevails and the 1973 War is the last Arab interstate war

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Canal, the Arabs could not defeat Israel on the battlefield. Israel had its weaponry resupplied by a superior United States, and ended the war outside of Cairo and Damascus, encircling the 20,000-strong Egyptian Third Army. Once Egypt opted to leave the circle of war in favor of the circle of peace, no Arab army could or would fight Israel on its own. (There was a brief clash with the Syrian army and

Israel in 1982.) The net effect is that the conventional wars that defined the

Arab-Israeli conflict from 1948 to 1973 were deemed futile, and interstate wars effectively ended. Instead, non-state actors like Palestinian militant factions, then later Hezbollah and Hamas, sought to carry on the conflict, setting the stage for the current asymmetric engagements between Israel and militant or terrorist groups.

Energy used for geopolitical pressure

The war in 1973 brought Arab states to the zenith of their oil-based power, following a half-hearted embargo attempt in 1967. The oil market looked different in 1973, creating a perfect storm. The ingredients were all there: rising consumption, lack of U.S. spare capacity, and nationalization of Arab oil production in several critical countries. Taken together, this gave Arab states the ability to unilaterally set prices and agree to cuts in oil production, using the relatively young OPEC, in a way that was previously impossible.

As far back as 1947, the United States imported about 8 percent of its oil. By 1973, the figure skyrocketed to 36 percent. In 1967, the Arab states lacked the economic leverage to push prices higher and offset production cuts with increased revenue. By 1973, though, both these factors had changed and the oil embargo sharply impacted the world economy, driving a sustained recession that ended only in 1975.

The issue was not just a nearly 60 percent rise in world consumption of oil between 1967 and 1973; a key factor was that the Arab states engaged in a creeping nationalization of their oil production industries. Until 1973, American and British oil companies known as the Seven Sisters earned most of the profits. After the war, the Arab oil states decided to change the rules, insisting that they reap a majority of the profits.

However, it is important to chart the trajectory of the oil embargo. Arab leaders made no bones about their expansive objectives: they wanted to keep the embargo going until Israel withdrew from all territories taken in the 1967 War, including East Jerusalem. The fact is that the oil embargo lasted just five months and was withdrawn by the oil producers on March 18, 1974, after rather relatively limited achievements.

The Arab oil embargo, however, can claim credit for launching U.S. diplomatic involvement in the post-war period. Moreover, the embargo helped launch the first Israel-Egypt disengagement agreement, under which troops on both sides separated themselves by a few miles near the Suez Canal in January 1974. This involved Israel withdrawing from a fraction of the Sinai desert. Subsequent withdrawals would be completely divorced from the embargo. Israel withdrew from another slice of the Sinai a year after the embargo was lifted, but due to

a U.S.-Egyptian package of quid pro quos rather than oil-based pressure. Of course, Israel would withdraw from the majority of the Sinai only in the wake of Sadat's historic trip to Jerusalem in 1977 and the subsequent Egypt-Israel peace treaty of 1979. (Due to different factors, the Golan Heights, East Jerusalem, the West Bank, and Gaza would largely be outside the Israel-Egyptian contractual treaty context.) In short, the oil embargo fell afiel of its main objective.

Why did the embargo end? In theory, given its ostensible early success, it could have kept going until Israel was pushed back to the 1967 lines. However, a variety of factors created profound limitations to a strategy linking oil and Israeli concessions.

On a pure economic level, an embargo would not be effective over time, given the fungibility of oil. Arab states cut shipments to the United States, but kept providing oil to others. Third parties then shipped oil to the United States, mitigating the impact of the embargo. Production cuts, while more effective in forcing prices up for Americans, required discipline among OPEC members, all of whom wanted to maximize profits. OPEC members favored higher oil revenues, but were often less sanguine about production cuts. Arab production cuts were only 9 percent of overall international production of 50 million barrels per day, limiting their ability to offset lower exports with higher prices.

Further, the embargo game was a double-edged sword. The world understood that the global economy was vulnerable due to its heavy reliance on oil, but the Arab states understood that they would also be hurt by a global economic downturn. The Saudis were well-aware that undermining the U.S. economy could have destabilizing economic implications for them. Indeed, a global recession

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would occur in 1974 and part of 1975, knocking more than 3 percent off global GDP. Saudi Oil Minister Sheikh Ahmed Zaki Yamani would say to counterparts, "if you went down, we would go down." Some wondered if Yamani feared that a four-fold rise in oil prices would lead the United States to vigorously pursue the prospects of alternative energies, which would be the death-knell for the Saudis, whose GDP was at that time over 50 percent oil rents. As such, it was preferable to keep prices

somewhat lower in order to avoid pushing the United States to try and become energy-independent.

A second set of limits on the embargo strategy was that the Saudis saw that a weakened United States could imperil a strong U.S.-Saudi relationship. It

was not tenable for Washington to be viewed as a supplicant of Riyadh. The United States was the guarantor of Saudi security, and the kingdom relied on the American military for defense and arms acquisitions. So long as there was an embargo, the United States would not sell weapons or enhance other forms of defense cooperation. The more the American public viewed the oil embargo as political blackmail, the more intense the blowback against Arab oil producers. On January 7, 1974, Defense Secretary James Schlesinger publicly mentioned the prospect of reprisals against those who perpetrated the embargo. Washington would only tighten defense cooperation with Riyadh once the embargo ended.

A third set of limits on the embargo strategy was that the United States held diplomatic cards in the Middle East, not just military ones. Ultimately, other Arab states wanted Kissinger to pursue not only a first disengagement with Egypt, but also a disengagement agreement with Syria. In principle, Kissinger was keen to do this anyway, because he did not want Sadat exposed as the only Arab leader to sign a post-war ceasefire with Israel. Engaging a more radical Syria would provide Sadat with political cover as he moved closer to Washington. However, Syria's insistence that the embargo remain until such a comparable disengagement accord be reached was matched by a U.S. refusal to engage in diplomacy until the embargo was lifted. A sort of compromise was reached, whereby Kissinger began an early round of disengagement talks with Damascus before the lifting of the embargo on March 18, but in fact, his Syria shuttling only began on April 29.

Another limitation on the embargo strategy was that it lost the support of Egypt—the biggest Arab country and leader of the war effort—once the first disengagement agreement was signed in January 1974. Ironically, it was Sadat who proposed the oil embargo before the war. Yet, there was logic to his reassessment of the advisability of the oil embargo. Sadat became more receptive to U.S. appeals as his relationship with Kissinger and Nixon developed, and he wanted to enter the American geopolitical orbit. Nixon insisted that Sadat intercede with Saudi Arabia to lift the oil embargo. Kissinger convened the ceremonial opening to the Geneva Conference in December 1973 as a cover for U.S.-Egyptian diplomacy, as per Sadat's wishes. Nixon wrote Sadat:

“Our nations stand at the threshold of a great turning point in history...[but] in order to make it possible for me to move decisively, it is necessary that the discrimination against the United States which the oil embargo represents be brought to an end.....It cannot wait for the outcome of the current talks on disengagement”.⁴

⁴ December 28, 1973, Letter From President Nixon to Egyptian President Sadat, Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969-1976, Volume XXV, Document 422, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76v25/d422>.

Soviet influence falling and Washington rising as the indispensable peace broker

Sadat was not merely responding to U.S. pressure. He moved toward the United States in no small measure because the Soviets had no relationship with Israel and therefore no leverage to induce Israeli concessions: Moscow could help bring war, but had no utility in bringing peace. Ironically, Israel's military victory, which stemmed in no small part from U.S. resupply, did not hurt America's standing with Egypt. On the contrary, America was now all the more valuable because it was close to Israel. Only the United States and its relationship with Israel could help him regain the Sinai, and thus a weak America did not serve Egyptian purposes. At different times, Sadat would say that the United States held "99 percent of the cards" to regaining Egyptian land. Egypt did not want the United States to weaken and lose its leverage with Israel.

Kissinger capitalized on this immediately and used the post-war period to launch successful diplomacy, positioning the United States as the only peace broker and allowing it to mediate between the parties in a way that had been impossible in all previous rounds of Arab-Israeli conflict. U.S.-brokered disengagement agreements with Egypt led simultaneously to a partial return of Sinai and much closer ties with the United States. This paved the way for Sadat's historic trip to Jerusalem in 1977, which enabled him to recover the rest of the Sinai Peninsula.

In terms of superpower relations, it is clear that U.S. policy during the 1973 War was driven by how Washington anticipated Soviet moves. The United States initially wanted to help Egypt achieve a quick limited victory. But once Sadat, buoyed by early battlefield successes and receiving major Soviet assistance, rejected a UN ceasefire which would have frozen the battle line, the Americans shifted course and began a massive airlift of weapons and supplies to Israel. It became apparent over the course of the war and its aftermath that Kissinger did not want to sacrifice détente, but rather sought to eliminate Soviet influence in the Middle East. Kissinger would later recall, "we sent a message to Sadat on the first day of the war saying you are now making war with Soviet arms. But keep in mind that you have to make peace with American diplomacy."

Therefore, the Geneva international peace conference after the 1973 War had an opening ceremony involving both superpowers, but the aim remained the establishment of an uncontested *pax Americana*. Kissinger wanted to bring Egypt into the American orbit without sacrificing détente. This was a very delicate but successful endeavor. In the aftermath of the war, the U.S.-Egyptian relationship shifted from adversarial to a pillar of American foreign policy in the Middle East. Post-war diplomacy led to the Washington-Cairo relationship growing in many directions, given the importance of Egypt as the most populous Arab state, the strategic value of the Suez Canal, and its status as the leader of the Arab World, which it remained for decades to come. Security ties deepened

as Egypt entered the American orbit, receiving billions of dollars in aid over several decades and becoming a major buyer of American weaponry.

As Quandt put it:

“American policy toward the Arab-Israeli conflict was fundamentally affected by the events of the October 1973 war...The simple lesson from this crisis was that the status quo in the Middle East was volatile and dangerous, and it could disintegrate, with serious consequences for American global and regional interests. Consequently the status quo had to be stabilized through a combination of diplomacy and arms shipments. A political process must begin that would offer the Arabs an alternative to war, but it must be carried on at a pace the Israelis could accept.”

Stability in the Middle East could not be guaranteed by military predominance. Kissinger would visit the Middle East eleven times over the course of one-and-a-half years.

Birth of Gradualism

The 1973 War led to another innovation: gradualism. Its operational manifestation was shuttle diplomacy by Kissinger. Yet the main novelty was not how many flights it took for Kissinger to reach the 1974 and 1975 Sinai disengagement agreements. Rather, it was an understanding that the Arab-Israeli conflict could not be solved all at once. It was too complex. It needed to be disaggregated. Yet, it is a mistake to view Kissinger as the sole architect of the disengagement agreements and gradualist strategy. Sadat in his own way also favored this approach.

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When President Jimmy Carter wanted to pursue a comprehensive agreement by reconvening the Geneva conference, Sadat saw this as perhaps well-intentioned, but something that would ultimately tie Egypt's hands. The nature of the peace conference would be that “nothing would be agreed upon until everything was agreed,” thereby providing a veto to Syria. Nicholas Veliotis, a senior State Department official responsible for Arab-Israel affairs and future ambassador to Egypt, would later say, “Sadat possessed the fundamental and unalterable preference to keep control of all negotiating decisions in Cairo's hands, and not let them fall into the Syrian preference for a unified delegation.”⁵

⁵ Interview with author, June 25, 2008.

The Last War

People remember the 1973 War a full fifty years later because it was so consequential. It was pivotal in shifting the trajectory of the Middle East, rendering the interstate Arab-Israeli wars that characterized the regional landscape since 1948 unthinkable. In no small measure, this was due to Sadat's transformative leadership, Kissinger's diplomatic agility, and Rabin's analytical capability. The three men understood the landscape they inherited and the terrain they—in fits and starts—sought to shape in the aftermath of the war. It would be a world where both Egypt and Israel moved deeper under the U.S. wing and deepened their links to its security order, and it would be a world in which war was no longer possible. The two Sinai disengagement agreements of 1974 and 1975, reached by all three leaders, were the predicate for Sadat's electrifying trip to Jerusalem in 1977, and the Egypt–Israel Peace Treaty of 1979.

In Sadat's historic Knesset speech, the Egyptian president declared:

*“Any life lost in war is a human life, irrespective of its being that of an Israeli or an Arab. A wife who becomes a widow is a human being entitled to a happy family life, whether she be an Arab or an Israeli. Innocent children who are deprived of the care and compassion of their parents are ours, be they living on Arab or Israeli land. They command our top responsibility to afford them a comfortable life today and tomorrow.”*⁶

The Middle East would know a myriad of challenges after the 1973 War, but there would be no going back to the frequent interstate wars that so dominated the past. As such, Sadat declared his belief to his parliament that the 1973 War should be “the last war”. Five decades later, this hard-won peace has held. ©

6 New York Times, Transcript, Egyptian President Anwar Sadat speech, November 20, 1977, <https://www.nytimes.com/1977/11/21/archives/transcripts-of-sadat-and-begin-addresses-sadat-we-truly-welcome-you.html>.