

## Part I

### Overview of the Sinai Experience

#### 1. Negotiating Disengagement 1973-75: Educating the Parties in Incremental Risk-taking

Even before becoming Secretary of State in 1973, Henry Kissinger was critical of previous American approaches designed to bring about a comprehensive solution to the long-standing Arab-Israeli conflict. Aware of the diplomatic momentum that could be developed if the parties were to offer tactical concessions on the marginal issues of mutual interest to both sides, Kissinger opted for an incremental approach that would give the disputants time to work out common interests and differences gradually as negotiations proceeded.

In Kissinger's view, step-by-step negotiations would allow the Arab states and Israel to see some progress at an early date. This, in turn, would educate the parties with respect to the rewards of self-restraint and the utility of concessions.<sup>1</sup> The 1973 October War provided Kissinger with the opportunity to put his theory to the test and to create the conditions necessary for peacemaking. The postwar cease-fire and its subsequent codification in the Six-Point Agreement signed by Egypt and Israel on November 11, 1973, demonstrated the parties' intent to end the state of hostilities and to reverse those policies that, heretofore, had sustained the conflict. As the first step in the confidence-building process, the cease-fire served to stabilize the military relationship between the two belligerents. Most notably, it served to maintain a stalemated military situation in which efforts to mediate the conflict and to establish non-belligerent contacts could begin.

To further ensure the stability of the immediate postwar situation, the newly formed United Nations Emergency Force (UNEF II) was called upon to perform a number of peacekeep-

ing and verification functions including (1) preventing further entanglement of the Egyptian and Israeli forces; (2) assuming control of and establishing checkpoints along the Cairo-Suez Road; (3) working with the Israelis to verify the non-military nature of cargo supplied to the encircled Egyptian Third Army; and (4) having the UNEF commander serve as the chairman of the "Kilometre 101" Egyptian-Israeli military disengagement negotiations.<sup>2</sup>

The "Kilometre 101" negotiations were as important in form as they were in substance. Professional Egyptian and Israeli military officers — meeting face-to-face for the first time in 25 years — began to negotiate specific details regarding the separation of forces. That these talks occurred at all, was evidence of Kissinger's skill in persuading President Sadat to subsume his demand for a return to the October 22 cease-fire lines and to seek instead a broader Israeli withdrawal of forces as part of a disengagement agreement. To merely remove Israel from the west bank of the Suez Canal, Kissinger argued, would accomplish very little. The important thing was to produce a more substantial Israeli withdrawal into the Sinai that both sides would perceive as the beginning of an ongoing process.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Henry Kissinger, *Years of Upheaval* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1982), p. 636.

<sup>2</sup> Michael Comay, "UN Peacekeeping in the Israel-Arab Conflict, 1948-1975: An Israeli Critique", *Jerusalem Papers on Peace Problems*, No. 17-18 (1976) p. 33.

<sup>3</sup> Henry Kissinger, *Years of Upheaval*, p. 639.

