

agement process. Unfortunately, neither Egypt nor Israel felt compelled at this juncture to offer the more extensive concessions necessary to produce an agreement. For its part, Egypt demanded that Israel withdraw to a line east of the crucial Mitla and Gidi passes and agree to return the oil fields at Abu Rudeis. Israel, however, fully aware of the strategic importance of the passes, insisted on maintaining its long-established electronic surveillance station at Gidi and refused to accept the Egyptian demand regarding the oil fields. To emphasize Israel's concern over losing strategic depth, Defence Minister Shimon Peres argued:

It is a question not just of the Passes but of our military [intelligence] installations that have no offensive purpose and are necessary. The previous Government could not overcome the psychological blow that the Syrians and the Egyptians launched a surprise attack. We need an early warning system. We need 12 hours of warning. Under the proposed agreement we'd have only six.⁶

In addition to keeping its early warning station, the Israeli leadership sought a formal Egyptian declaration of non-belligerency, one that would effectively remove Egypt from the Arab war coalition.

The deadlock between the two belligerents was ultimately broken on March 25, 1975, when President Sadat announced that Egypt would reopen the Suez Canal and approve a three-month extension of the UNEF mandate beyond its April 1975 expiry date. These significant political gestures permitted negotiations to resume. Capitalizing on these developments, Secretary Kissinger engaged in another round of "shuttle diplomacy" aimed at achieving a more extensive disengagement of forces in the Sinai.

3. The Sinai II Agreement: Building Upon Precedent, 1975-79

3(a) Overview

Having already accepted the idea of a demilitarized buffer zone controlled by the UNEF with adjacent limited force zones monitored by the UNEF, the parties offered no objections to implementing an extended version of these measures as part of a second disengagement agreement. Israel agreed to withdraw from the Mitla and Gidi passes, which would be included in the new UN buffer zone, and to quit the oil fields at Abu Rudeis. Still highly suspicious of the Egyptians, however, and remembering well the sudden withdrawal of the UNEF in 1967, Israel balked at the idea of foregoing its strategic surveillance station at the western end of the Gidi Pass.

This problem was resolved when the parties agreed that Egypt would be permitted to build and maintain a surveillance station similar to Israel's at the eastern end of the Gidi Pass. In addition, at the request of both Egypt and Israel, the United States agreed to become directly involved in the implementation of the Agreement, including its verification. This US decision to participate provided both parties with sufficient confidence to sign the Sinai II Agreement on September 4, 1975.⁷ Each believed the series of interlocking verification measures — UN monitoring of compliance with agreed force levels and monitoring of access to the passes by the parties themselves as well as by the US — would provide a level of confidence commensurate with their security concerns. In short, both parties believed the Agreement was structured such that neither side

⁶ Nadar Safran, *Israel: The Embattled Ally* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1978), p. 546.

⁷ For the full text of the Sinai II Agreement of September 4, 1975 see United States Sinai Support Mission, *Report to the Congress* (Washington, D.C.: Department of State, 1982), Annex A.