**Chapter 10**

**The Deal Maker: Peace with Egypt**

“On Saturday morning, May 21, 1977, Menachem Begin called me to offer me the position of foreign minister in the government he was establishing.” With these word, Dayan opened his autobiography. They mark the last chapter in Dayan’s political career, in which he played a pivotal role in the peace process with Egypt. [[1]](#footnote-1)

On June 3, 1974, after Golda Meir and her cabinet resigned, Labor Party leader Yitzhak Rabin established a new government, excluding Dayan. Dayan’s “victory” in the Agranat Commission had been largely a Pyrrhic one, as his having evaded any condemnation from the commission fueled public wrath against him. He even had to be hastily ushered out by a back door at Bar-Ilan University to avoid being pummeled by bereaved parents.[[2]](#footnote-2) Similarly, the media and politicians, including those from his own party, distanced themselves from him. Publicly, he had reached the end of the road. “*Sic transit gloria mundi*” (Thus passes the glory of the world), Menachem Begin muttered on seeing Dayan sitting by himself in the Knesset cafeteria.[[3]](#footnote-3)

After the Yom Kippur War, Dayan believed that a more significant settlement could emerge between Israel and Egypt than in the past, although not the permanent solution the superpowers insisted upon. He thought that Henry Kissinger was essential for reaching a partial arrangement.[[4]](#footnote-4)

On September 3, 1975, the Rabin government, nearly two years after the war’s end, reached an interim arrangement with Egypt, the Sinai 2 Agreement, signed September 4. It demanded a 30-kiometer Israeli withdrawal from the Suez Canal and established both sides’ commitment to a peaceful resolution. An addendum included a U.S. commitment to provide Israel with oil and advanced planes.[[5]](#footnote-5)

This represented the first agreement between Israel and an Arab nation not made resulting from a war; rather, it set a precedent for dialogue, trust-building, and increased U.S. involvement at the expense of the USSR. The Suez Canal was rebuilt and its cities were reconstructed, as Dayan had wanted after the end of the Six-Day War.[[6]](#footnote-6)

Despite this agreement, threats against Israel persisted. On June 27, 1976, a group of Palestinian and German terrorists hijacked an Air France plane and flew it to Entebbe, Uganda, holding the passengers hostage. On July 4, the IDF executed a daring 3800-kilometer rescue mission – Operation Thunderbolt. Defense Minister Shimon Peres, who still held Dayan in great respect after the Yom Kippur War, wanted Dayan’s approval before proceeding. Coming especially to a restaurant where Dayan was dining, Peres told Dayan about the bold plan. Dayan responded that “It’s a beauty of a plan!,”[[7]](#footnote-7) Dayan cited his trust in operation’s leaders – Benny Peled, in charge of flying the planes to Entebbe, and Yoni Netanyahu, in charge of the raid itself,[[8]](#footnote-8) further evidence of the importance Dayan attributed to leadership – for him, the decisive factor in any plan.

For Dayan, Operation Thunderbolt marked the completion of the transfer of leadership to Prime Minister Rabin, Defense Minister Peres, and Chief of Staff Motta Gur. As defense minister, Dayan had combatted the war on PLO-led international terrorism, including the infamous Lod Airport attack on in 1972, killing 24 and wounding 71 passengers in the hall with gunfire and hand grenades, and carried out by three members of the Japanese Red Army on behalf of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP). Another infamous attack was the murder of the 11 Israeli athletes at the Munich Olympic Games later that summer by the Palestinian terrorists Black September organization.

On May 8, 1972, a Sabena flight out of Brussels was hijacked by Black September. After landing in Israel, the hijackers threatened to blow up the plane and its 90 passengers if 315 Palestinian terrorists were not released from Israeli prisons. Defense Minister Dayan personally directed the negotiations and helped devise a scheme to deceive the terrorists. The plan had been for fighters from the elite Sayeret Matkal unit to board the plane dressed as mechanics and maintenance men. A Red Cross official, discovering hidden gun beneath their overalls, refused to let them board. Dayan grabbed the walkie-talkie and, addressing the official as if he were a junior officer under his command, barked, “This is Gen. Dayan speaking. I am instructing you to let them pass.” The Red Cross official obeyed.[[9]](#footnote-9) The rescue operation, Isotope, is still considered a successful model for handling similar situations.

On May 15, 1974, a terrorist cell entered the town of Maalot in northern Israel where its members proceeded to attack and apartment building, killing innocent civilians, before taking over an elementary school where more than a hundred Safed high school students and their teachers were staying during a field trip. Some managed to escape, but 85 students, two teachers, and two medics were held hostage for the next two days. The army began negotiations with the captors who were threatening to execute the hostages if their demands to release 20 imprisoned terrorists were not met. Dayan traveled to Maalot to order immediate military action and take the terrorists by surprise. But Motta Gur refused and Dayan, his standing weakened, capitulated. Dayan crawled up to the windows of the school building and was shocked by the sight of armed terrorists facing dozens of adolescents. He – the life-long fighter – later told his assistant, Naftali Lau, a Holocaust survivor, that for the first time he understood how Jews during the Holocaust obeyed just a handful of men carrying weapons.[[10]](#footnote-10) By the time Gur authorized a military action in the afternoon, the terrorists were expecting it. Twenty-two students, five civilians, and one soldier were killed and scores were injured in the botched mission, since known “the Maalot disaster.”[[11]](#footnote-11) Dayan’s last firefight, it was a jarring final chord.

**Dayan’s Return to the Political Arena**

Following his inauguration as president of the United States in January 1977, Jimmy Carter and his team – Secretary of State Cyrus Vance and National Security Advisor Zbigniew Brzeziński – played a key role in achieving the ground-breaking between Israel-Egypt peace treaty. Perhaps somewhat naïve, the energetic Carter dove headfirst into the peace process, focusing on a comprehensive arrangement he thought could be achieved through a conference with all sides led by the two superpowers, the United States and the Soviet Union. Viewing such a conference as a trap in light of Carter’s vision of a united and therefore powerful Arab delegation, Rabin and his successor Prime Minister Menachem Begin objected, thus bringing Carter closer to Sadat.[[12]](#footnote-12) Carter, who also demanded Israel’s return to the 1967 borders, was the first U.S. president to make the Palestinian issue a priority.[[13]](#footnote-13) After meeting Sadat in April 1977, Carter said he and Sadat had “hit it off extremely well.”[[14]](#footnote-14) Sadat courted Carter, understanding that through using the U.S. president, Egypt could regain the Sinai Peninsula back. Carter became Egypt’s *de facto* representative vis-à-vis Israel.[[15]](#footnote-15)

This paved the way for Dayan’s return to politics after three years in the political and public desert. The scheduled elections were held early – in May instead of the fall of 1977 – triggered by a political crisis about desecrating the Jewish Sabbath that led to Rabin’s resignation. Dayan aspired to a central role, but was not in a position to extract promises from his party.[[16]](#footnote-16) He therefore reached out to Begin, with whom he felt more of a shared ideology than with Labor. Dayan’s stance on the key point of the West Bank was a mix of Labor and Likud positions. He opposed the Likud’s hoped-for annexation as well as Labor’s proposed relinquishment. Uncomfortable with Begin’s pompous and dramatic style, so far from his own restrained approach, and unable to accept Begin’s refusal to guarantee no West Bank annexation, Dayan did not join Likud.

In April 1977, after Leah and Yitzhak Rabin were discovered to be illegally holding U.S. dollar accounts in Washington, D.C.,[[17]](#footnote-17) Rabin resigned as Labor’s leader, and the much less popular Peres became the Labor Party’s candidate. This contributed to the Likud election victory, resulting in the first Likud-led government in the country’s history. The idea of Dayan crossing party lines was unthinkable then. Begin believed that even Dayan, capable of almost anything, would never contemplate such as move, derided as “political prostitution” by a Knesset member.[[18]](#footnote-18) Begin faced public backlash for the very idea, promising bereaved parents that Dayan would not be appointed a minister in his government.[[19]](#footnote-19)

But Begin very much wanted Dayan and Dayan had often proved that he could disregard criticism and was loyal only to his own beliefs, not any partisan platform. Dayan agreed to join Begin’s government under two conditions, one ideological and one personal: no West Bank annexation and retaining his Labor party Knesset seat, causing even more party outrage, as Labor accused him of joining the enemy and costing them a Knesset seat.

What did Begin gain? Begin, suffering from a very negative image, was desperate for international legitimacy, which he believed Dayan could deliver. Although aware of Dayan’s tarnished image at home, Begin needed Dayan’s international heroic status. Begin acknowledged about Dayan that, “He has no second when it comes to speaking and negotiating with world leaders,” adding “I want statesmen all over the world to carefully check how they’re dressed before the Israeli foreign minister enters their study.”[[20]](#footnote-21) Dayan’s inclusion in the government provided continuity between two dramatically different governments, reassuring many that Begin had a responsible adult by his side.[[21]](#footnote-22) As Yoel Marcus wrote:

The match between Dayan and Begin would show itself as the most important factor in jumpstarting the peace process.... It was a miraculous encounter: on the one hand, a man seeking to change his image as “terrorist” and enter history as the one to bring the peace, and, on the other hand, a man seeking to erase the stain of Yom Kippur, understanding that a unique situation required unique solutions and only he was capable of providing them.[[22]](#footnote-23)

Ezer Weizman, Begin’s defense minister, like others, suspected that Dayan joined Begin’s government to promote his own peace plan, writing: “When he joined the Begin government, Dayan was seeking to continue where he had left off in 1971. He felt that all sides wanted a settlement. Begin’s attitude to Dayan was special: almost from the first moment, Begin’s door was open to Dayan in a way it never was to any other member of his government.”[[23]](#footnote-24)

Indeed, Dayan, with his acute political instincts, sensed the possibility for peace talks. In an August 1977 lecture, he announced: “My situation assessment is that we are on the brink of a national event of the greatest historic proportions since 1948,” adding, “It may be that we have reached valid talks of political content… and perhaps more than that – an actual peace treaty.”[[24]](#footnote-25) Dayan continued that he sensed an opportunity to negotiate peace, with Israel better position than ever, with land to bargain with. While noting points of agreements with the United States, Dayan acknowledged obstacles, like Jewish settlements across the Green Line, the extent of any future Israeli withdrawal, and the PLO’s status.[[25]](#footnote-26) Dayan, sceptical that a comprehensive agreements with all Israel’s enemies could be reached, supported an incremental approach and stressed the importance of the U.S. guarantees. He was confident of success with Egypt.[[26]](#footnote-27)

Dayan later wrote that he joined the Begin government as foreign minister in order to “to greatly affect the moves of the Israeli government to attain a peace settlement with our Arab neighbors and the Palestinians,”[[27]](#footnote-28) despite his differences with Begin. Begin wanted Israeli sovereignty over the entire region, while Dayan believed “in an arrangement of coexistence between us and the Arabs living in this region with none imposing sovereignty on the other.”[[28]](#footnote-29) Now in Dayan was committing to attaining peace. His advisor Elyakim Rubinstein wrote, “In his terms as foreign minister, he would work day and night with urgency and passion, pouring his entire being into the process.”[[29]](#footnote-30)

On June 24, Dayan presented Begin with a summary of discussion principles at Carter’s upcoming Geneva conference. Dayan proposed a phased agreement, with each stage contingent on the success of the preceding one. Dayan believed the immediate goal should be ending the state of war rather than achieving peace, which would be hard to achieve. Dayan suggested that the depth of the retreat would depend on the depth of the peace.[[30]](#footnote-31) About the West Bank, Dayan felt: “This is our ancient homeland; a revival of Israel and return to Zion that would forbid Jews to settle in Judea and Samaria is unthinkable.” He insisted on resolving the refugee issue before tackling the Palestinian problem in the territories. Dayan envisaged a form of Palestinian sovereignty with some sort of connection to Jordan.[[31]](#footnote-32) Ultimately, he was confident about reaching a peace arrangement, including about the West Bank.[[32]](#footnote-33)

During August 1977, Dayan sprang into action as foreign minister, secretly meeting Indian and Iranian leaders, and King Hussein. Understanding that Hussein was insisting on Israel’s return to the pre-1967 lines, Dayan understood that he had to focus on the Egyptian peace process.[[33]](#footnote-34)

That same month, Secretary of State Vance was encouraged by Sadat and Dayan’s attitudes after returning from talks in Middle East capitals, although there had been no breakthrough. Vance felt that Dayan had moderated Begin’s rigidity,[[34]](#footnote-35) Dayan having assured Vance that Sinai and its Jewish settlements would not hinder peace.[[35]](#footnote-36)

After the Jordanian channel closed, attention shifted to Egypt. Dayan suggested renewing communications with Egypt via Morocco, prior intelligence sharing between them making Morocco a natural conduit.[[36]](#footnote-37) A breakthrough occurred when Moroccan King Hassan invited Dayan to a secret meeting at his palace. There, Dayan sent a message to Egypt about Israel’s willingness at the highest echelon of heads of state or foreign ministers. Egypt agreed. Dayan immediate asked Meir Rosen, the Foreign Ministry’s legal counsel, to prepare a draft or a Israeli-Egyptian peace agreement. The 48-point draft was then sent to Cairo and Washington.[[37]](#footnote-38)

A meeting between Dayan and Hassan Touhami, deputy head of the Egyptian government was scheduled for September 16, and the U.S. administration was informed. Dayan was to address the U.N. Assembly on September 18. Touhami was adamant: Sadat would not shake hands with an Israeli leader as long as there was as much as one single Israeli soldier on Egyptian soil. Dayan responded that that was no way to start a negotiation. Dayan later denied Egyptian claims that they had continued the talks after Dayan promised Touhami all of Sinai. Dayan insisted that he had told Touhami not to rely on full Israeli withdrawal or evacuation of Israeli settlements in Sinai, while assuring him that they could reach a satisfactory arrangement.[[38]](#footnote-39) Regardless, Touhami left believing that Israel would withdraw from Sinai, which he communicated to Sadat. The Egyptians agreed to continue talks, with a second meeting taking place only about two and a half months later. In the interim, Dayan ceaselessly sought ways to bridge their gaps and reach a separate peace agreement with Egypt.[[39]](#footnote-40)

After his initial meeting with Touhami, Dayan proceeded to New York, ostensibly to address the U.N., but really to prepare for Carter’s Geneva conference, on which the United Stated remained fixated, naively believing that they could resolve the conflict in one comprehensive conference bringing all the sides together, including the Soviets,[[40]](#footnote-41)seek an alternate route.[[41]](#footnote-42) Sadat, wary of Palestinian or Syrian interference and eager to neutralize Soviet influence, sought an alternate route – direct talks with Israel.

On September 19, 1977, Dayan and Vance met, followed by a meeting with Carter. The meeting with Vance went well, with Dayan hinting at returning all of Sinai to Egypt, a hint forwarded to Ismail Fahmi, Egypt’s foreign minister, on September 21.[[42]](#footnote-43) However, the meeting with Carter was more confrontational, with a belligerent Carter accusing Israel of being more stubborn than the Arabs. “You put obstacles on the path to peace,” a refrain Carter would utter often in the near future.[[43]](#footnote-44)

Dayan repeated Israel’s stance on the legality of Jewish settlements in the West Bank legal and its refusal to withdraw in a peace settlement. He did propose a compromise to restrict new building to military facilities only, to which Begin immediately objected. Another disagreement with Carter was including an independent PLO-led Palestinian delegation at the Geneva conference, to which Israel was vehemently opposed, fearing it would inevitably to the establishment of a Palestinian state. Dayan was also sceptical about the conference, believing it would hinder Sadat’s ability to reach a separate agreement with Israel independently.[[44]](#footnote-45) The U.S. administration misjudged Sadat’s eagerness for talks, impatience with delays, and aversion to Soviet involvement.[[45]](#footnote-46) Despite tensions, Carter concluded he could work with Dayan. However, Carter was unaware that Dayan was sometimes crossing Begin’s rigid policy lines. Dayan, too, was unhappy with the meeting’s atmosphere and the U.S. positions raised.[[46]](#footnote-47) Carter later wrote that he respected Dayan because he wanted to achieve peace, and end the occupation, writing that Dayan “even showed some flexibility on the Palestinians,” proposing a joint Arab delegation for Geneva’s opening session and having PLO leaders later join the Jordanian if they were not well-known.[[47]](#footnote-48)

On September 29, Dayan received the U.S. draft of call to convene a joint U.S.-USSR peace conference no later than December 1977. The draft, made public two days later, mentioned Palestinian inclusion. Despite Israel’s reservations with U.S. policy, Dayan decided to influence U.S. policy by gaining U.S. public support. Still a magnet for U.S. Jewry, Dayan spoke in interviews and at Jewish community gatherings, relaying a stark message: “We are being told by Carter and Vance that if we want peace, we must accept the Arab terms. Maybe there will be peace if we do all that but there will be no Israel. We are not going to accept this.”[[48]](#footnote-49) Dayan stressed Israel would not negotiate with the PLO.

Dayan’s PR campaign was successful, and pressured the administration,[[49]](#footnote-50) resulting in a Carter-Dayan meeting on October 4. Carter was stunned by Dayan’s clout and the intensity of public opposition to his rigid positions on Israel. Dayan, too, was aware of the shift in the balance of power, and used his advantage carefully. At first, their exchanges were difficult. Brzeziński later recalled being shocked by Dayan’s threat to use public opinion against the world’s largest superpower. But during the conversation, Carter became more conciliatory, occasionally asking Dayan what he intended to tell the journalists waiting outside and the audiences across the country in his coast-to-coast campaign to sway public opinion.

Dayan asked if Israel could participate in the Geneva conference without accepting the joint U.S.-Soviet declaration and was told it was possible. William Quandt, then on the National Security Council, wrote that Dayan showed creative imagination on the issue of the Palestinian representation.[[50]](#footnote-51) The administration suggested lesser-known PLO representatives in an attempt to obscure their affiliation. Dayan joked, saying that by the time they arrived at the conference they would no longer be unknown, and adding, “Mr. President, I may have only one eye, but I’m not blind.” Finally, the U.S. conceded that Israel would have veto power over Palestinian attendees. The administration insisted on a united Arab delegation, contrary to Israel’s preference for separate national delegations, But Dayan then asked that Carter create the impression that Israel opposed this condition, and hint that it was imposed.[[51]](#footnote-52)

Carter asked Dayan if he would support a withdrawal to the 1967 borders in exchange for peace, reminding Dayan that he had objected to occupying the Golan Heights. Dayan answered that it was impossible to turn back the clock. “No withdrawals?” asked Carter. “That would be an overstatement,” Dayan retorted. After disagreements, by the end of the evening, the sides had devised a shared U.S.-Israeli working paper, with U.S. compromises on several key points: Palestinian participation but not as a separate delegation; a united Arab delegation that would later split to negotiate bilaterally; and the West Bank and Gaza Strip would be discussed by Israel, Jordan, and the Palestinians without other nations’ involvement.[[52]](#footnote-53)

When they left the room, Dayan deflected journalists’ questions, motioning that they should ask Vance. This was a calculated gesture, making Vance’s statement a joint declaration, with more validity.[[53]](#footnote-54)

Dayan later learned from Sadat, that Syria’s president Assad had insisted on a united Arab delegation; Egypt’s wishes had been similar to Israel’s. In the same conversation, Dayan told Sadat that he tried to stop Carter from inviting the Soviets, warning the administration that Sadat opposed Soviet involvement.[[54]](#footnote-55)

Quandt summarized the long but productive meeting[[55]](#footnote-56) in which Dayan deftly navigated the question of Palestinian attendance between Begin’s outright veto and Carter’s demands. Regarding a separate peace treaty with Egypt, Dayan introduced an important approach: “It’s enough to remove a single wheel from a car to keep it from moving.”[[56]](#footnote-57) Removing Egypt, the largest and most powerful Arab nation from the conflict would nearly eliminate the possibility of war.

Begin, however, was displeased by the Palestinian inclusion and was furious that Dayan presented him with a fait accompli. Carter next wanted a secret meeting between Fahmi and Dayan, and was surprised that Fahmi accepted a public meeting, but wanted Yasser Arafat present. Obviously, Dayan refused. Meanwhile, the government approved the U.S.-Israeli working paper prepared after Dayan’s visit.

Publicly, Dayan cooperated with Carter on the Geneva conference, but he actually focused on a separate agreement with Egypt. Both Israel and Egypt felt Geneva was a trap whose potential damage would outweigh its benefits. They made discrete approaches to each other, avoiding superpower interference.

Sadat was known for bold, dramatic gestures that would completely upend strategic reality and thus create new opportunities for change. He was prepared to take huge risks, albeit calculated and deliberate, and made decisions on the basis of his intuition and unique historical understanding. His historic trip to Jerusalem in November of 1977 to speak to the Knesset broke decades-old psychological barriers, forever changing the face of the Middle East.

In 1979, Dayan asked Sadat when and why he had thought of going to Jerusalem. Sadat answered that after meetings with Nicolae Ceaușescu, the Romanian dictator, the Shah of Iran, and Saudi Arabian leaders seeking bold moves, he decided that only a personal trip to Jerusalem would effect a fundamental change.[[57]](#footnote-58)

Sadat recalls that he made the decision to go to Jerusalem only on the plane from Riyadh to Cairo. When Dayan asked the purpose of the meeting with Touhami, Sadat explained to Dayan that: “I sent Touhami to set the stage for the Geneva conference.” Sadat felt that Geneva was largely ceremonial and would succeed only if everything was previously agreed upon. Once he decided to go to Jerusalem, his mind was made up. On November 9, he announced his plan to travel to the Knesset in Jerusalem to achieve a peace treaty to the Egyptian parliament.

Dayan was initially sceptical about Sadat’s sincerity,[[58]](#footnote-59) but was convinced when Sadat accepted Begin’s invitation to Israel, saying that such a visit would be an event of supreme importance.[[59]](#footnote-60) Interviewed on Israeli radio, Dayan said that if there was any chance of a bilateral Egyptian-Israeli peace treaty being signed, he would support it immediately, before the Geneva conference. Dayan realized that Sadat had abandoned his precondition of Israeli withdrawal from all conquered Egyptian territory, which was a tremendous diplomatic victory for Israel and too good an opportunity to miss. Dayan recognized the immense symbolic importance of Sadat’s visit but remained worried about bridging the enormous gaps between the sides.[[60]](#footnote-61)

November 19, 1977, is a day no Israeli alive then will ever forget. On that day, the leader of the largest and most important Arab nation broke the absolute boycott the Arab nations had imposed on Israel since the moment of its establishment.

Dayan was one of the first Israelis Sadat met after he stepped off the plane. “Don’t worry, Moshe. It will be all right,” said Sadat. It was “as if he had read Dayan’s concerned mind that somehow Sadat was intent on tricking the Israelis.”[[61]](#footnote-62) Israel was gripped by ecstasy, feeling that that peace had already arrived, with just a few annoying details to be resolved. The truth, of course, was that the road to peace was still long, winding, and full of pitfalls.

In the car from the airport to Jerusalem, Dayan asked his Egyptian counterpart, Boutros Boutros-Ghali, if Egypt would be willing to sign a separate peace treaty with Israel. Boutros-Ghali emphatically answered, “No.” Dayan requested that Sadat not mention the PLO in his speech to the Knesset, to which Boutros-Ghali did not respond. But Sadat did indeed avoid mentioning the PLO. According to an Egyptian journalist, the reason was Dayan’s request.[[62]](#footnote-63)

On November 20, Dayan and Sadat met for lunch, with Sadat restating his peace conditions and asking if Israel was interested in discussions of substantive matters. After Dayan replied that Sadat’s crammed schedule lacked time for serious talks, Sadat agreed that the discussion of essential issues would begin immediately and continue after his return to Egypt so that they could come to Geneva already in agreement.[[63]](#footnote-64) Sadat emphasized he would not sign a separate agreement with Israel. The meetings with Dayan were always businesslike, lacking the personal rapport Sadat enjoyed with Ezer Weizman. Dayan’s mention of his three visits to Egypt (in 1956, 1967, and 1973), apparently irritated Sadat, as Dayan symbolized the defeats of 1956 and 1967.[[64]](#footnote-65) Egyptian journalist Mohamed Hassanein Heikal recalled the following anecdote: “After the visit, a Scandinavian ambassador was reported to have asked Dayan: ‘I hope you are going to compensate Sadat for the political risks he took?’ Dayan replied: ‘I don’t see why we should pay a political price for every event. The guests invited themselves to a party on our territory, and we welcomed them. They brought their own food and drink and music. They should be the ones who thank us because we opened our home for their party.’”[[65]](#footnote-66) Whether the story is true or not, it reflects the Egyptian feeling that their leader’s bold act wasn’t being reciprocated and Israel felt that Sadat’s war, reception was enough for now.

The climax of the visit was Sadat’s speech to the Knesset declaring the end of wars and the opening of negotiations between Israel and Egypt. Sadat enumerated his conditions for peace: the full withdrawal and recognition of the Palestinians’ right to a state in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Begin spoke after Sadat, also speaking of peace but in general terms without any specific commitment.

At dinner, Sadat shared his disappointment with Dayan over Begin’s response, but Dayan reassured him that Begin was open to negotiations, which was the most that could be expected at this stage. Exhorting Sadat that perseverance would lead to progress, Dayan assured Sadat that he would not be sorry.[[66]](#footnote-67) After Sadat explained that what he meant by the words “a just peace” was that nations must resolve their differences through talk, not wars, Dayan observed that Egypt was willing to provide “non-belligerence” but not full peace.[[67]](#footnote-68) Dayan’s was optimistic about the final outcome but pessimistic about the process. He realized Israel was facing difficult negotiations, but for now he – as he often did – wrote a limerick about this historic visit, ending with the line, “Did it happen or was it just a dream?”[[68]](#footnote-69)

After returning to Egypt, Sadat strove to keep the momentum going and planned a conference in Ismailia so that all the nations expected at Geneva could hopefully reach agreements beforehand, arriving in Geneva only for the signing ceremony. Sadat also decided on a preliminary conference for senior officials in Cairo in mid-December. In this period, contact with Israeli leaders was conducted through the Touhami-Dayan channel in Morocco. Thus, on December 2, 1977, in Marrakesh, Dayan offered a territorial withdrawal in Sinai in exchange for demilitarization and preservation of the Israeli settlements. Touhami rejected this, insisting on addressing the Palestinian issue in the context of a comprehensive settlement with all the Arab states. Dayan explored Egypt’s willingness to sign a separate peace treaty but Touhami refused to commit. Dayan left Morocco feeling that the negotiations had hit an impasse and that only U.S. involvement would help advance the process. But Carter was still supporting a comprehensive peace, reflected in his November 30 declaration welcoming the Cairo conference and his hopes for the Geneva conference.[[69]](#footnote-70)

To prepare for Cairo, Begin prepared a 21-point plan for Palestinian autonomy rather than the U.S. and Egyptian demands for a full withdrawal. Begin’s proposal included some of Dayan’s ideas, including establishing an elected Palestinian council, abolishing military rule, and letting the inhabitants choose between Jordanian and Israeli citizenship.[[70]](#footnote-71)

On December 14, the Cairo conference began, doomed from the start, as other Arab delegations did not come. Sadat continued insisting on a comprehensive settlement, the return of all Palestinian land, and Palestinian self-determination. With such large gaps, Dayan concluded that any agreement with Egypt would entail considerable Israeli concessions.[[71]](#footnote-72)

On December 24, the sides met again in Ismailia at the senior leadership level. The unproductive meeting ended with both sides concluding that U.S. involvement was needed. Discouraged, Dayan felt that the chances of the talks succeeding were low. Nonetheless, he started to believe that Sadat was serious about wanting peace.[[72]](#footnote-73) Between January and July, both sides focused their efforts on bringing in the United States as mediator, each trying to win the American public opinion and administration support.

In February 1978, Sadat visited the United States, charming the administration, especially Carter, who agreed with Sadat’s position that Israel had to withdraw from all occupied land and that the Jewish settlements were an obstacle to peace.[[73]](#footnote-74) Israel was now cornered, negotiating not only with a former enemy but also with its superpower patron, the United States, whose continued backing was critical to Israel’s existence. While Carter planned more pressure on Israel over withdrawal, borders, and the settlements,[[74]](#footnote-75) the administration came to realize that Sadat was now seeking a bilateral Israeli-Egyptian agreement.[[75]](#footnote-76)

Despite the difficult situation, Israel retained some bargaining chips, including some choice on land it could agree to relinquish; all Egypt had was words. On February 8, the day Sadat left the United States, Dayan arrived and, in face of a public now pro-Sadat rather than pro-Israel, including most of U.S. Jewry, Dayan embarked yet again on a coast-to-coast PR campaign to change public opinion. In a February 16 meeting with Carter, Dayan realized that the administration was more aligned with Egypt and viewed Israel as intransigent. Dayan asked Carter two questions: would Sadat insist that Syria conduct simultaneous talks with Israel, and would Sadat agree to sign an agreement if the Sinai issue were completely resolved and principles about the Palestinians were agreed upon even without Hussein’s involvement? Carter answered no to the first question and was uncertain about the second in light Egypt’s mixed signals.[[76]](#footnote-77)

On March 21, 1978, Begin visited Washington at Carter’s invitation. Carter’s initial attempts to ease Begin’s rigid line with a particularly warm reception were unsuccessful, leading Carter to shift his approach and become more critical. The two also lacked any personal chemistry between them, and Carter viewed Israel as the only obstacle to peace. Indeed, Carter criticized Begin and Israel from the outset.[[77]](#footnote-78) Dayan later wrote: “Carter listened with open impatience to Begin’s detailed positions… He wanted to know what was next.”[[78]](#footnote-79) Carter pressed about an Israeli withdrawal from the West Bank.

The second meeting on March 22 witnessed a harsher Carter blaming Israel for the failure to reach a settlement, convinced about whose fault it was. According to Dayan, Carter spoke quietly but with fury, his words falling on Begin “like blows.” It was clear that Carter was about to hold Israel responsible for the talks’ failure.[[79]](#footnote-80) Dayan then explained Israel’s position to Carter, concluding that he considered “the chances for peace not to be so terrible.”[[80]](#footnote-81) In his memoirs, Carter noted that he decided to pressure Begin in order to determine if it was worthwhile to continue these talks. Carter again read out to Begin six points of Israeli refusal, which U.S. public opinion immediately turned into “Israel’s six noes.” Dayan, noted Carter, tried to save the situation through explanations while maintaining loyalty to Begin, but it was clear to everyone that Begin would not budge.[[81]](#footnote-82) William Quandt described Carter as combative; while it’s true that Carter had planned on pressuring Begin, his anger reflected his genuine frustration with Israel’s prime minister.[[82]](#footnote-83)

Indeed, “Begin left the White House battered and bruised.”[[83]](#footnote-84) The administration’s PR machine immediately began presenting Israel’s stance negatively. Still, Dayan found some positives, including U.S. understanding of Israel’s need for a permanent West Bank Israeli military presence and their agreement that Egypt, Jordan, and Israel together needed to discuss the Palestinian issue. Summing up the limits of U.S. power in this situation, Dayan said: “The United States is a superpower, but to achieve peace between us and the Arabs, it needs our agreement.”[[84]](#footnote-85) However, he also asserted results could be achieved only through U.S. mediation.[[85]](#footnote-86) Israel needed U.S. mediation even if it was clear that the United States clearly favored the other side.

The Carter administration realized that while Dayan was holding a tough line, he was pragmatic and had a knack for finding creative solutions to seemingly insoluble problems. Dayan was therefore invited back to meet with senior administration officials in April 1978. Dayan repeated Israel’s stance: that after a mutually acceptable five-year transition period, the West Bank and Gaza Strip would not automatically become an Arab territory and the sides would have to engage in final-status negotiations. Dayan also raised a new proposal based on the unilateral implementation of self-rule after the five-year period, the end of military rule, and elections. Regarding the Jewish settlements, Dayan repeated his position that Jews should be able to settle anywhere they wished. Dayan expressed his approach to an open, evolving reality: “Let’s wait five years… A new reality will be created (consequent to the implementation of some sort of self-rule) and then we’ll discuss the issue.”[[86]](#footnote-87) The Americans, preferring definitive solutions and finding Dayan’s more open-ended approach unacceptable, demanded a decision on the situation after the five years. This reflected not only the gap between the sides, but their widely divergent strategies and worldviews. Dayan felt that now all they could do was schedule a future decision about the occupied territories in another five years, whereas Sadat wanted to know what would happen at the end of the five years. In light of the deadlock and U.S. support of Egypt’s position, the U.S. administration realized that Dayan’s pragmatism, together with the legal creativity of Israel’s legal advisor Aharon Barak, “[embody] the most concrete hope for real progress on the Israeli side.”[[87]](#footnote-88)

Dayan now lost his patience, claiming that Israel was being treated like a criminal defendant forced to answer never-ending questions from the dock while Egypt was exempt from any demands. When U.S. Ambassador to Israel Sam Lewis came to Dayan in May 1978 with a proposal prepared by the Secretary of State for Dayan’s approval, Dayan asked sarcastically where he was should sign. Highly displeased with the administration’s conduct, Dayan told Lewis he would pass the proposal on to Begin and recommend that he reject it.[[88]](#footnote-89)

On June 18, Israel’s cabinet approved Dayan’s proposal that included agreeing to administrative autonomy in the occupied territories for five years followed by negotiations over the permanent status involving local representatives (not the PLO). The U.S. administration was not pleased with the formulation.

Formal talks were suspended between February and July of 1978, with the Americans trying mediation between the sides to produce at least a joint declaration of principles. After these efforts failed, the Americans decided to reconvene the sides again – this, time, in an ancient castle in Leeds, hoping the relaxed atmosphere would make the participants more conciliatory participants. The main topic of discussion at the July 17–19 conference attended by foreign ministers and staffs was the Palestinians.

Dayan wrote that he had long before suggested to Vance discussing concrete proposals rather than searching for a formulation of general principles.[[89]](#footnote-90) He noted also wrote that the Leeds conference was important although difficult, with the Egyptians submitting a very rigid position demanding immediate Israeli withdrawal from the West Bank without any security arrangements that they had previously agreed upon. To prevent another deadlock, Dayan spontaneously composed a more flexible Israeli proposal, suggesting Israeli openness to territorial compromise and willingness to discuss the status of the West Bank in another five years.[[90]](#footnote-91)

As Dayan had anticipated, the negotiations were tough, to a large extent a dialogue of the deaf.[[91]](#footnote-92) Eventually, Dayan decided to test the Egyptians by exposing their position on the Palestinian issue. He asked them – hypothetically – whether Egypt would sign a separate about the Sinai alone if the other Arab nations abstained from talks? Given your rigid positions, asked Dayan, wouldn’t it make sense for us to rescind our offer to withdraw from Sinai?[[92]](#footnote-93) The hemming and hawing clearly indicated that Egypt wanted peace and would probably agree to a separate treaty and even compromises over the Palestinians. Egypt’s priorities were securing the return of all of Sinai and massive U.S. support. Initially, the Leeds conference was considered a failure, but in hindsight, one can say that the talks were free and direct[[93]](#footnote-94) and even represented a breakthrough in many ways, especially in that the sides started sitting together and understanding each other. However, Carter, not in attendance, felt no progress had been made.[[94]](#footnote-95)

To advance negotiations, Dayan suggested to Vance that they begin discussing “ending the occupation” rather than withdrawal,[[95]](#footnote-96) an idea that helped bridge the gap between Egypt’s interest in ending the occupation and Israel’s proposed self-rule. Vance was positive about the new direction and Dayan offered practical working proposals to Quandt, proposals that Begin would never approve, such as a ban on Jewish settlement in the West Bank Afterward, “Quandt thought of Dayan as a man who was trying to solve problems.”[[96]](#footnote-97) Then Dayan made Quandt a “personal offer,” involving an agreement to discuss West Bank sovereignty at the end of five years of self-rule. Begin was pleased with Dayan’s achievements but not with Dayan’s liberty in making a “personal offer.” Dayan told Begin that they could disagree, but that he needed the freedom to make suggestions especially those clearly presented as his own and not as official government policy, in order to negotiate.[[97]](#footnote-98) Tension between them over this would only increase as the talks continued.

On July 24, Dayan addressed the Knesset, announcing Israel’s readiness to discuss the future of the West Bank and Gaza Strip after five years of self-rule, but its refusal to accept any agreement based on withdrawing to the 1967 borders or transferring land to Arab sovereignty, even with U.S. security guarantees.[[98]](#footnote-99)

On the eve of the Camp David summit, which started on September 4, Dayan held personal meetings with Arab figures and leaders from the West Bank and Gaza Strip to hear their opinions on autonomy. Many, eager to maintain economic ties with Israel, were willing to consider various solutions, including autonomy, but wanted Jordan and the PLO included in any solution. Some supported maintaining the status quo, thinking that, ultimately, the Arab demographic majority west of the Jordan River would determine sovereignty, saying, “Give us Israeli citizenship, and within a decade, the Israeli president will be an Arab.” Dayan enjoyed these meetings, telling his advisor, Elyakim Rubinstein, that he still had a good reputation among the Arabs (if not with the Jewish public).[[99]](#footnote-100)

On July 28, Begin met with Assistant Secretary of State Alfred Atherton and agreed in principle to accept Dayan’s Leeds principles, which Begin emphasized originally represented Dayan’s, and not the official government position on the subject.[[100]](#footnote-101)

**Camp David**

Despite difficult, prolonged negotiations, Dayan’s media statements suggested Egypt’s readiness for peace. However, nine months after Sadat’s visit to deadlocked talks led to American officials scheduling an intensive a working summit of the parties with extensive U.S. involvement for September 5–to 17, 1978. For these talks, Dayan would use all his accrued experience – including his leadership in from Acre Prison,[[101]](#footnote-102) the Jordanian talks during the War of Independence, the talks with France and Great Britain before the Sinai Campaign, the agreement ending the War of Attrition, and the Yom Kippur War separation of forces agreements. This would be the test of his life.

Carter’s initial Middle East policy was ill-articulated and naïve, leading Sadat to establish direct communication with Israel without U.S. knowledge. Now, recognizing the stalemate, Carter realized that only a conference like Camp David could break the impasse. Carter carefully planned the conference: Camp David was secluded, the atmosphere relaxed, and the conduct and dress (including windbreakers emblazoned with the “Camp David” logo) informal, all contributing to a relaxed, resort atmosphere. Carter also set some rigid rules: no leaving the camp or media communication; only the White House Press Secretary would have media contact.[[102]](#footnote-103) Before internet and cellphones, Camp David’s setting allowed for a disconnect from the outside world, which the Americans believed would foster dialogue.

Camp David’s Aracadian setting, a secluded Maryland retreat, provided isolation and opportunities for recreation and informal socializing, creating an unprecedented and amiable atmosphere. Carter oversaw the details of the teams’ discussions, determined not to leave until white smoke rose from the chimney. The stakes were high. Carter made it clear that his personal prestige was on the line.

Dayan has no interest in games or socializing. He could not play ball games because of his limited vision, and he never made a habit of seeking company. He preferred solitary walks along the many paths while thinking quietly, an activity he particularly valued. His walks through the forest enhanced his reputation as a lone wolf.

The absence of the other Arab delegations made Sadat’s goal of a comprehensive peace agreement seem unrealistic. Both sides seem to have known the key to success at Camp David: Egypt conceding on its demand for comprehensive peace and a Palestinian settlement, and signing a separate treaty; Israel conceding the vast majority if not all of the Sinai Peninsula. Sadat was very confident that Israel would be forced to make major concessions. He trusted Carter to manage the confrontation with Begin on his behalf.[[103]](#footnote-104)

In the Camp David discussions, Begin and Dayan’s differences in style and in essence, became quite obvious. Begin was a formalist, a perfectionist, a jurist who examined every word for all its possible nuances, whereas Dayan was flexible, pragmatic, always looking for solutions to problems. For Begin, declarations and expressions of ideals were of paramount importance, while Dayan strove for practical, realistic albeit imperfect arrangements. Often, Begin’s approach was rigid – “take it or leave it,” while Dayan would try to find a way to satisfy both sides. Dayan, having spent more time with Americans than had Begin, knew them better; he understood “American,” not merely English. Consequently, the U.S. delegates viewed Dayan as someone with whom they could speak, unlike the rigid formalist Begin. Aharon Barak described Dayan as never giving in to despair and never getting painted into a corner; on the rare occasion he did, he always found an escape.[[104]](#footnote-105)

Brzeziński had a more nuanced view of Dayan: “Superficially, Dayan seemed like a reasonable man. But he was in some ways more devious than Begin. You knew with Begin more clearly what he wanted.... Dayan was less inclined than Begin to put his cards on the table. There was a strangely elusive quality about Dayan. While I more or less knew what made Begin and Weizman tick, I never had that feeling about Dayan. I always saw him in a fog.” Still, he suggested that “Dayan may have been less inclined to dig in his heels than Begin. One had a feeling that Dayan had an instinctive appreciation of the ambiguities and nuances of the Arabs.”[[105]](#footnote-106)

The negotiations were difficult. Dayan described them as “[t]he most decisive, difficult, and unpleasant part in the peace talks with Egypt,” adding, “There were times that I kept myself from bursting out only by tightening my fists and biting my tongue.”[[106]](#footnote-107) Begin wanted Israel’s proposal introduced first; Dayan disagreed, preferring to let Egypt make the first offer to forestall a U.S. compromise proposal, which would likely be unfavorable to Israel. Begin conceded and Sadat presented his offer to Carter first, which Dayan rejected outright. With Egypt still opposing a separate agreement with Israel, the Americans made their own offer on September 8. On September 10, Carter shared an updated proposal, excluding any reference to the Jewish settlements. But the Americans were disappointed by Israel’s refusal of any West Bank compromise. Dayan indicated that Israel would reconsider the U.S. proposal.

A significant point of contention was an evacuation of Sinai, where Israel had 13 settlements, three airfields, and an oil field providing much of Israel’s energy needs. What could compensate Israel for relinquishing all this? Any Sinai evacuation could prove a precedent, with Brzeziński claiming that if Sinai settlements could be evacuated, so could those in the West Bank.[[107]](#footnote-108)

Carter repeatedly turned to Dayan for help in trying to break through to Begin’s rock-hard opposition. He considered Dayan an ally also seeking a way out of the deadlock and not wedded to old positions.[[108]](#footnote-109)

Dayan’s continuous attempts to understand Sadat were noted by the Americans, who found that he, unlike Begin, was trying to understand the other side. Slater wrote that: “The Americans found Dayan appealing, and used him to soften up Begin, because none of the other [Israelis] puzzled as much about what Anwar Sadat really wanted. Why had he taken a certain position? And what could Israel do to make him change his position? ‘Dayan would not ask in front of Begin,’ noted William Quandt, ‘but would take an American aside, and ask what’s making Sadat tick. Is he serious? Is this a bluff? Is this for domestic consumption?’”[[109]](#footnote-110)

Assistant Secretary of State Alfred Atherton and the U.S. ambassador to Israel, Sam Lewis, both at Camp David, observed that Dayan had the knack for seeing the problem from the other side’s point of view.[[110]](#footnote-111) Lewis said that he “found it easier to talk to Dayan than to the prime minister ‘because Begin would lapse into stereotypes, never having conversed with a West Banker or Gazan until late into his prime ministry. Dayan could change position without any sense of personal ego involved. He was very results-oriented.’ To move Begin with arguments was tough, he only moved when he assessed he had to move. Then…Begin would find his argument, ‘whereas you could sell Dayan an argument. He was intellectually engageable in a way that Begin wasn’t.’”[[111]](#footnote-112) Carter considered Dayan’s assessments of the Palestinians’ positions reliable, sensing that Dayan understood them.[[112]](#footnote-113) Quandt wrote that Carter and Vance started leaning on Dayan, Weizman, and legal advisor Barak to persuade Begin to compromise (Sadat, in contrast, was more flexible than his advisors).[[113]](#footnote-114)

Carter recalled that on the evening of September 10, “We finally adjourned, and I asked Dayan to walk back with me to my cottage. He was a competent and level-headed man. I felt that if either he or Weizman were heading the delegation, we would already have reached agreement. I needed Dayan’s special assistance at this time, but recognized the necessity of his loyalty to the Prime Minister.”[[114]](#footnote-115)

Dayan, wrote Carter, promised him that Begin wanted peace despite the problems. “We talked quietly about the other issues during these early morning hours… Day break was approaching, but it was still dark as Dayan turned to leave. He had difficulty seeing the trees between him and the path, and when he walked into one of them, I was reminded of how seriously his eyesight was impaired. My heart went out to him; I considered him a friend and a proper ally. Because Prime Minister Begin trusted his Foreign Minister and relied on him for advice, this discussion was to be an important and fruitful one.”[[115]](#footnote-116)

Carter wanted Dayan to get Begin to make concessions, as Sadat had already done. Dayan had suggested to Brzeziński to defer the Jewish settlement issue until other issues were resolved, and Brzeziński agreed. Now Dayan tried to persuade Carter get to Sadat to temporarily retain the Israeli settlements. Sadat adamantly refused, now insisting on deploying Egyptian army units in the West Bank and Gaza Strip during the five-year interim period. Now Dayan vehemently disagreed. Carter agreed to Dayan’s request that the Americans formulate two positions papers to help clarify the issues, one on Sinai and the other on the West Bank. The U.S. side began to realize that an Israeli-Egyptian agreement over Sinai could be reached while leaving the West Bank and Gaza Strip issue unresolved temporarily. Carter later wrote: “Later that evening, I met for about two hours with Dayan and Barak… I found Dayan more hopeful, more determined to succeed even than Weizman, who was ordinarily the optimist. He seemed willing to accept failure, however, rather than consider the removal of all Israeli settlers from the Sinai. I wished that Dayan knew Sadat better.”[[116]](#footnote-117)

While Dayan reached understandings with Carter, the other members of the Israeli delegation experienced a sense of failure. On September 12, Begin told them he would wait just another three days for results. Dayan asked for patience, explaining that Carter was preparing a new proposal focusing on Sinai. To apply pressure on the Americans, Dayan told them about the Israeli delegation’s pessimism, mentioning to Ambassador Lewis that, by the way, he was planning on returning to Israel the next day. An appalled Lewis immediately told Carter, and the Americans started moving faster, fearing that the talks could slip through their fingers.[[117]](#footnote-118)

When Begin rejected the Americans position paper the next day, the Americans immediately worked on another version. Scrutinizing each issue, they realized that the primary obstacle was Israel’s Sinai settlements. Carter told Dayan and Barak that Israel must agree to evacuate the settlements in Sinai in order to reach an agreement.[[118]](#footnote-119)

Now Weizman, as Carter had done with Dayan at the summit’s start, pleaded with Sadat to sit with Dayan. But Dayan was sceptical, feeling that Sadat viewed him as a sworn and guileful enemy. Carter advised Dayan to develop trust between the two and not discuss points of disagreement. Dayan then promised to speak with Sadat only about “dates and camels.”[[119]](#footnote-120) Sadat was somewhat confounded by the idea of such a meeting. The two leaders had not developed any particular chemistry and Dayan, unlike Weizman was distant, making no effort to become liked And for Sadat, Dayan symbolized more than any other Israeli in the delegation Egypt’s humiliating defeats of 1956 and 1967. The two men finally met on September 14.

Sadat greeted Dayan graciously, but immediately began pressuring Dayan about Israel’s Sinai settlements. In his book, Dayan joked, “The dates and camels have disappeared.”[[120]](#footnote-121) Sadat offered Israel full diplomatic relations following Israel’s complete withdrawal from Sinai and evacuation of the settlements. Dayan refrained from arguing that evacuation was essential for achieve peace, which Dayan believed Sadat wanted. At a personal level, Dayan reported, the two men developed no rapport.[[121]](#footnote-122) Dayan also noted that Sadat had avoided speaking about the West Bank and Gaza Strip, indicating that Sadat would compromise on that issue in exchange for full Sinai withdrawal. Dayan reported to Israel’s delegation that Sadat’s priority was Sinai and he would accept minor victories about other issues. Nonetheless, Dayan took a hard line, threatening that Israel would remain and Sinai and continue pumping oil if Sadat insisted on all this.

Ibrahim Kamel, Egypt’s Foreign Minister in December of 1977, succeeding Fahmi, later wrote that Dayan’s was a turning point for Sadat, leading him to agree to several concessions. They were considered “a complete surrender”[[122]](#footnote-123) by Kamel, who resigned that weekend before the Camp David Accords were signed.

On September 15, Dayan informed Carter that his meeting with Sadat was not successful, leading Carter to fear that the summit was about to fail. Responding to Carter’ s request, Dayan advised Carter to make a list of the still unresolved issues so that they could become the starting point for the future.[[123]](#footnote-124) Now Dayan became despondent. This was familiar to the Israelis, but new to Carter, now reliant on Dayan’s creative thinking.[[124]](#footnote-125)

Dayan told the Israelis that Carter planned to end the summit on September 17, and would blame Israel for failure. Dayan used this tactic to pressure the Israeli side,[[125]](#footnote-126) threatening that the talks’ failure would be catastrophic for Israel-U.S. relations.[[126]](#footnote-127) Dayan was indifferent to Vance and Brzeziński’s idea of a security treaty between Israel and the United States as part of a comprehensive agreement, assuming they were simply trying to get Israel to make further concessions.[[127]](#footnote-128) When Atherton asked him why he had originally supported building settlements in Sinai, Dayan answered that he never thought Egypt would want peace. But now that it was clear Egypt did want peace, Israel had to evacuate them.[[128]](#footnote-129) Begin, however, was still refusing.

The breakthrough came at the last minute, with Begin twisting the steering wheel at the last second, offering concessions which led to an agreement. In the evening of September 16. Begin joined the meeting with Dayan and Barak. Carter recalled having thanked God for that.[[129]](#footnote-130) Begin agreed to bring the Sinai settlements to the Knesset for decision.

Now an unexpected crisis about Jerusalem’ status came to a head. This looked like a U.S. trap to Israel. Dayan was furious, telling Carter that the Israeli delegation wouldn’t have come to Camp David had it known that this was U.S. policy.[[130]](#footnote-131) He continued irately: “How can you claim that the Western Wall, the Jewish Quarter, Hadassah, the university, Mt. Olives, and Mt. Scopus belong to the Jordanian kingdom? Just because the Jordanians conquered them in 1948, destroyed the synagogues, and killed or captured the civilians who were living there?!”[[131]](#footnote-132) Begin unequivocally refused any Jerusalem compromise. Dayan advised the Americans to ease the pressure. However, things became more complicated when they learned that Sadat wanted to fly an Arab flag[[132]](#footnote-133) over Jerusalem’s al-Aqsa mosque, the third most important site to Islam built over the remnants of the Jewish temple, the holiest location in the world for Jews. Dayan sarcastically quipped: “Maybe Sadat wants an Arab flag above the Knesset building too?,”[[133]](#footnote-134) asking the Americans, “If Jerusalem is not Israel’s capital, what is?”[[134]](#footnote-135) Eventually, a compromise was found involving an exchange of letters that would become part of the agreement, making it clear that Israel objected to any transfer of sovereignty for Jerusalem.

By late afternoon, the agreement was almost complete, the issue of withdrawing to the 2967 borders still contentious. Dayan proposed mentioning this only in the context of any future Israeli-Jordanian talks; he also opposed any freeze on the number of Jewish settlers. Begin and Dayan would not agree to a five-year freeze on settlements in the territories, although Carter believed they had reached an understanding, which Begin denied. Years later, Carter admitted Begin was a decent man; the source of the problem seems to have been a misunderstanding between the sides.[[135]](#footnote-136)

Carter praised Dayan effusively: “I can say that the basic terms of the Camp David accords were hammered out substantially under the influence of Moshe.”[[136]](#footnote-137) In contrast, Dayan reserved his esteem for Begin, writing that his leadership was invaluable and that he was involved in every last detail of the talks.[[137]](#footnote-138)

On September 17, 1978, the three leaders signed the Camp David Accords in a solemn ceremony on the White House lawn, thus beginning a tradition of signing peace treaties between Israel and Arab nations with U.S. mediation: the peace treaty with Egypt signed on March 26, 1979; the First Oslo Agreement with the Palestinians signed on August 20, 1993; the Washington Declaration with Jordan signed on October 26, 1994; and, most recently, the normalization agreements with the UAE and Bahrain signed in September and October 2020. At the press conference at Camp David, Dayan said that this peace treaty was the first stage of full peace treaties with Arab nations.[[138]](#footnote-139)

Camp David actually produced two agreements. The first, concerning Sinai, had Israel evacuating all military and civilians from Sinai with U.S. compensating them by building two new airbases in the Negev. The Sinai Peninsula would become partially demilitarized, with a U.S. forced stationed in a large, fully demilitarized buffer zone, Israel preferring U.S. to U.N. forces. Egypt agreed to establish full diplomatic relations with Israel nine months after the IDF withdrawal from Sinai.

The second agreement was a framework for a comprehensive Middle East peace with a focus on an Israeli-Palestinian agreement. Israel would provide full autonomy – more than Begin wanted – to West Bank and Gaza Strip Palestinians for five years. After that, Israel could still demand sovereignty of parts of the territories. In practice, as Aharon Barak observed, the document left the Palestinian issue open. Unlike the clearly defined agreement about Sinai, the second document was vague. Perhaps its strength lay in this.

Begin and Dayan discussed autonomy, but from different perspectives. Begin viewed the West Bank (or Judea and Samaria as he called the area) as an inseparable part of Israel. Appreciating rapid Palestinian population growth and their opposition to becoming Israeli citizens, Begin proposed a political distinction between the inhabitants and the land, allowing Israel to continue settling the area and maintain control while still granting autonomy, the concept long championed by Dayan had championed for years: autonomy for the people but not for the land. This formula allowed for progress in the talks. Dayan’s autonomy, however, was a far more significant and fundamental idea of autonomy for the Palestinians, leaving only security in Israel’s hands.[[139]](#footnote-140)

Elyakim Rubinstein, an Israeli legal advisor, noted that much of the agreement was left in “a constructive fog,” the vagueness the best they could do and serving the goal.[[140]](#footnote-141) This approach suited Dayan, who wanted such matters left open for future development.

**Signing the Peace Treaty**

The Camp David Accords were an astounding achievement, leading to the peace treaty and requiring significant compromises.

On September 27, 1978, the Knesset approved the agreements, including the evacuation from Sinai, by a large majority. Before the vote, Dayan said, “In the next few weeks, each of us will take stock, will think of himself, of his family, of his children. It will be one of the great moments of the state of Israel, of its self-examination, of its assessment of the future.”[[141]](#footnote-142) However, a November 5 Arab summit meeting criticized the agreements and censured Egypt for betraying the Arab camp, thus pressuring Egypt.

The expectation was to reach a final peace treaty within three months. However, the next conference, scheduled for October 12 at Blair House in Washington, revealed that the timeline was unrealistic due to disagreements about wording. Gradually, the agreement with Egypt became more important than any autonomy discussion.[[142]](#footnote-143) The points of contention were: the connection between Israel’s Sinai withdrawal and the start of full diplomatic relations; U.S. financial and military commitments to Israel and Egypt; compensation to Israel for evacuating the Sinai airfields; Israel’s demand for long-term U.S. oil supply guarantees; and the date on which Israel’s West Bank and Gaza Strip military rule would end.[[143]](#footnote-144)

To speed up negotiations, Carter joined on October 17. Dayan had three concerns: Egypt’s still-standing defense commitments to other Arab countries; the talks with Egypt were linked to the West Bank and Gaza Strip; and Egypt’s reluctance to accept normalization. In a gesture to Carter, Dayan suggested an expedited withdrawal to the interim line in Sinai and the return of al-Arish within two rather than nine months. This pleased Carter, who agreed to speak with the Egyptians about speeding normalization and to consider aid to help finance the Sinai withdrawal. Dayan also sought Egyptian flexibility toward Israel’s requests.[[144]](#footnote-145) Dayan suggested quietly withdrawing from certain areas, allowing the residents to run their own affairs. He also proposed a population exchange between Israeli settlers in the West Bank and Palestinian refugees. Begin didn’t like any of these ideas.[[145]](#footnote-146)

On October 30, Dayan conceded to Vance that Begin’s interpretation of self-rule was very narrow.[[146]](#footnote-147) On November 11, 1978, the administration submitted the final draft of the peace treaty. That evening, Vance and Dayan were still hammering out outstanding issues before Vance and Begin met the next day. While Dayan told Vance he was pleased with the treaty, Vance’s meeting with Begin did not go well.[[147]](#footnote-148) Begin, feeling that Dayan was too eager to compromise, limited Dayan’s authority in the negotiations despite Dayan’s protestations.[[148]](#footnote-149)

In mid-December 1978, Vance pressed Israel for further concessions, a period Israel called “Black December.” Vance, frustrated by Israel, temporarily halted negotiations.[[149]](#footnote-150) But the U.S. administration soon resumed talks. Further talks were held between Dayan and U.S. and Egyptian leaders in Washington and Brussels, the latter leading to a breakthrough, with the Egyptians finally agreeing not to reopen the agreements and to be satisfied with the letters of interpretation alongside them. In February, Dayan and Egypt’s Foreign Minister Mustafa Khalil met to resolve the last disagreements. In February and March, Begin met with Carter, both meetings not pleasant. The leaders, Begin, Carter, and Sadat were again needed to get the talks back on track, and meetings among the three were held in March, with Carter traveling to the Middle East to close the remaining gaps.

Tensions between the sides were at an all-time high: would Carter finally be able to resolve the differences? At a briefing Dayan before Carter’s March visit, Dayan explained that the Americans urgently needed a Middle East success now to compensate for the loss of Iran as an ally following the revolution there the preceding month. He stated that “[the Americans] need Egypt and Egypt needs them,” and that even if Carter did not achieve a peace treaty, he “will not toss away the Middle East; he won’t toss away either Israel or Egypt.” Dayan added that the Americans would make aid to Egypt contingent on signing a peace treaty.[[150]](#footnote-151)

Carter reached Cairo on March 8, 1979 and Israel the next day. Vance presented Dayan with Egypt’s positions on till-open issues: stationing Egyptian liaison officers between Gaza and Egypt, providing oil from Sinai, and the conflict between Egypt’s prior defense treaties with other Arab nations and the peace treaty with Israel. This was critical for Israel, unwilling to find itself in a military conflict with another Arab nation that Egypt would join because of a previous agreement. Although the Israeli cabinet met and approved other concessions, the U.S. administration announced they were not enough. In light of this, Carter’s March 12 meeting with the Israeli government was very tense. Carter supported Egypt’s demand to deploy liaison officers in Gaza, a major stumbling block. The U.S. proposal that Israel buy oil from Egypt via an intermediary clearly indicated that Egypt intended to maintain its commercial embargo on Israel. The meetings ended that evening with the problems still unresolved.

Around 9 p.m., Dayan, with Weizman’s help, persuaded Begin to let him meet with Vance for a last-ditch effort at a solution. Vance described this meeting as the most critical of the entire negotiations process. In his book, Dayan would write that he and Vance had established a relationship based on mutual trust and a common language. Vance did not disagree.[[151]](#footnote-152) Dayan used this meeting to convince Vance to convince Sadat to relinquish his demand for liaison officers in Gaza. Vance agreed in exchange for Israeli flexibility on the oil issue. Dayan assented, but he wanted a U.S. commitment to supply oil to Israel for 20 – not 10 – years and an explicit clause that Israel would be able to buy oil directly from Egypt. This clause had important declarative value as a repeal of the boycott on Israel, even if the oil was actually sold via a U.S. company. Vance noted later that when Dayan made these suggestions, he knew that a breakthrough had just taken place.[[152]](#footnote-153)

Vance then called Carter while Dayan called Begin to get their authorization.[[153]](#footnote-154) Vance was on cloud nine. He would write: “When we shook hands at the elevator, I thanked heaved for Dayan and his patience, imagination, and courage.”[[154]](#footnote-155) Back at his hotel, Dayan told his wife, “The crisis is over.” Carter then traveled to Cairo to present the proposals to Sadat, which Sadat approved immediately. Only then did Begin show the draft of the agreement to his cabinet, which also approved it. On March 20, the Knesset, too, voted in favor of the agreement by a large majority.

The peace treaty between Israel and Egypt was signed on March 26, 1979. Dayan, detesting ceremonies, found the speeches uninspiring, as everything had already been said. Vance wrote that the future held many difficult problems regarding self-rule,[[155]](#footnote-156) as Dayan knew too. After the ceremony, the sides prepared for the autonomy talks, which would be followed by the end of Dayan’s role in the Begin government.

Dayan was a crucial figure for the United States, serving as a buffer between the administration and Begin, helping to understand the Egyptian side, and generating many creative solutions. Carter viewed him as a friend and an ally, and Vance wrote he came to admire Dayan greatly, finding him “to be a brilliant, imaginative, and honest man.”[[156]](#footnote-157) With Sadat, however, Dayan never developed any closeness. Dayan, an introvert who preferred his own company to that of others, wasn’t particularly sociable or friendly, especially in that period. In addition, many of the Egyptians never forgave Dayan, holding him personally responsible for their humiliation in 1956 and 1967. Nonetheless, Sadat and Dayan were able to work together to promote their respective national interests.

Sadat and Dayan also had a shared strategic goal: of weaking the Soviets and oust them from the region while increasing U.S. involvement there. This shared interest helped overcome obstacles between them. Both sides were in fact conducting negotiations over U.S. regional involvement rather than solely bilateral issues, even if this aspect of the talks was not overt.

**The End: A Political Last Will and Testament**

Ezer Weizman, who left the Begin government some seven months after Dayan, recalled:

To those around me, I said that it wouldn’t take long. Dayan pushed Begin to the wall when he stipulated his joining the government on not applying Israeli law to Judea and Samaria. Begin does not forget or forgive; when he is pushed to the wall, he remains silent and remembers.[[157]](#footnote-158)

After the peace treaty was signed, Dayan knew that his days in the Begin government were numbered. He saw two main issues threatening Israel’s existence:: the military conflict with the Arab nations on Israel’s borders and the conflict with the Palestinians for control of Israel. The peace treaty with Egypt had minimized any possibility of an Arab coalition taking on Israel in battle. Without Egypt, the biggest and strongest Arab nation, such a coalition was not on the table. Syria was weak; Jordan did not want to attack Israel and the forces from Iraq and others could only be reinforcements. The remaining issue then, festering like an open wound, was the Palestinians conflict. Dayan hoped he could play a role in finding a solution to the problem. Even after his ouster from Begin’s government, the Palestinian question became Dayan’s most pressing preoccupation until his death.

Dayan and Begin disagreed about Judea and Samaria. Dayan opposed both annexation and withdrawal, whereas Begin wanted full Israeli sovereignty over the occupied areas. Begin preferred Interior Minister Yosef Burg, a member of the Mafdal party whose position was closer to Begin’s, to head Israel’s negotiating team. Dayan refused to be a member of a team he could not steer according to his own worldview. He waited four months to see how the talks developed. When he realized they would not result in anything concrete, he decided to leave the government.

Dayan developed his own idea for Palestinian autonomy –“unilateral autonomy” – assuming there was no chance for a final agreement with the Palestinians. He sought to devise a reality both sides could accept until they could, at some unknown future time, reach a final political settlement that would be mutually satisfactory. Dayan’s plan was to reduce Israeli involvement in the civil administration in terms of running the inhabitants’ day-to-day lives and the possibility of shared sovereignty between Israel and Jordan or a situation of no formal sovereignty for some interim period. Zalman Shoval, then Dayan’s advisor in the Foreign Ministry wrote: “As a supremely practical person, Dayan felt that it was better to create an interim situation that would improve life for both sides without determining the final status than to insist on a certain final status that was impossible under existing circumstances.”[[158]](#footnote-159) Dayan, opposed to establishing a Palestinian state, thought his plan could prevent it.

Begin did not try to prevent Dayan’s resignation. He no longer needed him. Dayan had helped the Begin government achieve worldwide recognition and spearheaded the peace process with Egypt. Now, Menachem Begin, a Nobel Peace Prize recipient, a statesman of international repute himself, borne aloft on a wave of support at home, no longer needed Dayan. Perhaps even the contrary; Dayan was now, to some extent, a liability.

Dayan resigned on October 2, 1979. Begin was well aware that Dayan had mounting reservations about how ministers were speaking about the talks with Egypt, land appropriations, and establishing new Jewish settlements in Palestinian-populated areas.[[159]](#footnote-160) He told Begin, “The talks being held right now are a waste of time… I don’t get to deal with issues that matter to me, and I end up dealing with issues that don’t matter to me. I did not join the government to meet with foreign ambassadors and go to cocktail parties.”[[160]](#footnote-161) Begin expression of regret over Dayan’s resignation letter seems to have been mere lip service. As the old adage goes, “In politics, there are no friends.”[[161]](#footnote-162)

On October 23, Dayan left the government. Now a one-person faction in the Knesset, he sat in the last row next to former extremist Likud members who had left their party after the peace agreement with Egypt. He found no support from Labor due to his perceived political betrayal in joining Begin.

Dayan was also very ill, suffering from cancer and heart problems. He had difficulty speaking and was nearly blind, with his vision in one eye deteriorating It seems that this time, his political career had come to an end.

Acutely aware of his situation, Dayan had no immediate plans for another political move, and assumed that these would be his last days in the Knesset and he intended for them to pass quietly. He devoted his time to writing about the peace process; the eventual book, *Halanetsah tokhal herev* (*Shall The Sword Devour Forever*), was published before his death.[[162]](#footnote-163) Ha also started gathering materials for a book about Jewish heroes from Bar Kochba to Yoni Netanyahu.[[163]](#footnote-164) Still, Dayan was not ready to leave the political arena altogether because the Palestinian issue and the future of the West Bank continued to preoccupy him. treaty’s suggestedrelying

At the start of Dayan’s tenure as foreign minister, Zalman Shoval, then a new Likud MK and Dayan supporter, established a forum called Habama (the podium or stage) to serve as a platform for Dayan’s “political and social inquir[ies].”[[164]](#footnote-166) Its first conference, on September 10, 1977, had been immensely successful, with Dayan, the keynote speaker, swept attendees off their feet and enthused them with his brilliant analyses and proposals for action.[[165]](#footnote-167) Habama would invite political figures, academics, and business people to express their opinion, with Dayan always the central axis at these meetings. Here, Dayan could articulate his ideas and reach the public through Habama’s press publications. Dayan used this serious and thoughtful forum as a place “to toss around ideas and get responses and feedback,” and was grateful for criticism and debate.[[166]](#footnote-168) During the talks with Egypt, the forum had helped Dayan articulate his thoughts and hone his positions on the key issues, including the withdrawal from Sinai and Palestinian autonomy.

At Habama conferences, Dayan addressed many topics, but the center of it all was Israel’s relations with the Arabs. Dayan’s heaviest worry was Israel’s control of a million Arabs, which had already lasted 10 years. He felt military rule over the occupied territories should be abolished and unilateral autonomy implemented. This was a revolutionary position and a departure for Dayan: after the Six-Day War, he had been the one to persuade the Israeli public that it was possible to maintain military rule over civilians (albeit a “soft” or “enlightened” rule). Now, having resigned from Begin’s government, he was trying to convince others that such rule was unsustainable.[[167]](#footnote-170)

Dayan proposed a unilateral autonomy plan, involving shifting Israel’s responsibility and authority for many issues – from education to infrastructure – to the Palestinians, while leaving responsibility and authority for security issues in Israel’s hands. His complex plan baffled most of the public, eager for simpler solutions.[[168]](#footnote-171)

Dayan’s autonomy proposal hinged on four principles. First, rejection of any radical solution of either annexation or withdrawal, separating the issues of sovereignty and the military government, and developing some formula for joint civilian rule that would lead to a gradual process of peaceful coexistence. Second, favoring partial and pragmatic arrangements’ cumulative power over a comprehensive settlement. Third, no Palestinian state, but recognizing the need to address the refugee problem. Last, unilateral autonomy, preventing potentially dangerous agreements over the future of the occupied territories involving another Arab nation. Dayan never formulated a fully operational plan, perhaps because he felt it was a project in development. For Dayan, this was the right choice for Israel, because continuing the status quo was only damaging Israel.[[169]](#footnote-172)

Dayan distinguished between territories occupied beyond the Green Line, such as the Gaza Strip and Sinai, and the West Bank. Like Begin, he viewed Judea and Samaria as part of the historic homeland of the Jewish people and supported Jewish settlement there. But, unlike the Israeli right, Dayan felt it was necessary to consider the rights of the Palestinian inhabitants. He therefore opposed both annexation and withdrawal, and instead supported Israel lifting its military rule while maintaining a security presence. Dayan thought Jewish settlement in the West Bank could eventually could lead to peaceful coexistence through shared authority and joint economic development, but should be planned and built on state land only. True to his worldview, he saw no reason to define the final arrangement now; instead, the right direction would be found through trial and error.[[170]](#footnote-173) For Dayan, unlike prevailing opinion, the refugee problem and managing Palestinian civilian life in the territories needed to be addressed before discussing any state-like framework in which the Palestinians could express their national aspirations. Dayan cautioned that establishing a Palestinian state before settling the issue of the refugees where they lived would be disastrous for Israel.[[171]](#footnote-174)

Although initially declining to run for the Knesset after Begin announced early elections on June 30, 1981, Dayan formed a new political party – Telem – due to pressure from the Habama forum. Encouraged by favorable opinion polls, Dayan believed he could return to the Knesset as the head of a mid-sized party, with chances for serving as a powerful swing factor. The first polls showed the party getting 21 or even 23 seats of the Knesset’s 120.[[172]](#footnote-175) Dayan wrote the party’s foreign affairs and security platform, which supported the idea of Palestinian autonomy.

Telem’s platform focused on relations with the Arabs. It proposed a five-year interim period, as discussed at Camp David, with Israel military rule there and Jewish settlement on state land only, followed by talks with Jordanian and West Bank representatives. If after the five-year period, West Bank Arabs refused to negotiate, Israel would impose unilateral autonomy to the extent possible. The Palestinian refugee problem would be resolved where the refugees were residing(most in the Arab countries surrounding Israel, with Israel playing an active role. Jerusalem would remain Israel’s capital with the holy sites administered by the various religions and sects. Israel would also strive for suitable arrangements with Christians and Muslims.[[173]](#footnote-176)

However, Dayan’s campaign faltered. On the campaign trail, he looked old and tired and his rallies were poorly attended. In the end, Telem won only two Knesset seats, leaving it with minimal influence at best. At party headquarters, Dayan spoke, assuming sole responsibility for the outcome.[[174]](#footnote-177)

Shortly after the election, Dayan’s supporters made a last attempt to place Dayan in a position of power, arranging a meeting with Begin and a reluctant Dayan. Dayan tried to convince Begin of the merits of unilateral autonomy, but Begin’s response was cutting: “Mr. Dayan, I did not accept your proposal when you were my foreign minister. Why would you expect me to do so now?” A weakened Dayan answered: “If you do not institute autonomy now, you are later destined to establish a Palestinian state with your own two hands.” The meeting was obviously over.[[175]](#footnote-178) Thereafter, Dayan’s health deteriorated quickly. On October 6, Sadat was assassinated by the Islamic Jihad in Egypt. The same day, Dayan published his last opinion piece for the daily press warning against abandoning the peace treaty after Sadat’s death.[[176]](#footnote-179)

On his deathbed, Dayan was visited by several close confidants and friends who had been by his side at different points in his career, sharing his political will with some. Rubinstein recalled that Dayan told him to be extremely vigilant in terms of the peace with Egypt and Israel’s relations with the United States.[[177]](#footnote-180) Dayan was worried that the peace with Egypt might be affected by an Islamic revolution after Sadat’s death, similar to what had happened in Iran (which happened when the Muslim Brotherhood seized power between June 2012 and July 2013). Dayan’s request was to strengthen normalization and peace, and he emphasized the importance of maintaining security arrangements and expanding U.S. involvement.[[178]](#footnote-181)

On October 16, 1981, just 10 days after Sadat’s assassination, Moshe Dayan, age 66, died in the hospital of a heart attack after dedicating most of his adult life to the service of his beloved country.

APPENDIX

**Dayan and Israel’s Nuclear Power**

Israel’s nuclear policy was pivotal in its first four decades of existence. It is believed that Israel has nuclear capabilities, having crossed the nuclear threshold around 1966, [[179]](#footnote-182) although Israel has never signed the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty (NPT). To date, all Israeli governments have adopted a policy of nuclear ambiguity. Nonetheless, the factor of Israel’s possible nuclear capabilities has resonated powerfully throughout the Middle East and the world. possibilityeassumingThere is no certain answer to these questions.

We can assume that Moshe Dayan, who had a significant influence on important decisions between the 1950s and late 1970s, helped shape this policy.

In the absence of any accessible documentation about Israel’s nuclear activity, this overview of the nuclear issue is based mostly on second- and third-hand testimony and various hypotheses, circumstantial evidence, and foreign press publications, which in turn are also derived from sources whose reliability is unclear. Therefore, everything stated on the subject must be evaluated very carefully. However, given the importance and impact of the topic, it should be addressed to the extent possible.

Ben-Gurion reportedly concluded that Israel needed nuclear capabilities as early as the War of Independence. The Jewish people, having been decimated in the Holocaust, and its refugees in Israel now facing menacing threats from Arab enemies, may have feared annihilation. A nuclear program was also seen as a way to help Israel leap to the forefront of scientific knowledge.[[180]](#footnote-183) Ben-Gurion realized that implementing this would require the help of a nuclear power. However, key figures, such as Defense Minister Pinchas Lavon and Moshe Sharret opposed the project and feared U.S. disapproval.[[181]](#footnote-184)

Cooperation with France in the early 1950s also included the nuclear program, spearheaded by Shimon Peres, the young, eager Defense Ministry director general. France’s military aid, including nuclear assistance with nuclear arms, apparently influenced Ben-Gurion’s decision to join the British-French coalition in the Sinai Campaign. France’s officially promised to arm Israel with conventional arms, but unofficially, agreed to help build a nuclear reactor.[[182]](#footnote-185)

In September 1956, a month Peres secured France’s commitment to provide a small nuclear reactor for research purposes. At the Sèvres conference a month later, Peres, according to his own testimony, met with French Prime Minister Guy Mollet and Defense Minister Maurice Bourgès-Maunoury, with Ben-Gurion’s knowledge and blessing. The French agreed to build a nuclear reactor in Israel. By September 1957, France supplied Israel with a nuclear reactor twice as large as initially promised.[[183]](#footnote-187) The nature of the construction was a closely guarded secret; as far as the public knew, the project involved building a textile manufacturing plant.

At this early stage, Dayan, while apparently aware of the nuclear program, had no active part in it, expressing neither enthusiasm nor reservations. Although interested in Dayan’s thoughts, Ben-Gurion did not ask for a formal IDF opinion, concerned about potential competition for budgets for conventional weapons and the nuclear project.[[184]](#footnote-188) Like many others in the late 1950s, Dayan also doubted the reactor’s technological feasibility and distrusted the French. The heads of RAFAEL (Hebrew acronym of “Authority for the Development of Armaments”) recalled that when touring the research institute as Chief of Staff, Dayan told them, “You know, I don’t believe in all this, but you invited me so I came.”[[185]](#footnote-189) Nevertheless, there is evidence that he played a role in convincing the French to provide Israel with the necessary equipment to build the reactor in Dimona in exchange for Israel providing the French with the results of its nuclear research, the French being eager to attain nuclear knowledge that its other Western allies were not eager to share with it.[[186]](#footnote-190) In short, while Dayan’s position and level of involvement remain uncertain, his strong ties with the French, his loyalty to Ben-Gurion, and his cooperation with Peres, make his participation likely, even if, in those years, he was not convinced of the project’s value.

In 1962, Dayan, now an ex-military government minister, became an enthusiastic supporter of the nuclear program. He, together with Peres, called for a massive investment in the nuclear program, even at the expense of IDF budgets,[[187]](#footnote-191) believing that nuclear capabilities could stop the conventional arms race, which Israel was destined to lose. Furthermore, every round of war would be more complex and costly than the previous one, and Israel could not afford to lose even a single confrontation. Dayan therefore thought that only nuclear potential could give Israel the deterrence needed to weaken the Arabs’ motivation to go to war. Dayan and Peres claimed that in the absence of any superpower guarantee of Israel’s security, Israel had to create its own guarantees.[[188]](#footnote-192) Israel Galili and Yigal Allon opposed introducing nuclear weapons into the Middle East, preferring that Israel ensure that it could keep up with its enemies technological capabilities.[[189]](#footnote-193) Ben-Gurion and Peres, however, wanted nuclear capability at almost any cost.

In 1961, Ben-Gurion promised President Kennedy that U.S. representatives could inspect the Dimona reactor. In the summer of 1962, Kennedy decided to sell defensive Israel Hawk surface-to-air missiles to Israel, the first U.S. weapons trade with Israel, hoping this would signal a U.S. commitment to Israel’s security and discourage Israel’s nuclear ambitions.[[190]](#footnote-194) The U.S. administration, worried that Israel’s nuclear program would escalate extremism and push the Arabs farther into the Soviet orbit, pressured Ben-Gurion for international inspection of the Dimona reactor. The compromise was Israel’s agreement to U.S. supervision.[[191]](#footnote-195)

When Levi Eshkol became prime minister following Ben-Gurion’s resignation in 1963, he had to meet his predecessor’s commitment to the United States. it. The project faced both external opposition, including U.S. pressure, and internal resistance from several ministers, including Sapir, who felt Israel could not afford it.[[192]](#footnote-196) To examine possible methods of action, Eshkol called a meeting of senior personnel to consult with them about it. Dayan’s assessment was unequivocal:

The most important thing, security-wise, that could change our balance of power is the finished product out of Dimona. There is no substitute for it, there is no other trick…. as long as there is a chance of reaching it, we have to... do everything to reach it...[[193]](#footnote-197)

Israel’s policy during this period was to develop nuclear potential while avoiding direct confrontation with the United States on the subject and encourage the Americans to provide conventional weapons. This led to the policy of ambiguity as a response to some of the issues that emerged during that period.[[194]](#footnote-198)

On March 10, 1965, Prime Minister Eshkol promised President Johnson that: “Israel will not be the first to bring nuclear weapons into the Israeli-Arab region.”[[195]](#footnote-199) Nonetheless, the United States had its doubts about Israel keeping this obligation. Dayan criticized Eshkol’s decision to allow U.S. inspection of Dimona, writing that by agreeing to such inspection, Eshkol had admitted that Israel possessed the nuclear option.[[196]](#footnote-200) However, Eshkol, while allowing inspections to take place, cleverly showed the U.S. inspectors only what he wanted them to see and they didn’t press for more.

By the Six-Day War, Israel had not yet developed a close security relationship with the United States, one later dubbed as “special,” and the nation had not yet been promised U.S. security aid. In the tense pre-war period, an isolated Israel worried that the Egyptians first strike could hit the Dimona reactor in the early stages of the campaign. By June 2, following Dayan’s appointment as defense minister, cabinet members were leaning towards a first strike, partially because of two aerial photo sorties the Egyptians had sent over Dimona that the IDF failed to intercept.[[197]](#footnote-201) At the height of the tensions, Peres reportedly suggested a controlled nuclear explosion at an isolated installation that would cause no damage but would demonstrate Israel’s capabilities and serve as a deterrent.[[198]](#footnote-202)

After the Six-Day War, the security roles of prime minister and defense minister were redivided. The prime minister remained in charge of nuclear matters but was no longer solely responsible. In practice, many issues were handed off to Tsvi Tsur’s management at the Ministry of Defense.[[199]](#footnote-203) Through this division of responsibility, Dayan managed to advance Israel’s nuclear program even further than what the prime minister wanted, and Israel reportedly crossed the nuclear threshold at some point between 1967 and 1969, becoming a fully-fledged nuclear nation.[[200]](#footnote-204)

A further disagreement emerged between Dayan and Eshkol over whether Israel should openly use its nuclear potential as a deterrent Dayan apparently advocated for transparency while Eshkol wanted to continue the policy of ambiguity. Israel’s pre-war crisis emphasized that Israel could not rely on superpower security guarantees and that it had to manage its security concerns on its own. Dayan, canny about the media, was apparently behind Eshkol’s decision to have a member of Israel’s Atomic Energy Commission give public media interviews. Dayan likely used these interviews to convey changes he felt Israel had to make in its nuclear strategy, although there is no mention of the issue in any official documents.[[201]](#footnote-205) Dayan may also have sought to increase U.S. involvement in the Middle East given the Soviets’ growing influence in the region.

In March 1969, when Golda Meir became prime minister, some measures were taken keep control of Israel’s nuclear program with the prime minister. To regulate the division of authority between the prime minister and defense minister, a confidential document entitled “The Constitution” was prepared with Meir and Dayan’s permission The document was confidential, but based on what has been published, an integral part of it clarifies the supremacy the prime minister has on the subject and the Defense Ministry’s authority.[[202]](#footnote-206)

At the end of the 1960s, Dayan was concerned about the growing Soviet threat in the region. Understanding that Israel could not face down the superpower alone, Dayan saw nuclear potential as Israel’s only plausible deterrent against the Soviets. Israel’s decision makers hoped Israel’s nuclear capability would spur the United States to take a more active role in the region or at least try to prevent confrontation between Israel and the Soviet Union.[[203]](#footnote-207)

Israel’s nuclear potential possibly helped increase U.S. involvement and ensure its commitment to Israel’s security. In the late 1960s, talks aimed at signing the NPT were making progress, and Israel had to decide whether to sign. At a meeting with Meir and Israel’s security leaders at Dimona, Dayan apparently opposed signing the treaty, emphasizing that Israel’s enemies were cruel dictators. According to testimony, immediately after Dayan’s remarks, Meir decided not to join the NPT[[204]](#footnote-208) that was signed in 1968 and went into effect in 1970. At this point, the United States preferred that Israel keep its nuclear activities confidential and not adopt open nuclear deterrence. Israel, having promised the United Sates it would not be the first to bring nuclear weapons into the region, also promised not to reveal its existence publicly.[[205]](#footnote-209) Nixon’s administration, led by National Security Advisor Henry Kissinger, decided not to oppose its allies, including France, acquiring nuclear capabilities, assuming that, if ever used, nuclear power would be aimed against the Soviet Union. In the Middle East, the U.S. aligned with Israel facing the Soviet client states of Egypt and Syria. Wanting to avoid criticism for not having forced Israel to sign the NPT, the United States halted inspections of the Dimona reactor in 1969, leaving Israel with a nuclear infrastructure without any international inspection routine. However, the United States demanded that Israel never declare its nuclear capabilities out in the open.[[206]](#footnote-210) Thus, political necessity all but dictated Israel’s policy of ambiguity.

During Dayan’s term, Israel reportedly transitioned from having nuclear potential to producing a small nuclear arsenal. More than any other event, the French embargo on arms sales to Israel after the Six-Day War and the Soviet rush to rearm the Arabs exposed Israel’s fragility. Moreover, the War of Attrition placed Israel in direct conflict with the Soviets. Dayan, fearing that Israel might get caught in an extended war of exhaustion it could never win because of its material inferiority, articulated a new formula for Israel’s policy he called “the bomb in the basement,” meaning manufacturing nuclear weapons without publicly declaring their existence. This avoided international pressure while signaling Israel’s very palpable it had nuclear bomb capabilities.[[207]](#footnote-211)

There is some evidence, based on hearsay, not unequivocal proof, that in the Yom Kippur War, when IDF’s battlefield situation seemed disastrous, Dayan, for the first time, raised the possibility of using nuclear weapons.[[208]](#footnote-212) Arnan (“Sinai”) Azaryahu, an aide to Minister Israel Galili, provides key evidence of the political-security Kitchen Cabinet meeting that took place at noon on October 7, 1973. Dayan had just returned to Tel Aviv after visiting both fronts, where he heard nerve-wracking reports on Egyptian and Syrian troops surging ahead. At the end of the official meeting, after Elazar had left the room and no more minutes were being taken, Dayan suggested considering a nuclear demonstration of capability to deter the enemy but not use it on the enemy. Prior to the meeting, Dayan invited the head of the Atomic Energy Commission, Shalhevet Freier, to attend to explain the feasible nuclear options if the need arose. Freier waited outside the conference room to be called to explain the implications. Yigal Allon and Israel Galili objected, saying there was no reason to discuss those questions at the current time. Meir agreed and the topic was not discussed. This is apparently the only recorded evidence of Dayan referring to nuclear weapons during the war.[[209]](#footnote-213)

According to historian Avner Cohen, Azaryahu’s testimony strengthens Israel’s image as a mature, responsible state, even in the most difficult hours of the Yom Kippur War. Azaryahu’s description provides a much more sober view than that presented in various publications on Israel’s willingness to use nuclear weapons in the first days of the Yom Kippur War. For example, according to journalist Michael Karpin, Dayan ordered Israel’s warplanes fitted with nuclear bombs and missiles with nuclear warheads and even had the IAF provided with specific targets to attack should the situation rise to the level of an existential threat to Israel.[[210]](#footnote-214) Journalist Seymour Hershdescribed a Kitchen Cabinet discussion on October 9 following Israel’s failed October 8 counterattack, purportedly attended by Freier, who briefed the ministers. According to Hersh, the nuclear weapons option was raised primarily to pressure the United States to hurry to Israel’s side.[[211]](#footnote-215) But the description is quite improbable because on October 9, the immediate existential threat had passed.

Post-war, Dayan again called for Israel to openly declare itself a nuclear power for several reasons. First, paradoxically, it could help advance a territorial compromise with Egypt and Syria and a process of reconciliation and peace as Israel would feel safe while the Arabs would know that it was impossible to eradicate it. Second, such a declaration would make it possible to cut defense spending and strengthen the nation’s economy. Dayan was very concerned about a conventional arms race, which Israel would never be able to win.[[212]](#footnote-216) Yitzhak Rabin, then prime minister, was convinced that Dayan’s proposal was too risky, and therefore ordered continuing the policy of ambiguity.[[213]](#footnote-217)

Towards the end of his political road, Dayan debated the issue of Israel’s nuclear policy in Telem, his political party, arguing that the nuclear option would serve as a safe deterrent umbrella for Israel and help it avoid the conventional arms race and take further risks for peace. The combination of deterrence and a hand stretched out in peace would guarantee the nation’s existence.

Dayan’s claim seemed justified when, in the aftermath of the Yom Kippur War trauma, and following Dayan’s death, Israel built the largest military it ever had.[[214]](#footnote-218) However, the Israeli economy was incapable of sustaining such a large army, and by the mid-1980s, the costs contributed to a period of hyper-inflation. The economic recovery plan then \included serious defense cutbacks. But Dayan could not have foreseen the tremendous changes of the 1990s and early 2000s: the end of the Cold War; the geopolitical changes in the Middle East; the development of technology; and the revolution in military matters. As a result, Israel no longer faced a coalition of Arab armies. Moreover, the major threats to Israel now come from missile and rockets operated by terrorist organizations aiming at the nation’s civilian rear. Moreover, since the 1980s, Israel has been transformed from a poor state to a high-tech superpower with a healthy GDP. While Dayan’s concerns then may be outdated today, they could resurface if Iran becomes a nuclear state.

1. Moshe Dayan, *Halanetsah tokhal herev* (Hebrew) *[Shall the Sword Devour Forever]*, Edanim Publishers, Yedioth Aharonot, Jerusalem, 1981, p.17. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Slater, 1991, p. 385. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Cited in Arieh Naor’s essay, “Levi Eshkol’s Ouster from the Defense Ministry and the Six-Day War Outcomes: Anatomy of a Savior Complex” (Hebrew), in: Devora Cohen and Moshe Lisk (eds.) *Tsomtei hakhra’ot ufarshiyot mafte’ah beyisrael* (Hebrew) [*Nodes of Decision and Key Affairs in Israel*], The Ben-Gurion Institute for the Study of Israel and Zionism, Ben-Gurion University of the Negev, 2010, p. 485 [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Slater, 1991, p. 386. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Stein, 2003, p. 218. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Ibid, p. 217. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Slater, 1991, p. 387; Mati Golan, *Peres* (Hebrew), Schocken, Jerusalem and Tel Aviv, 1982, p. 182. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Erez and Kfir, 1981, p. 41. Yoni was the older brother of Israe's Prime Minister Benjamin (Bibi) Netanyahu. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. From the docudrama *Sabena* by Rani Sa’ar (director), Nati Diner, and Moshe Zonder. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. Barnoach-Matalon, 2009, p. 226. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. For more on the Maalot attack, see: Dayan, 1976, pp 719–723. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. Stein, 2003, p. 228. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. Ibid, p. 233; William B. Quandt, *Camp David: Peacemaking and Politics* (Brookings, 1986) in Hebrew translation, Keter, Jerusalem, 1988, p. 62. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. Stein, 2003, p. 236. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. Ibid, p. 237. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. Slater, p. 389. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. At the time, it was illegal for Israeli citizens to hold bank accounts overseas, barring exceptional circumstances; the account in question had been opened while Yitzhak Rabin was the Israeli ambassador to the United States (1968–1973) and, according to procedure, it should have been closed once he left that post. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. Slater, 1991, p. 393: “Dayan had asked for expert advice and found that there was ample precedent for keeping his seat. Israel Kargman, the former chairman of the Knesset Finance Committee, called Dayan’s defection an act of political prostitution and rank treachery.” [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. Ibid, p. 391. [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. Yoel Marcus, *Camp David: Hapetah leshalom* (Hebrew) [*Camp David: The Start of Peace*], Schocken, Jerusalem and Tel Aviv, 1979, p. 28. [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
21. Gerald M. Steinberg and Ziv Rubinovitz, *Menachem Begin and the Israel-Egypt Peace Process: Between Ideology and Political Realism*, Indiana University Press, Bloomington, 2019, pp. 59–60. [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
22. Marcus, 1979, p. 30. [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
23. Ezer Weizman, *Hakrav al hashalom* (Hebrew) [*The Battle for Peace*], Idanim, 1981, p. 261. [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
24. Elyakim Rubinstein, “Moshe Dayan and the Peace Process” (Hebrew), in *Moshe Dayan: Bein estrateg lemedina’ee* [*Moshe Dayan: Between Strategist and Statesman*] published in honor of the 22th anniversary of the death of Lt. Gen. Moshe Dayan, *Iyunim bevitahon leumi* (Hebrew) [*National Security Studies*], Issue 5 (2003), National Security Studies Center, University of Haifa, Haifa, p. 97. [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
25. Ibid, p. 100. [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
26. Ibid, p. 97–104. [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
27. Dayan, 1981, p. 18. [↑](#footnote-ref-28)
28. Ibid, p. 19. [↑](#footnote-ref-29)
29. Elyakim Rubinstein, *Darkei shalom* (Hebrew) [*Ways of Peace*], Defense Ministry Publishing, Tel Aviv, 1992, p. 12. [↑](#footnote-ref-30)
30. Dayan, 1981, p. 24. [↑](#footnote-ref-31)
31. Dayan, 1981, p. 26. [↑](#footnote-ref-32)
32. Steinberg and Rubinovitz, 2019, p. 63. [↑](#footnote-ref-33)
33. Ibid, p. 70. [↑](#footnote-ref-34)
34. Quandt, 1988, p. 88. [↑](#footnote-ref-35)
35. Steinberg and Rubinovitz, 2019, p. 70. [↑](#footnote-ref-36)
36. Ibid, p. 74. [↑](#footnote-ref-37)
37. Slater, 1991, p. 397. [↑](#footnote-ref-38)
38. Mohamed Heikal, *Secret Channels: The Inside Story of Arab-Israeli Peace Negotiations*, HarperCollins Publishers, New York, 1996, p. 262; Steinberg and Rubinovitz, 2019, p. 74. Stein claims that he examined all existing sources and found no trace that Dayan promised the Sinai Peninsula to Touhami, in: Stein, 2003, p. 248. [↑](#footnote-ref-39)
39. Quandt, 1988, p. 102. [↑](#footnote-ref-40)
40. Stein, 2003, p. 146. [↑](#footnote-ref-41)
41. Quandt, 1988, p. 63; Stein, 2003, p. 246. [↑](#footnote-ref-42)
42. Steinberg and Rubinovitz, 2019, p. 76. [↑](#footnote-ref-43)
43. Slater, p. 399 [↑](#footnote-ref-44)
44. Stein, 2003, p. 241. [↑](#footnote-ref-45)
45. Ibid, p. 254. [↑](#footnote-ref-46)
46. Quandt, 1988, p. 105. [↑](#footnote-ref-47)
47. Jimmy Carter, *Keeping Faith: Memoirs of a President*, University of Arkansas, University of Arkansas Press, 1995, p. 300. [↑](#footnote-ref-48)
48. Slater, 1991, p. 400. [↑](#footnote-ref-49)
49. Stein, 2003, p. 259. [↑](#footnote-ref-50)
50. Quandt, 1988, p. 115. [↑](#footnote-ref-51)
51. Slater, 1991, p. 400. [↑](#footnote-ref-52)
52. Ibid, p. 401. [↑](#footnote-ref-53)
53. Ibid, pp. 259–260. [↑](#footnote-ref-54)
54. Dayan, 1981, p. 88. [↑](#footnote-ref-55)
55. Quandt, 1988, p. 118. [↑](#footnote-ref-56)
56. Ibid, p. 116. [↑](#footnote-ref-57)
57. Dayan, 1981, p. 87. [↑](#footnote-ref-58)
58. [↑](#footnote-ref-59)
59. Slater, 1991, p. 403. Ibid, p. 403. [↑](#footnote-ref-60)
60. Stein, 2003, p. 265. [↑](#footnote-ref-61)
61. Slater, 1991, p. 404. [↑](#footnote-ref-62)
62. Heikal, 1996, p. 263. [↑](#footnote-ref-63)
63. Dayan, 1981, p. 82. [↑](#footnote-ref-64)
64. Slater, 1991, p. 405. [↑](#footnote-ref-65)
65. Heikal, 1996, p. 265. [↑](#footnote-ref-66)
66. Dayan, 1981, pp. 84–85. [↑](#footnote-ref-67)
67. Steinberg and Rubinovitz, 2019, p. 78. [↑](#footnote-ref-68)
68. *Jerusalem Post*, November 13, 1987, in: Slater, 1991, p. 406. [↑](#footnote-ref-69)
69. Quandt, 1988, p. 135. [↑](#footnote-ref-70)
70. Steinberg and Rubinovitz, 2019, p. 104. [↑](#footnote-ref-71)
71. Dayan, 1981, p. 96. [↑](#footnote-ref-72)
72. Stein, 2003, p. 287. [↑](#footnote-ref-73)
73. Dayan, 1981, p. 102. [↑](#footnote-ref-74)
74. Quandt, 1988, p. 157. [↑](#footnote-ref-75)
75. Ibid, pp. 158–159. [↑](#footnote-ref-76)
76. Carter, 1995, p. 316. [↑](#footnote-ref-77)
77. Carter, 1995, p. 384. [↑](#footnote-ref-78)
78. Dayan, 1981, p. 108. [↑](#footnote-ref-79)
79. Ibid, p. 110 [↑](#footnote-ref-80)
80. Ibid, p. 111. [↑](#footnote-ref-81)
81. Carter, 1995, pp. 319–320. [↑](#footnote-ref-82)
82. Quandt, 1988, p. 164. [↑](#footnote-ref-83)
83. Weizman, 1975, p. 263. [↑](#footnote-ref-84)
84. Dayan, 1981, p. 112. [↑](#footnote-ref-85)
85. Ibid, p. 113. [↑](#footnote-ref-86)
86. Dayan, 1981, p. 114. [↑](#footnote-ref-87)
87. Quandt, 1988, p. 168. [↑](#footnote-ref-88)
88. Dayan, 1981, p. 117. [↑](#footnote-ref-89)
89. Ibid, p. 119. [↑](#footnote-ref-90)
90. Yoel Marcus, *Camp David: Hapetah leshalom* (Hebrew) [*Camp David: The Beginning of Peace*], Schocken, Jerusalem and Tel Aviv, 1979, p. 74. [↑](#footnote-ref-91)
91. Ibid, p. 74. [↑](#footnote-ref-92)
92. Weizman, 1975, p. 310; Marcus, 1979, p. 79. [↑](#footnote-ref-93)
93. Harold Sanders in the seminar“An Enduring Peace,“Part 3, 13:10. onwards,<https://youtu.be/oo0fdrvvMig?t=807>; Sanders was Assistant Secretary of State for Middle East Affairs from 1978 until 1981 and was active in all stages of the negotiations. [↑](#footnote-ref-94)
94. Stein, 2003, pp. 293–294. [↑](#footnote-ref-95)
95. Quandt, 1988, p. 177 [↑](#footnote-ref-96)
96. Slater, 1991, p. 409. [↑](#footnote-ref-97)
97. Bar-On, 2014, pp. 338–339. [↑](#footnote-ref-98)
98. Steinberg and Rubinovitz, 2019, p. 129. [↑](#footnote-ref-99)
99. Rubinstein, 1992, p. 75. [↑](#footnote-ref-100)
100. Ibid, p. 128. [↑](#footnote-ref-101)
101. See Chapter One. [↑](#footnote-ref-102)
102. Slater, 1991, p. 410. [↑](#footnote-ref-103)
103. Quandt, p. 182. [↑](#footnote-ref-104)
104. Slater, 1991, p. 412. [↑](#footnote-ref-105)
105. Interview with Brzeziński, in: Slater, 1991, p. 413. [↑](#footnote-ref-106)
106. Dayan, 1981, p. 132. [↑](#footnote-ref-107)
107. Interview with Brzeziński, in: Slater, 1991, p. 414. [↑](#footnote-ref-108)
108. Carter, 1995, p. 379. [↑](#footnote-ref-109)
109. Interview with Quandt, in: Slater, 1991, p. 415. [↑](#footnote-ref-110)
110. Ibid, p. 415. [↑](#footnote-ref-111)
111. Interview with Sam Lewis, in: Slater, 1991, p. 415. [↑](#footnote-ref-112)
112. Interview with Jimmy Carter, in: Slater, 1991, p. 415. [↑](#footnote-ref-113)
113. Quandt, 1988, p. 195. [↑](#footnote-ref-114)
114. Carter, 1995, p. 386. [↑](#footnote-ref-115)
115. Ibid, p. 387. [↑](#footnote-ref-116)
116. Ibid, pp. 390–391. [↑](#footnote-ref-117)
117. Slater, 1991, p. 415. [↑](#footnote-ref-118)
118. Ibid, p. 416. [↑](#footnote-ref-119)
119. Dayan, 1981, p. 159. [↑](#footnote-ref-120)
120. Ibid, p. 159. [↑](#footnote-ref-121)
121. Ibid, pp. 159–160. [↑](#footnote-ref-122)
122. Quandt, 1988, p. 208. [↑](#footnote-ref-123)
123. Lawrence Wright, *Thirteen Days in September: Carter, Begin, and Sadat at Camp David*, Alfred A. Knopf, New York, 2014, p. 28. [↑](#footnote-ref-124)
124. Ibid, p. 256. [↑](#footnote-ref-125)
125. Slater, 1991, p. 417. [↑](#footnote-ref-126)
126. Dayan, 1981, p. 145. [↑](#footnote-ref-127)
127. Quandt, 1988, p. 211. [↑](#footnote-ref-128)
128. Slater, 1991, p. 418. [↑](#footnote-ref-129)
129. Carter, 1995, p. 405. [↑](#footnote-ref-130)
130. Steinberg and Rubinovitz, 1991, p. 161. [↑](#footnote-ref-131)
131. Dayan, 1981, p. 150. [↑](#footnote-ref-132)
132. It is not clear what flag Sadat meant, because there is no general Arab flag, only specific flags of the various Arab nations. [↑](#footnote-ref-133)
133. Slater, 1991, p. 418. [↑](#footnote-ref-134)
134. Gerald M. Steinberg and Ziv Rubinovitz, *Menachem Begin and the Israel-Egypt Peace Process: Between Ideology and Political Realism*, Indiana University Press, 2019, p. 161: “In a public event in Jerusalem one year later, Dinitz said that Dayan asked a senior US official, ‘If Jerusalem is not Israel’s capital, what is?’ The official replied, ‘I don’t know.’” [↑](#footnote-ref-135)
135. # A seminar entitled “An Enduring Peace: 25 Years after the Camp David Accords,” Woodrow Wilson Center, 2003, YouTube, in three parts:

     <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5udmemjaZN8&ab_channel=WoodrowWilsonCenter>

     https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j-8aiiAs9Qo&t=1556s&ab\_channel=WoodrowWilsonCenter

     <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oo0fdrvvMig&t=3970s&ab_channel=WoodrowWilsonCenter> [↑](#footnote-ref-136)
136. Slater, 1991, p. 419. [↑](#footnote-ref-137)
137. Steinberg and Rubinovitz, 2019, p. 162. [↑](#footnote-ref-138)
138. Ibid, p. 171. [↑](#footnote-ref-139)
139. Stein, 2003, p. 276. [↑](#footnote-ref-140)
140. Rubinstein, 1992, pp. 104–105. [↑](#footnote-ref-141)
141. Slater, 1991, p. 420. [↑](#footnote-ref-142)
142. Stein, 2003, p. 300. [↑](#footnote-ref-143)
143. Ibid, ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-144)
144. Quandt, 1988, p. 236. [↑](#footnote-ref-145)
145. Carter, 1995, pp. 504–505. [↑](#footnote-ref-146)
146. Quandt, 1988, p. 239. [↑](#footnote-ref-147)
147. Ibid, p. 242. [↑](#footnote-ref-148)
148. Dayan, 1981, p. 175. [↑](#footnote-ref-149)
149. Quandt, 1988, p. 248. [↑](#footnote-ref-150)
150. From deputy directors general meeting just before Carter’s visit, Foreign Ministry, March 7, 1979, State Archive, <https://docs.google.com/file/d/0BxpR2lHZaDkHamNnNnJwWmZONVk/edit> [↑](#footnote-ref-151)
151. Cyrus Vance, *Hard Choices: Critical Years in America's Foreign Policy,* Simon and Schuster, New York, 1983, p. 249. [↑](#footnote-ref-152)
152. Ibid, p. 250. [↑](#footnote-ref-153)
153. Slater, 1991, p. 420. [↑](#footnote-ref-154)
154. Vance, 1983, p. 250. [↑](#footnote-ref-155)
155. [↑](#footnote-ref-156)
156. Vance, 1983, p. 251. Vance, 1983, p. 197. [↑](#footnote-ref-157)
157. Weizman, 1975, p. 262. [↑](#footnote-ref-158)
158. Zalman Shoval, *Diplomat* (Hebrew), [*Diplomate*], Yedioth Ahronoth, Tel Aviv, 2016, p. 135. [↑](#footnote-ref-159)
159. Bar-On, 2014, p. 353. [↑](#footnote-ref-160)
160. Dayan, 1981, p. 244. [↑](#footnote-ref-161)
161. Slater, 1991, p. 428. [↑](#footnote-ref-162)
162. Bar-On, 2014, p. 353. [↑](#footnote-ref-163)
163. Slater, 1991, p. 437. [↑](#footnote-ref-164)
164. Shoval, 2016, p. 136. [↑](#footnote-ref-166)
165. Ibid, p. 137. [↑](#footnote-ref-167)
166. Ibid, p. 138. [↑](#footnote-ref-168)
167. From the introduction to the book by Natan Yanai (ed.), *Moshe Dayan al tahalikh hashalom ve’atida shel medinat yisrael: Dvarim biknasey habama leberurim medini’im vehevrati’im (1977*–*1981)* (Hebrew), [*Moshe Dayan on the Peace Process and Israel’s Future: From the Conferences of Habama for Political and Social Inquiry (1977*–*1981)*], Defense Ministry Publications, Tel Aviv, 1988, pp. 7–10. [↑](#footnote-ref-170)
168. Shoval, 2016, p. 150. [↑](#footnote-ref-171)
169. Yanai, 1988, pp. 7–9. [↑](#footnote-ref-172)
170. Ibid, p. 11. [↑](#footnote-ref-173)
171. Ibid, p. 19. [↑](#footnote-ref-174)
172. Shoval, 2016, p. 148. [↑](#footnote-ref-175)
173. Yanai, 1988, pp. 283–284. [↑](#footnote-ref-176)
174. Shoval, 2016, p. 151. [↑](#footnote-ref-177)
175. Ibid, p. 152. Dan Margalit, *Ra’iti otem* (Hebrew), [*I Saw Them*], Kinneret Zmora Bitan, Tel Aviv, 1997, p. 114. Shoval noted that Dayan passed away shortly thereafter and Dayan and Begin never made amends. Nonetheless, Begin’s eulogy for Dayan was statesmanlike and noble. He compared Dayan to the heroes of the Hebrew bible, such as Joshua, Gideon, Jonathan, and David. [↑](#footnote-ref-178)
176. Slater, 1991, p. 435. [↑](#footnote-ref-179)
177. Author’s interview with Elyakim Rubinstein, Jerusalem, October 15, 2020. [↑](#footnote-ref-180)
178. Rubinstein, 1992, pp. 52–53. [↑](#footnote-ref-181)
179. Shlomo Aharonson, *Neshek garini bamizrah hatikhon* (Hebrew), [*Nuclear Weapons in the Middle East*], Academon, Jerusalem 1994, p. 18. [↑](#footnote-ref-182)
180. Avi Shlaim, *The Iron Wall: Israel and the Arab World*, Yediot Aharonot: Chemed Books, Tel Aviv, 2005, (Hebrew). P. 181. [↑](#footnote-ref-183)
181. Aharonson, 2003, p. 10. [↑](#footnote-ref-184)
182. Ibid, p. 14. [↑](#footnote-ref-185)
183. Shlaim, 2005, p. 181. [↑](#footnote-ref-187)
184. Avner Cohen, *Yisrael vehaptsatsa* (Hebrew), [*Israel and the Bomb*], Schocken, Jerusalem, 2000, pp. 93-94. [↑](#footnote-ref-188)
185. Michael Karpin, *The Bomb in The Basement: How Israel Went Nuclear and What That Means to the World*, New-York: Simon & Schuster Paperbacks, 2006, p. 126: [↑](#footnote-ref-189)
186. Karpin, 2006, pp. 90-91. [↑](#footnote-ref-190)
187. Aharonson, p. 291. [↑](#footnote-ref-191)
188. Cohen, 2000, pp. 194-195. [↑](#footnote-ref-192)
189. Aharonson, 1994, pp. 228-231; Udi Manor, “Shikul da’at infantili: Dayan, Allon, ha’amimut hagarinit vehaviku’ah al mekoma shel yisrael bamerhav” (Hebrew), [“Infantile Consideration: Dayan, Allon, the Nuclear Ambiguity, and the Argument over Israel’s Place in the Region”], *Politika: Ktav et yisraeli lemada’ey hamedina veyehasim beynleumi’im* [*Politics: An Israeli Journal on Political Science and International Relations*], Vol. 27 (2018), p. 98. [↑](#footnote-ref-193)
190. Ibid, p. 211. [↑](#footnote-ref-194)
191. Ibid, p. 216. [↑](#footnote-ref-195)
192. Ibid, p. 217. [↑](#footnote-ref-196)
193. Cohen, 200, pp. 217–218. [↑](#footnote-ref-197)
194. Tamar Rahamivov-Honig, *Amanat ha’isur al neshek garini: Hashlakhoteha al hazira habeynleumit vemashmauyot leyisrael* (Hebrew), [*The Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty: Its Ramifications for the International Arena and Implications for Israel*], M.A. thesis, University of Haifa, July 2020. [↑](#footnote-ref-198)
195. Manor, 2018, p. 83. [↑](#footnote-ref-199)
196. *Haaretz*, March 26, 1965. [↑](#footnote-ref-200)
197. Cohen, 2000, p. 351. [↑](#footnote-ref-201)
198. Peres, 1995, pp. 166–167. [↑](#footnote-ref-202)
199. Cohen, 2000, pp. 358–359. [↑](#footnote-ref-203)
200. Avner Cohen, *The Worst-Kept Secret: Israel's Bargain with the Bomb*, Columbia University Press, New York, 2010, pp. 174–176. [↑](#footnote-ref-204)
201. Cohen, 2000, pp. 359–360. [↑](#footnote-ref-205)
202. Cohen, 2010, pp. 96–97. [↑](#footnote-ref-206)
203. Cohen, 2000, pp. 372–373, 392. [↑](#footnote-ref-207)
204. Cohen, 2010, p. 75. [↑](#footnote-ref-208)
205. Shlaim, 2005, p. 292. [↑](#footnote-ref-209)
206. Aharonson, p. 24. [↑](#footnote-ref-210)
207. Uri Bar Joseph, “The Hidden Debate: The Formulation of a Nuclear Doctrine in the Middle East,” *Journal of Strategic Studies* 5*,* No. 2 (June 1982), pp. 217; Shlaim, 2005, p. 293. [↑](#footnote-ref-211)
208. Cohen, 2010, p. 80. [↑](#footnote-ref-212)
209. Ibid, p. 80. The description in Cohen’s book erroneously dates the meeting to October 9; the particulars of the description make it clear that the meeting in question occurred on the 7th at Dayan’s low point of the day. By the 9th, Dayan was much more optimistic and there would have been no reason for him to propose the use of nuclear weapons or even the threat of their use. On that day, Dayan was saying that Israel would be able to dig into its defensive lines and defend them for as long as necessary.

     The details of the interview and further discussion about it may be found on his website at The Avner Cohen Collection, Interview with Arnan Azaryahu <https://www.wilsoncenter.org/arnan-sini-azaryahu>; Avner Cohen, “When Israel Stepped Back From the Brink,” *The New York Times*,3 October 2013, Accessed: 23 August 2018; <https://www.nytimes.com/2013/10/04/opinion/when-israel-stepped-back-from-the-brink.html>. [↑](#footnote-ref-213)
210. Karpin, 2006, p. 324. [↑](#footnote-ref-214)
211. Seymour Hersh, *The Samson Option: Israel’s Nuclear Arsenal and American Foreign Policy*, Random House, United States, 1991. [↑](#footnote-ref-215)
212. Bar Joseph, 1982, p. 217. [↑](#footnote-ref-216)
213. Cohen, 2010, pp. 75, 280, n. 14. [↑](#footnote-ref-217)
214. Between the Yom Kippur War and the mid-1980s, the IDF’s order of battle more than doubled. Source: Dr. Ido Hecht, *Milh’mot yisrael* (Hebrew), [*Israel’s Wars*], IDF Command and Staff College, 2020. [↑](#footnote-ref-218)