NATIONAL INTERESTS AND FOREIGN POLICY
BEHAVIOUR IN THE MIDDLE EAST:
THE ARAB STATES BOYCOTT OF AND
RAPPROCHEMENT WITH EGYPT, 1979-1987

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INTRODUCTION

In contrast to the 1950's and 1960's, when the Arab States tended to frame their Foreign Policies in terms of ideological goals as Arab unity, the liberation of Palestine and anti-imperialism - the 1970's and 1980's have seen a triumph of "real politik" over ideology and of tactics over strategy. The new pragmatism is best reflected in the issue-oriented basis of the present alliances in the Arab Middle East. The 1960's conflict between Nasserism and Baathism over the ideological supremacy and leadership of the Arab system has eased. The last two decades witnessed a declining importance of ideology to the leadership of several key Arab states such as Egypt, Syria and Iraq.¹

The Foreign Policy behaviour of these states became preoccupied with serious territorial, military, security and economic considerations. Arab Foreign Policies in the late seventies and early eighties became more pragmatic, with tangible national interests prevailing over ideological considerations. Greater flexibility provided a broader range of options for policy-makers and led to the development of working relationships across previously ideological differences. The predominance of national interest considerations as physical survival, economic well-being and freedom of action were evident in the regional Foreign Policy behaviour of key Arab states as Egypt, Syria, Iraq and Saudia Arabia.² The modifications that did occur stemmed largely from the decline in the
primacy of pan-Arab sentiments among political elites and the public alike. The most obvious manifestation of this trend was a sharp reduction in pressures for political union. Emphasis was placed instead on functional co-operation between the Arab states through the formation of diplomatic common fronts, military alliances and economic co-operation.

The new pragmatism is closely related to the processes of the Arab states’ Foreign Policy adaptation (coping with a changing regional or international environment), transformation (response to a radical change in one ingredient or several of a state’s situation) or restructuring of orientation (a fundamental change in the state’s objectives and strategy). With the rise of pragmatism in regional Arab foreign policies, the pattern of politics became determined basically by each individual state’s geo-strategic situation, its economic-social-political environment and its national aspirations. Thus, whenever an Arab state felt less threatened by its regional environment, it pursued a more active Foreign Policy both regionally and internationally in an attempt to have more influence in determining the direction of Arab regional politics. But, whenever the regional environment appeared threatening and hostile, it would opt for a more cautious and less active posture and be more concerned with its national interest and security.

There has been then a latent tension in the orientation of the Arab state’s foreign policies between the norm of
pan-Arabism and the interests of each state, between role conception and role performance. There is a growing discrepancy between the pan-Arab belief system and state behaviour based on "raison d'etat". Thus, there is a difference between the sources of a state's particular policy, which are in many cases specific national interests, and the justification of that policy in pan-Arab terms.

In the analysis of Arab pragmatism, the role of oil wealth and its political and psychological impact cannot be overlooked. Oil has created a new set of values, attitudes, loyalties and allegiances. Almost all the Arab states have become "oil states" either directly through the possession of oil or indirectly through remittances and financial assistance. As a consequence changes took place in the basis of power in the Arab regional system. These changes affected the position of individual states and the pattern of relations within the system. With regard to the basis of power, there was a marked increase in the importance of economic capabilities as evidenced by the rise of Saudi Arabia's financial power. The large surplus of capital that developed in the region led the key Arab states as Syria and Iraq to turn increasingly to the wealthy oil-producing states in the Gulf, and particularly Saudi Arabia, for assistance. The result was the rise of economic aid as a new instrument of influence in inter-Arab relations.

The rapprochement between the Arab states and Egypt
occurred basically due to the development of this trend of modernity in the foreign policies of the Arab states, each of which emphasised its national interests in a pragmatic character. The Arab states have given primacy to their relationship with Egypt with a correspondingly diminished adherence to the previous Arab consensus to boycott Egypt in the Baghdad Arab Summits of 1978 and 1979. What caused the shift in actual fact were (a) Israel’s invasion of Lebanon and the fear of another Arab military setback, (b) the Iranian threat to the Arab Gulf security and the fear of the export of religious revolution to the region, (c) the Arab states perception of the presence of a strategic imbalance in favour of Israel and the threat of a more hegemonist military policy in the region.

The pressure of Egypt’s new moderate policy pursued through (a) its promotion of bilateral social, economic and political relations with the Arab states, (b) its maintenance of a cold peace with Israel, and (c) its adoption of a mutual interests diplomacy with other regional powers - all contributed to an end to its ostracism in the Arab world. Parallel with the change in Egypt’s policies, a number of developments in the Middle East - the Iran-Iraq conflict, the rift between Syria and the Palestine Liberation Organisation, and the new moderate Arab position towards the Arab-Israeli dispute as reflected in the PLO/Jordanian quest for peace - created fertile conditions for Egypt’s reintegration into the Arab fold. Arab states’ national interests perpetuated their need for an Egyptian support to counter balance the
destabilising factors in the region.

The analysis of the foreign policy behaviour of each Arab state is divided into an examination of its role conception (general strategy and objectives) and its role performance (actual behaviour). This difference between the objectives of a foreign policy and its actual realisation is the result of the presence of constraints on the capabilities of each major actor in the Middle East (e.g. Syria, Iraq and Saudi Arabia). The foreign policy behaviour of each state is the concrete actions, positions and decisions that it takes or adopts in the conduct of foreign policy. Foreign policy behaviour is the concrete expression of orientation in specific acts related to a state's national interests. Arab foreign policies are primarily regional in orientation. This regional emphasis is the result of two factors. First, small or medium powers are usually regionally oriented. Second, the Arab-Israeli conflict, the Iran-Iraq war and the Lebanese Civil War are perceived as all-Arab problems.
CHAPTER ONE

Egypt’s position in the Arab world has been to a certain extent undermined since its foreign policy act of signing the Camp David accord with Israel. Its historic role as the champion of the Arab and Palestinian cause has been attacked by all Arab states since it began the peace process with Israel and the U.S. in 1977. Seventeen Arab states met in Baghdad in 1978 and 1979 and decided to boycott Egypt politically and economically. All Arab states — excluding Oman, Sudan, and Somalia — broke their diplomatic relations with Egypt, suspended its membership from the Arab league and later from the Islamic conference organisation. By concluding a separate peace with Israel, Egypt has in the view of these 17 Arab states broken the traditional ties of brotherhood and unity of purpose.

Despite this official Arab boycott, the movement for Egypt’s total isolation did not achieve its objectives. Egypt’s position in the Arab world was not so much undermined due to basically the failure of any other single Arab state to fill the political and strategic vacuum created by Egypt’s absence. The late 1970’s witnessed the emergence of new regional powers such as Syria, Iraq and Saudi Arabia. However, the rapid developments in the inter-Arab system developed constraints on their potential leadership role and eventually accelerated the rapprochement with Egypt.
As Egypt's president Anwar-El-Sadat was assassinated, the Egyptian foreign policy was not content with the isolation it faced in the Arab world. Egypt's foreign policy was in a critical situation because of the aggressive Israeli behaviour in the region. The Israeli actions put a dramatically different light on Egypt's peace treaty. They seemed to confirm that Israel had made peace with Egypt as a tactic to neutralise its most powerful neighbour. Syria and Iraq argued that Egypt had betrayed the Arab cause and that it was other Arab nations that would pay the price.

By contrast to Egypt, Syria's foreign policy began to gain more credibility and support among the Arab states. Syria had opposed the Egyptian-Israeli peace treaty, and alongside with Libya, Algeria, the PLO, and the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen - formed the steadfastness rejectionist front in 1979 to co-ordinate their foreign policies to isolate Egypt and build a nationalist Arab front to champion Palestinian rights. Syria stood firmly against the U.S. and Israeli presence in Lebanon. When Israel demanded that Syria withdraw its surface-to-air missiles from Lebanon's Bekaa Valley and Washington sent special envoys as Mr. Philip Habib to defuse the crisis, Syria refused claiming it was the guardian of Arab security. Then after the assassination of Beshir Gemayel on September 14, 1982, Israel sought to carry out the prime political objective of its invasion by turning the government of his brother and successor, Amin Gemayel, into an Israeli puppet. The Syrian national interests
and the prime importance of Lebanon in its strategy caused it to resist the Israeli ambitions by all means.

Furthermore, Syria was not interested in giving Israel a political victory by the implementation of the May 17, 1983 withdrawal pact between Lebanon and Israel. President Hafiz-El-Assad opposed the agreement and contributed to its failure to prevent an Israeli domination over Lebanon.\textsuperscript{11} The strong resistance of the Shiites in the South of Lebanon against the Israeli forces gave Syria even more Arab support because it was the major source of financial and military assistance to the Shiites forces.\textsuperscript{12} In the absence of an Egyptian regional foreign policy in the late 1970's and early 1980's, Syria's strategy in the region attempted to play a central, pivotal and leading role in the region.

The single most important item on Syria's foreign policy agenda has been the return of the Golan Heights. President Hafiz-El-Assad is convinced that Israel will never willingly negotiate a return of the Golan Heights because of their strategic importance to Israel's northern region and its national water carrier (an expectation confirmed by Israel's annexation of the territory).\textsuperscript{13} Consequently the Syrian foreign policy has been directed to reject any peace initiatives which disregards its national interests, eg. Sinai II, the Camp David accord and for a time the Saudi Arabian Fahd peace plan. Syria has considered these agreements as potential settlements which will ultimately leave Syria alone to negotiate the
Golan Heights after other Arab governments have resolved their territorial disputes with Israel.

Before the Israeli invasion of Lebanon in 1982, Syria’s position in Lebanon, Syria’s assets within the PLO, and its claim to defend the Palestinian national cause, gave it formidable leverage over the PLO. Syria provided the PLO with invaluable support in Lebanon, facilitating supplies of weapons and at times defending PLO interests against its Lebanese rivals. Syrian support was at a cost. It was determined to play a prominent role in Arab politics. Influence over the PLO would ensure a voice in inter-Arab decisions and an ability to prevent other Arab states from co-ordinating a response to the Arab Israeli dispute that ignores Syrian interests. By keeping PLO Chairman Mr. Yasser Arafat close, Syria’s objective was to play a key role in formulating any strategy of confrontation or co-existence with Israel.\textsuperscript{14}

However, several developments affecting Syria’s regional foreign policy has occurred during 1979-1983. These developments have caused constraints on Syria’s leadership attempt in the Arab region during Egypt’s isolation. In Lebanon, Israel’s military success has undermined Syria’s position in the Arab world. In 1982, Lebanon became partitioned into three major sections - the Maronite area, the Israeli occupied south and a small Syrian enclave in the north east.\textsuperscript{15} Syria’s involvement in Lebanon has weakened the Palestinian and leftist forces and opened the door for the Israeli-Maronite connection and the spread of
Israeli power in Lebanon. Politically the danger still existed that Christian forces would formalise their grip on the country and implement a peace treaty with Israel. In the strategic contest with Israel, Syria since 1982 has become in no position to lead the Arab struggle against Israel. It has substantial ground forces tied up in Lebanon, its airforce suffered losses in combat with Israel in June 1982 and it has major internal-security concerns such as the militant sunni uprising in Hama in 1982 - all which produced constraints on its ability to play a leading regional role.

Syria's backing of a revolt by Palestinian radicals against PLO moderates led by Arafat damaged Syrian - Palestinian solidarity and committed Arab military, physical and economic power to a conflict far from the Israeli front. Syria's interests in Lebanon is bound up with the future of the Palestinians and the disposition of the Golan Heights. Syria's pulling of forces out of Lebanon is linked to its interests of regaining the Golan and settling the Palestinian dilemma. Thus, the foreign policy behaviour of Syria will then continue to focus primarily on Lebanon rather than regional Arab policies until an eventual achievement of its national interests is foreseen.

Syria's forging an open association with the Islamic government of Iran strained its relations with Iraq, the Arab Gulf States and contributed to the further polarisation of intra-Arab politics. Syria's support to
Iran in the Gulf war (in return for cheap and often free oil supplies) has brought negative reaction from the Gulf states. The question of cutting off aid to Syria has been raised at the Gulf co-operation council meeting as early as 1981. The Syrian-Iranian alliance has undermined Syria's claims of Arab nationalism and solidarity.

Syria's foreign policy has been preoccupied with limiting the prospects of any Iraqi regional hegemony after Egypt's isolation in 1979. The Syrian attempt to drain directly and indirectly Iraq's economic, social and military capabilities to achieve its narrow "raison d'etat" in ending any competition for regional leadership, has further weakened its position in the Arab world.

Iraq was one of the main leaders of the movement to punish Egypt for the peace treaty. It was instrumental in co-ordinating a comprehensive Arab response to isolate Egypt. It participated in the Tripoli conference in 1977 that set the stage for the formation of the steadfastness front. Iraq organised the Baghdad summit meetings of Arab heads of state in November 1978 and April 1979 to co-ordinate steps against Egypt. Iraq utilised the Camp David agreements to capitalise on Egyptian isolation which became the basic element of Iraq's regional foreign policy until the eruption of the war with Iran in September 1980.

Iraq offered the Gulf states its protection against the Iranian revolution in 1979, and in February 1980 president Saddam Hussein announced an eight-point programme for
regional solidarity. The programme called for a renunciation of armed force among Arab countries to resolve disputes, a call for joint resolution of disputes within the framework of Arab joint action, respect for mutual sovereignty and traditional integrity and nonalignment.17 Although these principles were similar to those in the Arab league charter, Iraq formed them as part of a diplomatic initiative designed to promote Iraq’s regional leadership during Egypt’s isolation.

In the eleventh Arab summit in Amman in December 1980, president Saddam Hussein succeeded in convincing the participants to establish an Arab development fund that would make low interest loans available to six underprivileged Arab states (Mauritania, Djibouti, Somalia, Sudan and the two Yemens). This manoeuvre put Iraq in the position of benefactor and visible proponent of pan-Arabism. Through moderation, prudent use of the economic power of oil and the championship of various Arab causes, Iraq endeavoured to establish itself as the Commanding Arab state. Moreover the threat of the export of the Iranian revolution gave Iraq an important stabilising role in the Gulf region. The new impact of the Iranian example as manifested in the seizure of the Grand Mosque in Mecca by a group of Islamic fundamentalists (Sunni) and by Shiia riots in eastern Saudi provinces in November and December 1979, gave Iraq an opportunity of a more active foreign policy in the Arab Gulf region.
However, the escalation of the war has compromised this effort significantly. The war has seriously distracted Iraq from its leadership attempt, undermined its economy and caused it to be dependent on conservative Arab states as Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and other Gulf states. Figures on direct loans to Iraq during the first five years of the war range from $25 billion to $60 billion. Jordan and Saudi Arabia in particular have provided transit rights for goods including vital military equipment, assisted Iraq to fulfil its oil contracts and lent it considerable diplomatic support regionally and internationally.¹⁸

The enmity between Iraq and Syria has undermined Iraq’s regional role. The rivalry with Syria is both geopolitically and ideologically based. The rivalry has taken several forms, from interference in each other’s internal affairs to a contest for the leadership of both the Baathist political movement and the Arab region. The Syrian support to Iran in the war has accelerated the early rapprochement with Egypt in 1980-81.

The Egyptian-Syrian defeat in the 1967 war with Israel facilitated the rise of a Saudi Arabian regional power. The 1967 defeat eventually led to (a) the end of the attempt by Nasserism and Baathism to dominate Arab regional politics, (b) a weightier role for the conservative wealthy Arab Gulf states particularly Saudi Arabia. Since the oil boom of 1973 saw the transfer of massive financial resources to Saudi Arabia, that country has become an important and influential actor in the
Middle East. It has promoted its Arab policy in the absence of Egypt to become an effective mediator in the settling of disputes in the region. The Saudi Arabian foreign policy has been instrumental in solving Arab crisis such as mediating between Syria and Jordan in their border tension in 1980 and facilitating a return to the status quo in Lebanon in Summer 1981.19

Saudi Arabia’s growing role in regional politics and its growing stake in international economic issues served to increase the sense of urgency that Saudi leaders felt for reaching an Arab-Israeli peace settlement. Saudi Arabia’s foreign policy accentuated the peace treaty between Israel and Egypt as an Israeli victory to split the Arab world and deny Egyptian military support to the Arab cause. Thus during the period 1979-1981 Saudi foreign policy followed the Arab consensus against the Camp David accord. But, with Egypt’s continuing absence and Saudi Arabia’s new influential status as a major oil power, the Saudi foreign policy believed it was up to them to break the deadlock.20 In 1981, Saudi Arabia took the major political initiative of the Fahd Peace Plan that was presented to the Arab summit in November 1981. Arab consensus on the Fahd plan was later achieved at the next Arab summit which was held in Fez in September 1982. Lacking only Libya’s participation, the summit formulated an eight-point peace plan which emphasised the Palestinian right to a state, while at the same time recognising the right of all states in the area to live in peace. While admittedly not explicit on the question of Israel’s
sovereignty, the plan clearly implied Israel's right to exist.\textsuperscript{21} Saudi Arabia's attempt was to provide an alternative and more comprehensive basis for a regional settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict which would gain Arab support and provide it with a more influential foreign policy in the region.

Meanwhile, Saudi Arabia continued to pay for the Arab deterrent forces (Syrian), which meant a political support for Syria's foreign policy objectives in Lebanon - basically preventing partition, opposing Israel's expansion and supporting Palestinian forces until 1982. The Saudi support guaranteed that Syria would not attempt to destabilise the Saudi regime, encourage Muslim fundamentalists, favour completely Iran's position in the Gulf dispute, and most important not to oppose the Saudi peace initiative. Thus, Saudi Arabia has followed its traditional policy of counter balancing different forces to as to maximise its own influence and freedom of action.

However, as a result of the Iran-Iraq conflict Saudi Arabia's foreign policy became principally concerned with the security of the Arabian peninsula. After Iraq became preoccupied with its war as early as 1981, Saudi Arabia's foreign policy stepped up its efforts to forge closer co-operation and co-ordination of economic, military and security policies to defend the Gulf region against the Iranian threats. The culmination of these efforts was the creation of the Gulf co-operation council in Winter 1981.\textsuperscript{22}
With the eruption of the Islamic revolution in Iran in 1979, the regional Saudi environment appeared more threatening and hostile causing it to opt for a more cautious and less active foreign policy. Saudi Arabia’s foreign policy became increasingly preoccupied with countering the threat posed by the new regime in Iran.

This became clear when the Ayatollahs were trying to export their revolution across the Gulf and had an interest in reviving the old Iranian claims to Bahrain. Concerned with its vulnerability, Saudi Arabia’s foreign policy was less able to devote attention and energies to exert more pressure to isolate Egypt. On the contrary, these new developments in the Gulf revived the importance of Egypt as a strategic counter-balance to Iran’s threats and as a supporter of any regional Gulf security arrangement. The Gulf war became a catalyst in the reorientation of Gulf states’ policies towards Egypt.
CHAPTER TWO

Facing a degree of isolation in the Arab world and a rise of new regional power centres, the Egyptian foreign policy began to formulate a new policy aiming at breaking the Arab boycott. Egypt, since president Hosni Mubarak’s rule, has sought readmission into the Arab family without breaking its treaty ties with Israel. The resolution of this difficult formula seemed an impossible task for a period of time due to the presence of many obstacles as Israel’s aggressive policies and the emerging regional role of Syria, Iraq and Saudi Arabia. Thus, Egypt was either to maintain normalisation of relations with Israel at the cost of political isolation in the Arab world or to return to the Arab fold at the risk of liquidating the gains from the peace treaty.

However, with both the positive steps taken by the Egyptian foreign policy towards the Arab region, and the regional developments in the Middle East, Egypt was able to proceed with this combination of peace with Israel and reconciliation with the Arab states.

Since 1981, Egypt’s regional foreign policy has been crystallised around two broad policy goals: (a) maintaining a cold peace with Israel (b) reconciling Egypt and the rest of the Arab world through an eventual rapprochement on bilateral levels.

Egypt’s normalisation process with Israel has been almost
completely halted since the invasion of Lebanon in 1982.\textsuperscript{24} Egypt’s Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister, Kamal Hassan Ali, summed up the situation in late 1984 as "official Egypt is implementing all the provisions under the peace treaty. As regards implementation at the popular level, the frustration felt as a result of Israeli practices in Lebanon - the invasion and the massacres - greatly affected the Egyptian people."\textsuperscript{25}

In practice that policy meant that Egypt made an effort to fulfil to the letter all the agreements with Israel which were dependent upon direct government action only - meaning maintaining peace at an official level, but slowing down the normalisation process.\textsuperscript{26} Egypt’s foreign policy seemed to be comfortable with a "Cold Peace" level of relations. Such a low profile was an asset in Egypt's efforts to re integrate in the Arab system. Egypt was strongly critical of Israel’s policy on three major issues: its continued occupation of South Lebanon, its ever increasing settlements in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, and its stance over the Taba dispute.\textsuperscript{27} Israel’s position and conduct in these matters were the subject of ceaseless Egyptian remonstrations as well as warnings to Israel voiced by officials and much more strongly by the media. The Cairo media depicted Israel since the invasion of Lebanon as a treacherous entity for whom peace was a mere camouflage to conceal its aggressive nature: "Expansion in the Arab lands was a million times more important than peace to Israel".\textsuperscript{28} this content of the Egyptian media scarcely differed from what was appearing
in moderate Arab countries as Jordan and Saudi Arabia.

Apart from deliveries of Egyptian oil to Israel, there has been no major development in trade. The volume of Israeli exports to Egypt during the fiscal year 1984-1985 was one-third of that in 1981-1982. There was rarely any Egyptian tourists to Israel and cultural exchanges were frozen. Israel's behaviour in the region gave Egypt reasonable cause for distancing itself by halting the normalisation process and by such actions as severing diplomatic relations with El Salvador and Costa Rica due to the transfer of their Embassies to Jerusalem. These postures facilitated the process of rapprochement between the Arab states and Egypt.

Egypt had to project a more pro-Arab image on its policies to bring Cairo closer to the positions adopted by the other Arab governments. There has been significant foreign policy changes in Egypt's Arab policies. These changes have created a more pragmatic balance in Egypt's foreign relations by showing a greater appreciation for the Arab nationalist sensitivities of both domestic opposition and other Arab governments. President Hosni Mubarak has expressed concern for the excesses in wealth and corruption associated with the influx of foreign aid and investment, and has displayed less enthusiasm for the ideas of a closer strategic relationship with the U.S. and the Western Block. Egyptian foreign policy advisers and newspaper editors refrained from verbal attacks on Arab leaders even if Egypt was criticised by them. Egypt opted
for a quiet diplomacy demonstrating on many occasions that it could be as zealous about Arab causes as its detractors. The "League of Islamic and Arab Peoples" which was established by the late president Anwar-El-Sadat as an alternative to the Arab league was abolished. President Hosni Mubarak announced that the league has "fulfilled its purpose and the reasons for its establishment have ended". These actions increased the credentials of Egypt among the moderate Arab states. Egypt's regional policy has initiated a variety of symbolic acts in the early 1980's to ease Egypt's isolation in the Arab world. These include Mubarak's meeting with King Fahd at the funeral of the late Saudi King Khalid, relieving PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat following his eviction from Lebanon, establishing a liaison office in Beirut, supplying arms to Iraq as early as 1982, and re-establishing cordial relations with Jordan.

The success of Egypt's multilateral Arab diplomacy was facilitated to a large extent by developments in the Middle East. The Israeli invasion of Lebanon in 1982, the Iran-Iraq dispute, the Iranian threats to Gulf security, the Syrian-PLO rift and the Jordanian/Palestinian peace framework - all were reasons for the rapprochement with Egypt.

From the outset, Israeli policy has put a strain upon the Egyptian-Israeli treaty. The outcome of the diplomacy leading to the 1979 peace treaty clearly signalling
Israel’s limited view of the goals sought: the absence of a linkage relating the peace treaty to the Camp David framework on the Palestinian question was a major evidence of this. Further evidence of this was the Israeli minimalist interpretation of the meaning of autonomy for the Palestinians. Even more concrete evidence of strain upon Egyptian-Israeli relations had to do with Israel’s settlements on the West Bank. Likud rushed ahead with its accelerated settlement policy, with the result that during 1977-1984, settlements increased from 36 to 100 and settlers from 5,000 to over 30,000. But Israel’s provocations were not limited to interpretations of the peace treaty. Israel formally annexed Jerusalem as its capital on April 18, 1980. This was followed by the Israeli air-raid on Iraq and its bombing of the Osirak nuclear research facility on June 8, 1981. Then there was more on December 14, 1981, when Israel had declared the annexation of the Syrian Golan Heights putting it under Israeli civil law and administration. Israel also extended its support for the “Free Lebanon” that Saad Haddad proclaimed in the strip of land along Israel’s northern border.

These actions by Israel and its invasion of Lebanon in June, 1982 created a diplomatic opportunity for Egypt in three aspects. The first was a degree of verbal criticism equal to or even stronger than that of most other Arab states. The second was action within the treaty itself, namely the freezing of the normalisation process. The third was an international manoeuvre to contain the
conflict. Egypt - as an albeit - ostracised Arab state, joined with France - as the former league of national mandatory power in Lebanon, to call for a cease-fire and an Israeli withdrawal. This had the effect of evidencing a new set of Egyptian Arab credentials to its Arab partners, and of drawing Egypt closer to the Arab state system. A major reason for this is that if Egypt had been condemned for having abandoned the Arab cause, no Arab state including Syria or Iraq put the Lebanese and Palestinian cause before its own. Meanwhile, Egypt extended humanitarian, medical and diplomatic support to the PLO during the Israeli invasion. This support became more evident with the internal dispute at the end of 1983 between Yasser Arafat and the Abu Musa factions of the PLO. Egypt rallied to the support of Arafat against the Syrian-supported Abu Musa factions. Egyptian military ships aided Arafat's withdrawal from Tripoli, an action followed by Arafat's visit to Cairo in December 1983. The rapprochement with the PLO represented the most potent legitimising factor available to Egypt for overcoming alienation from the Arab state system.

The Iran-Iraq conflict that began in September 1980, gave Egypt's foreign policy an opportunity to prove its pro-Arab image and its support for Arab claims. Egypt began to form an image as a power capable of aiding and protecting Arab states. By providing military aid to Iraq, Egypt was in conformity with the charter of the Arab league, which provides that Arab countries should aid each other when one of their member states is the victim of an
outside aggressor. Egypt's more pro-Arab role in the war was a clear evidence of its abiding to the Arab causes. This was even more evident, as Egypt argued, if contrasted to the Syrian role which was in support of the aggressor – Iran and not the Arab-Iraq. Egypt was thus more in conformity with the league's charter than Syria. The Egyptian role took two main forms: direct and indirect military assistance.37 Egypt's direct military assistance took the form of provision of ammunition, Soviet military spare parts, military equipment, technical and training personnel, military advisers and assessment teams. It occasionally sent the assessment teams to help analyse the situation and predict the direction of future offences. Indirectly it allowed selective emigration of certain crucial professions needed by the Iraqi military effort. Egypt tolerated the volunteering of Egyptians in Iraq to serve in the Iraqi forces. It provided agricultural and oil labour to man vital segments of Iraq's economy and thus freeing Iraqi's to fight at the military front.

The Iraqi reliance on massive military support from Egypt, necessitated frequent contacts between both at military and political levels. While only stopping short of formal resumption of diplomatic relations, the rapprochement affected a wide range of areas: strategic, political, economic, cultural and religious. The signal for the shift was given by President Saddam Hassein in early December 1982, when he declared that Iraq was looking forward to Egypt's resumption of its natural influential role in the pan-Arab movement. This was followed by a
continuous increase in the intensity of bilateral visits between political, economic and cultural delegations. In August 1983, the two countries signed a treaty for economic and commercial co-operation providing for an increase in the volume of trade between them. Another sign of improving relations were the recurrent references by officials and the press in both countries to yet another Egyptian-Iraqi bond - the large community of Egyptian workers in Iraq estimated to be two million. These workers have come to be the backbone of Iraq’s economy during its war with Iran. Thus, the new relations were being based on pragmatic considerations that serve the national interests of both states. Although Iraq was the main force behind the Arab boycott in 1979, the threatening situation to the Gulf security has made Egypt’s isolation irrelevant. Egypt’s military support was directly needed in the war and its political support was needed to endorse Iraq’s claims in the international community and especially in the West and the U.S.

Moreover, the Gulf states had urgent need for Egypt’s return to the Arab fold. Iraq’s poor performance in the war caused security fears to the Gulf states: should Iraq be defeated and the regime be replaced by either an Islamic fundamentalist or a more radical Baathist regime, this would greatly increase the Gulf states vulnerability. Thus, Arab Gulf states valued more having Egypt involved in Gulf affairs as a stabilising force. Egypt was still the only Arab country that can effectively help in facing the regional challenges to the Gulf security. Egyptian
officials emphasised that Egypt remains the Arabs' military most credible force and that it is always ready and capable of supporting other Arab states.

Egypt's approach to the issue of Gulf security encompasses three major factors: the First is that Gulf security is a part of Egypt's national security and constitutes a threat to the eastern wing of the Arab world. The Gulf is threatened by the impact of the Iranian revolution and the dispute between Iraq and Iran. Hence threats to Gulf stability are crucial to Egypt and it is most likely, that Egypt cannot tolerate a major Iraqi defeat and the collapse of the Iraqi regime because it would drastically destabilise the Gulf regime. The second factor is that the Gulf security is seen primarily as an Arab responsibility and Egypt is capable of establishing a deterring force to shoulder the protection of the Arab Gulf. The third factor is that oil security is an immediate economic concern to Egypt because large quantities of oil passes through Suez-Mediterranean pipelines (SUMED) that stretch in Egyptian territory from the Red Sea to the Mediterranean.

In addition to these major factors, Egypt's foreign policy has perceived Gulf security and Egypt's role in the Iran-Iraq conflict as an effective means of reinstituting its position and rehabilitating its image in the Arab world. The national interests of the Arab Gulf states was an eye-opener to the importance of Egypt's role in the region. By 1983-1984, most Arab Gulf states recognised
the necessity of having an Egyptian link to establish a credible deterrent to the potential Iranian threat.

The Syrian/PLO rift was another development in the Middle East that contributed to the rapprochement between the Arab states and Egypt. Since the attempt by Syria to demolish the PLO in Lebanon, to undermine Yasser Arafat’s position and to support the factions led by Abu Musa in 1982-1983, Egypt has provided support to the PLO forces under siege. There was a strong government and popular (as represented by the opposition parties) support to the PLO in Lebanon. Egypt’s assistance to Arafat at a time when Syria contributed to the fragmentation of the PLO gave Egypt a credible Arab nationalist image. Arafat’s tilt towards Egypt was accelerated by the Syrian hostility in Lebanon and the Saudi passive position toward it. In such circumstances, Egypt was the major balancing factor that PLO’s interests needed promptly. Given the symbolic nature of the Palestinian cause for the Arab collective, the legitimisation involved in Egypt’s return to the Arab fold without renouncing the peace treaty with Israel, must be seen as one of the most important consequences of the Lebanese war and the Syrian/PLO rift.

Thus, with Syria letting him down, the PLO Chairman had no other option but to join the peace process with Jordan. Jordan had resumed its diplomatic relations with Egypt in September 1984. King Hussein has championed the Arab move for reconciliation with Egypt because of his perception that a closer relationship with Cairo offers not only some
protection for his regime in the event that he may have to negotiate with Israel over the West Bank, but also against the possible depredations of other Arab states against his regime. Another primary rationale for the Jordanian rapprochement with Egypt was a desire to counter balance Syria’s regional influence. Egyptian support would enable Jordan to follow a policy opposed to Syria’s view - and at times even to defy the Syrians - as for example with the convening of the PLO National Council in Amman in 1984 and in the support of Iraq in the Gulf war. King Hussein wishes in conjunction with Egypt to mobilise Arab state support for an international peace conference to deal with the Arab-Israel conflict.

The PLO shift towards Jordan was coupled with a warming up of relations with Egypt to balance the Syrian pressure which attempted to control the organisation and eliminate its Chairman Yasser Arafat. The Palestine National Council meeting in November 1984 in Amman not only sanctioned Arafat’s visit to Cairo in late 1983, but also called the Arab states to restore diplomatic relations with Egypt. The PLO began consultations with King Hussein to work out a joint peace initiative. The presence of over a million Palestinians in Jordan, King Hussein’s access to the West Bank, the loss of independence in Lebanon and the U.S. recognition of King Hussein’s centrality in negotiations were important incentives for Arafat to co-operate with Jordan. The two parties worked endlessly to unify their positions and finally concluded a "Common Framework for Peace in the
Middle East" on February 11th, 1985.

This was a high point for the Egyptian diplomacy: Egypt-PLO contacts became a matter of daily basis during the negotiations on the agreement. The movement toward negotiations has presented Egypt with the opportunity to move away from the formula of autonomy talks related to Camp David, and to link its Arab policy to its peace efforts in the Middle East. The PLO/Jordanian agreement provided Egypt with a new avenue in Arab politics. Now, two of the main parties involved in the Arab-Israeli conflict have chosen the peaceful solution adopted by the Egyptian diplomacy. Egypt then began to convince the U.S. and the Western European countries to accept the idea of talking to a joint Palestinian-Jordanian delegation. The delegation was received in France, Italy and the EEC announced its willingness to receive it.41

In the final analysis, Egypt's new moderate policy towards the Arab Israeli conflict, its regional Arab Foreign policy, together with the convergence of events in the Middle East contributed to Egypt's reintegration into the Arab fold. The Arab region witnessed a de-emphasis of the Egyptian-Israeli peace process as key Arab states became preoccupied with regional instability and the maintenance of security. Iraq being dependent on the financial assistance of the Gulf states and on the technical and military assistance of Egypt was in no position to prevent Egypt's reintegration. Saudi Arabia and the Gulf states needed Egypt as a counter weight to the Syrian backed
Iranian threats to their security. The Syrian attempt to diminish the PLO provided Egypt with the opportunity to rally publicly its support to the PLO during the 1982 Israeli invasion and in the period after that. These had the effect of legitimising Egypt's reintegration and the achievement of a rapprochement that serves the national interests of the concerned Arab states.
CONCLUSIONS

Egypt's promotion of a moderate policy towards the Arab-Israeli conflict and the peace process in the Middle East, has been linked to its relations with the U.S. during the 1970's and 1980's. Egypt's foreign policy has appreciated since the late 1970's that if a comprehensive peace was to come to the Middle East it could only occur with an American Commitment that would in turn bring Israel along. Egypt's strategic role as a force of stabilisation was similarly appreciated by the U.S. especially after the series of dramatic events that occurred in the late 1970's and early 1980's. The Soviet intervention in Afghanistan, armed conflict in the horn of Africa, closer ties between South Yemen and the Soviet Union, the signing of a friendship treaty between the Soviet Union and Syria, the presence of Soviet military facilities in Libya and South Yemen, political turmoil in the Arab world in the post-Camp David era, the victory of the Iranian revolution and its impact on the Arab Gulf stability and the Iran-Iraq war - all were factors that accentuated Egypt's vital role as a moderate regional power capable of counteracting any destabilising forces.42

The U.S. which was a full partner in the Egyptian-Israeli peace treaty, has continuously attempted to maintain and strengthen the peace process by providing aid to Egypt and Israel. The increase in the size of U.S. economic and military assistance coincided with the shift in Egypt's foreign policy. The political underpinnings of the aid
programmes to Egypt was articulated in the 1981 A.I.D. (Agency for International Development) document as follows:

"Our high level of aid to Egypt is premised on the belief that Egypt’s peace initiatives are crucial to that objective and that these efforts must be supported by a growing economy".43

U.S. assistance given to Egypt was designed to replace Arab funds withdrawn because of the Camp David accord and to strengthen Egypt’s moderate peace policy. The aid covers a broad range of basic needs: food, infrastructure improvement, the updating of social services, technical assistance, agricultural and industrial projects and loans to support Egypt’s balance-of-payments difficulties. Egypt’s national interests since the late 1970’s has been defined primarily in terms of economic development through Western technology and investment. The primacy of economic concerns alongside an advocacy of stability and peace became the corner stones of Egypt’s foreign policy behaviour. Thus, both the U.S. and Egypt had a common aspiration for promoting peace and stability in the Middle East.

The positive Arab attitude towards Egypt has been a part of a whole new Arab strategy towards the Arab-Israeli conflict. All of the Arab countries have come to accept a peaceful settlement with Israel in the Fez summit. While recognising the right of all states in the area to live in
peace, the Fahd peace plan clearly implied Israel’s right to exist.

Later on, several meetings between Arab officials and Israelis took place. In 1986, Israel’s Prime Minister Peres met with King Hassan of Morocco in Ifran. The summit which was publicly acknowledged was not criticised except by Libya and Syria. Similarly, the meeting that was held between PLO officials and an Israeli delegation in Romania in 1986 - was publicly announced and weakly criticised by the Arab capitals.

The Mubarak - Peres meeting in Alexandria in 1986 was only attacked by Syria and Libya. Otherwise other Arab countries took a very moderate position. This was all in contrast to the Arab strong refusal of late President Anwar-El-Sadat’s visit to Israel in 1977. Egypt did not send back its Ambassador to Tel-Aviv except after the three conditions demanded from Israel were met. These were (a) Israel’s withdrawal from Lebanon (b) the solution of the Taba dispute, and (c) progress in the Middle East peace process. Egypt’s demands to return its Ambassador to Tel-Aviv strengthened Egypt’s Arab credentials. The moderate Arab position towards Israel has become more explicit in inter-Arab politics as Jordan and the PLO joined Egypt in the quest for a peaceful settlement for the Arab-Israeli conflict.

The Egyptian isolation in the Arab world after the signing of the 1979 peace treaty can be analysed as a part of the
continuous competition in the balance of power between the main poles and centres of the Arab system. It can be viewed as an extension of the power-politics game in the Middle East region. With Egypt’s leadership absent after the end of Nasserism and the wave of Arab Nationalism, new power centres rose in the region specially after the speedy influx of petro-power in the Gulf region. Saudi Arabia appeared as a new financial effective power in the region and it attempted to make the best gains out of Egypt’s absence - basically by playing a larger-mostly mediator - role in Arab politics. Iraq attempted to capitalise on Egypt’s absence by producing a programme for regional solidarity to promote its leadership. Similarly, Syria adopted a radical line and promoted its image as the sole defender of Arab causes in contrast to Egypt’s moderate peace politics. Thus, the Saudi, Syrian and Iraqi vetoes on Egypt’s return to the Arab community for a period of time, can be explained basically as a part of the interchange of power centres in the region. They would not accept again an Egyptian leadership centre to be the base of the Arab world.

But as a result of the regional developments in the 1980’s, a new phenomenon of “mutual interests policies” has occurred. The relations among the different Arab states is no more governed only by common causes, aspirations and the call for Arab nationalism. Arab relations in the 1980’s became more pragmatic with tangible national interests prevailing over ideological considerations. Inter-Arab relations are governed by the
exchange of benefits and interests and a greater flexibility leading to the development of working relationships across previously ideological divisions. A de-emphasis on ideology and the predominance of national interest considerations became more evident. For example, despite the absence of any diplomatic relations, Iraq has had very close co-operation with Egypt which provided it with military, technical, economical and political support in return for an end to Iraq's boycott of Egypt. Similarly, the PLO after its eviction from Lebanon has sought Egyptian support in face of Syrian pressures to control the organisation. Egypt in return gained the PLO support to the peace process. Egypt's restoration of relations with Jordan was in accordance with the plan of achieving peace in the region. The Gulf states have increased consultations with Egypt to secure a strategic depth against Iranian threats and to counter the Syrian support to Iran.

During the period 1982-1986 Egyptian-Arab co-operation achieved substantive progress despite the official boycott. There was a resumption of Cairo's airlinks with almost all the Arab states, and the volume of Egypt's trade with other Arab states was reported to have increased by 100% over 1978-1979 in 1984. Egyptian mass media began to accentuate that formal relations were becoming irrelevant with the multiplicity of contacts with Arab capitals. The growth of bilateral relations and ties through the various Egyptian "interests sections" in the Arab states hardly fell short of the customary diplomatic
ties. There was an extensive exchange of visits in late 1984 with Jordan as it restored its diplomatic relations on September 25th 1984. Egypt's foreign policy succeeded to regain membership in both the Islamic conference organisation and the non-aligned movement in 1984 with Arab consensus. PLO Chairman Arafat headed a high level delegation to Egypt in October 1985, declaring PLO's official restoration of contacts with Egypt. Egypt had just prior to the visit announced that it considered the second part of the Camp David accord regarding the autonomy of the Palestinians dead. By the end of 1985 Egypt had received many high-level officials from Jordan, Iraq, PLO, Algeria, Tunisia and the Yemen Arab republic.

During 1986 the Egyptian-Arab relations became very active. Egyptian information Minister - Safwat El Sherif visited the United Arab Emirates for a week to discuss different aspects of co-operation. Dr Atef Ebid, Egyptian Minister of State for Administrative Development visited Kuwait to arrange for the Kuwaiti Chamber of Commerce visit to Cairo. In December 1986, Egypt received a Saudi business delegation followed by a military delegation headed by the Saudi defence Minister's Counsellor. President Hosni Mubarak was invited to the fifth summit meeting of the Islamic Conference organisation in Kuwait in January 1987. Finally, a delegation representing the Egyptian opposition parties visited both Lebanon and Syria in late 1986 and early 1987 in an attempt to find a settlement for the Lebanese conflict. This gradual improvement in the Arab-Egyptian relations culminated in
the resumption of full diplomatic relations after an Arab consensus to end the boycott in the November 1987 Arab summit in the Jordanian capital Amman.

The most significant outcome of the Amman Arab summit is that it highlighted the greater pragmatism and moderation of Arab foreign policies towards the conflict with Israel. The acceptance by the Arab states that an Arab state - Egypt - can negotiate and sign a peace treaty with Israel, and still remain a member of the Arab community as well as retrieve a role in regional Arab affairs, is a clear manifestation of the new pragmatic trend. The Amman summit reflected the changes that have occurred in the Arab regional system over the 1970’s and 1980’s. The impact of the Egyptian-Israeli peace treaty, Israel’s invasion of Lebanon and the Gulf war has been the introduction of a moderate collective Arab consensus vis-a-vis Israel. The radical Arab stand under the leadership of Egypt’s Nasser is no longer present, and the absence of any alternative credible successor in the region has freed the regional policies of individual Arab states.

Arab foreign policies have been reformulated to pursue their own respective regional and external policies while at the same time safeguarding their national interest regarding security and economic survival. For instance, the fall in oil revenues over recent years has had a widespread impact on inter-Arab relations. Reacting to reduced revenues, oil-producing Arab states had to
redirect their investment to domestic development plans. This, in turn, introduced constraints on the foreign policies of these states resulting in a reordering of national priorities to be in favour of their state national interests and a moderation in regional policy. This convinced several Arab states to reject the confrontation policy with Israel and opt for a policy of peaceful co-existence.

In practical terms Egypt’s return to the Arab fold is a reflection of the change in the Arab state’s position towards Israel, the economic constraints due to the end of the oil boom and a result of the threats they perceive to their security. Egypt’s reintegration in the Arab community has proceeded with an Arab understanding that Egypt of the fifties and sixties is not that of today. It is appreciated that Egypt is unlikely to wish to dictate a collective Arab policy. Egypt’s domestic pressures and challenges ranging from economic difficulties (demographic profusion, diminishing food production and water resources and rising consumption of natural resources) and destabilising forces (eg. militant Islamic groups) tend to infuse on its foreign policy a necessity for minimising attempts for regional leadership. Egypt’s Arab policy will continue to pursue a balanced approach to inter-Arab relations, to maximise its own respective national interest regarding economic development and how Arab states can contribute to it in the 1990’s.

Another major cause for the rapprochement was the Arab
state's perception of the presence of a strategic imbalance in favour of Israel in the absence of Egypt. The peace treaty between Egypt and Israel in 1979, the failure to establish the Eastern Front 1978-1980, and the Iran-Iraq war since 1980 - all assisted in the creation of a context for Israel's powerful and superior position versus the Arab states. The Arab states perception was that quantitatively, the strategic arms balance in the region enables Israel to defeat any single or combined Arab military effort. Israel has a flourishing arms industry, while the Arab attempt to build a joint Arab organisation for military industrialisation was paralysed after the Camp David accord. Israel’s military strength is further enhanced by the supply of the most sophisticated and modern U.S. military technology. This strategic threat has not only alarmed the Arab front-line states but also the Arab Gulf states as Israeli planes violated Saudi Arabian territorial space on their way to bomb the Iraqi nuclear facility in June 1981.48

Moreover, the Arab regional disagreements and conflicts have been perceived strategically as a situation that can provide Israel with convenient channels for interference and penetration. Conflicts among Arab regimes (political, economic, military) and conflicts within these regimes (ethnic, religious, political) provide a flexible ground for a deeper fragmentation in the Arab world.49 Lebanon, Sudan, Iraq and Libya are a few examples of Arab states involved in civil or regional disputes. This continuous drain of Arab financial, economic, human and military
capabilities has accentuated the importance of correcting the declining status of Arab power vis-à-vis Israel. Egypt's reintegration can be viewed then as an acknowledgement on the part of the Arab leaders of the necessity of re-establishing a strategic balance with Israel that would serve the purpose of maintaining peace and stability in the Middle East region.
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