

Killing President Anwar Sadat—Again

With turmoil in the Middle East, and specifically threats from Iran and its proxies in Syria, Lebanon, Yemen and Gaza, this week's anniversary of the signing of the 1979 Camp David peace treaty between Israel and Egypt is something to look back on and celebrate. It'd have been unimaginable before that to see Israel opening regular flights to Sinai as it will be doing next month, and Israel's Prime Minister Bennett flying to Sinai for an historic meeting with Egyptian President al-Sisi as he did this week.

This week's meeting, also joined by Emirati Crown Prince Mohammed bin Zayed, is less about celebrating the peace and more about their resolve against a common enemy. In 1979, who'd ever have imagined that. Or even in 2019.

But with Egypt breaking the ice in 1979, Jordan following in 1994 and then the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Morocco and Sudan all following suit in 2020, the milestone of Camp David is ever present.

Peace with Egypt was momentous on many levels. Israel was able to breathe a little easier having the largest and one of the strongest Arab countries, and one of its longest borders, at peace. Egyptian President Sadat understood Israel was not going anywhere, that after several bloody wars, which it lost, more war was not the answer, and it was in Egyptian interests to make peace.

Largely brokered by U.S. President Jimmy Carter, Camp David was one of if not the single most significant achievements, possibly domestically but surely internationally, during Carter's one-term presidency. Surely, as a self-avowed Christian, Carter celebrated as he recalled Jesus' words,

“Blessed are the peacemakers.” Indeed, Sadat and Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin won the Nobel Peace Prize.

Hopes of peace breaking out were dashed as Egypt was expelled from the Arab League. Two and a half years later, Sadat would be dead, a victim of his bold statesmanship. The irony of Carter’s single greatest foreign policy success was foiled by his greatest foreign policy failure: the abandonment of the Shah of Iran, the Islamic revolution and rise of the Islamic Republic of Iran, and the 444-day hostage crisis that was just a foreshadowing of evil to come.

Four decades later, there are now six Arab countries that have made peace with Israel, and more talking and coordinating with Israel openly. As Sadat understood, Israel is not going anywhere, peace is much more to their advantage than war, and active open alliance with Israel is in their interests. That was clear in Sinai this week, not as a celebration of Camp David per se, but very much part of its legacy.

What brought Bennett, al-Sisi. and bin Zayed together this week was discussion of their common enemy and threats they face. Indeed, it was Islamists inspired by the Iranian revolution who murdered Sadat in October 1981. Today, a deeper entrenched and more hardline extremist Iran threatens Israel, and the rest of the Arab world. Iran’s reach is truly stunning from Lebanon, Syria and Iraq, and Yemen as a southern front, along with an outpost in Gaza. Israel is not the only target. This week, Iranian missiles were launched at Jeddah in Saudi Arabia.

As much as Sadat broke the ice making peace and paid with his life, now more than ever, the moderate Sunni Arab world recognizes Iran as being a real threat and present danger. That’s why we saw the Israeli, Egyptian and Emirati leaders together in Egypt this week. The Saudis and others were not present in person, but there’s no question that they were represented.

Missile attacks like that which took place in Saudi Arabia this week are not new. Israel has been dealing with this threat in Syria and Lebanon for years, and of course is monitoring (and interrupting) the Iranian drive to get nuclear weapons. What is new, and one of the likely triggers for the surprise meeting in Sinai, is the U.S. and other world powers seemingly running to reach a new deal with Iran, ostensibly to squelch their nuclear ambitions. The 2015 (Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action) Iran nuclear agreement didn't stop the Iranian ambition or ability. It paid the Iranians billions and paved a path to their ability to achieve a nuclear weapon. The Biden administration seems to want to reach a new agreement at all costs, preferring to see the world as how its leaders want it to be, rather than how it is.

Reports about the new agreement are that it'll be a bad remake of the poor 2015 original. An element rumored to be part of the new agreement's terms is the delisting of the Iranian Revolutionary Guard as a terrorist group. The idea is so absurd and dangerous that President Biden could truly look at himself in the mirror and say, "Come on, man."

Israel and the moderate Sunni Arab states know better and look at the world how it is, not how they want it to be. Three successive U.S. presidents have now pushed Israel and former Arab adversaries together. One brokered an unprecedented four peace treaties. Two so disenfranchised the Arabs that their only course of action and self-interest was to ally with Israel against a common enemy.

Carter didn't pull the trigger that killed Sadat. But by empowering Iran, he provided the ammunition. As Biden and other world leaders run to revive the disastrous 2015 agreement, further emboldening a terrorist state, it's as if they're reloading the Iranians' ammunition. They can't kill Sadat again physically, but the Iranians have many targets in their crosshairs, and someone is likely to pay the price.

Israel, Egypt, the UAE, Bahrain and even Saudi Arabia know this. That's why the meeting took place in Sinai this week, not as a celebration of Camp David. But one can rest assured that the foundation of Camp David created new alliances, and the Iranian threat created the resolve that has emerged to keep us all safe against Iranian threats.

Blessed are the peacemakers. Amen. But sometimes enemies posing existential threats need to be defeated. {eo}

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