National Foreign Assessment Center

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EGYPT

Succession in Egypt: The Process, Problems, and Possible Consequences

An Intelligence Assessment

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Central Intelligence Agency
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Key Judgments

An undercurrent of unrest that has been building in Egypt over the stalemated peace process, new prohibitions on political activity, and continuing economic dislocations have given rise to questions about President Sadat's tenure, and thus about the country's future. In our view, Sadat remains in control of events and can still draw on substantial assets, most notably his political acumen. He is a master at manipulating the myriad contradictions and pressures that beset Egypt. Nonetheless, the central role played by Egypt in Middle East politics puts a premium on its stability and moderation—both of which have prevailed primarily because of Sadat—and it is therefore important to consider the consequences of his departure.

In our opinion:

- The chances are good that Sadat loyalists will be able to control the succession process. Vice President Mubarak and War Minister Jamasi are the strongest contenders to replace Sadat.
- Those most likely to emerge at the top in a post-Sadat Egypt will support the fundamentals of his foreign and domestic policies, but are likely to make significant tactical changes.
  - — They will still want a negotiated settlement with Israel brokered by the United States, but would pursue it more slowly and in closer coordination with Egypt's Arab allies. (We are assuming here that Sadat's departure is not preceded—or prompted by—a dramatic, irreversible collapse of the peace process.)
  - — Attitudes toward the United States will depend primarily on the status of peace negotiations at the time Sadat leaves office. It is highly likely that a new government—particularly if it is led by Jamasi or another military leader—will seek to reduce the bitterness that has characterized Soviet-Egyptian relations under Sadat. A military-oriented government would be receptive to a Soviet offer to resume supplying arms, although it would not necessarily favor a warming in Egyptian-Soviet relations across the board.

— A successor regime will probably be cautious in its domestic policies; it might relax some of Sadat's unpopular economic reforms while seeking ways to reduce pressures for greater liberalization of political life.

- The chances of an extralegal seizure of power, although fairly small, are clearly within the realm of possibility. A takeover could develop if there were either a marked upsurge in discontent with Sadat and his policies, possibly accompanied by serious civil disorder, or a protracted succession crisis.

  — The military would play a pivotal role in either circumstance. An exclusively military regime coming to power in these circumstances would be strongly inclined to restore an Egyptian-Soviet arms relationship, although even then the approach to Moscow would be cautious. Egyptian-Israeli peace efforts would not necessarily end.

  — A government of the extreme left or right, either led or installed by elements in the military, would be a major threat to the peace process. Either eventuality would harden the attitudes of even the most flexible Israeli leaders.

Succession in Egypt: The Process, Problems, and Possible Consequences

Cause for Concern

The high expectations generated by Sadat's trip to Jerusalem had no recent precedent, and it was perhaps inevitable that disappointment over Israel's meager response would produce a profound pessimism. Sadat has been unable to stave off a deepening conviction that his dramatic effort has failed and that a return to old negotiating formulas holds out little hope for the immediate future.

Egyptians on the whole still admire Sadat and applaud his motives. Nonetheless, a subtle but clearly detectable undercurrent of skepticism is emerging concerning the continued viability of the President and his policies. A resurgence of grumbling over food and housing shortages earlier this year and fears that riots like those in January 1977 could be in the offing have compounded Sadat's problems. The rapidity with which this latest round of popular ferment developed may indicate that the Egyptian political climate is more volatile now that most Egyptians have come to accept Sadat's thesis that peace and economic improvement are inextricably linked.

Serious questioning of the regime remains confined largely to the politically sophisticated and centers on whether Sadat and his policies can survive, not on whether he should be allowed to carry on. Doubts are strong, however, and any new failures, missteps, or even a period of unchecked apprehension might lead to an open challenge of the government's authority.

To a degree, Sadat's own attitude has contributed to the uncertainty. He has said he will resign if his Jerusalem initiative proves fruitless and has underscored the point by speaking of the initiative in fateful terms. It is possible, of course, that an offer to resign or perhaps a call for presidential elections ahead of schedule will be used to elicit a popular demand that he stay on. Nasir used just such a gambit following the Arab defeat in 1967.

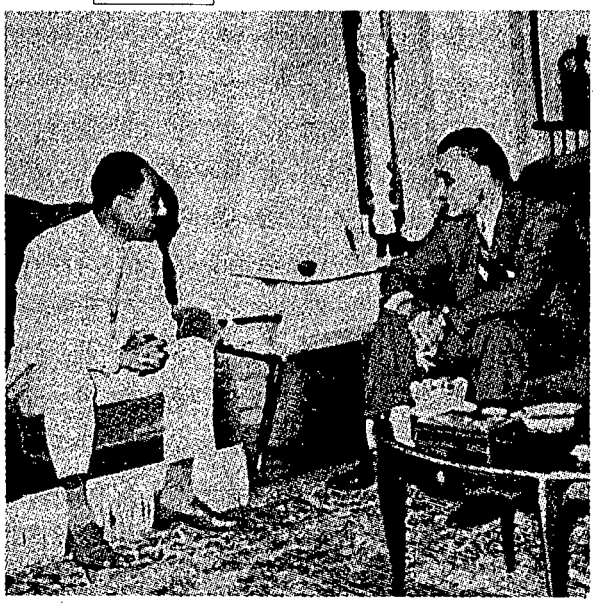
A persuasive argument can be made, however, that Sadat may at some point feel compelled to step aside. He has viewed his overture from its inception as a personal gamble of almost messianic proportions that should not redound to Egypt's detriment. Should he become convinced his efforts have failed, he might prefer to resign rather than be saddled with dishonor or submit to the criticisms and restrictions on his freedom of action that rejoining the Arab fold would bring. A new leadership, he might reason, would be able to dissociate Egypt from the abortive effort to "woo the enemy" and thus would be better able than he to develop credible policy options. There would also be a strong emotional component in Sadat's approach to a failure.

and—in the face of dashed dreams—might act out his disillusionment through resigning.

Moreover, his trip to Jerusalem has significantly increased the risk of assassination by domestic and foreign extremists.

The Precedents

The history of Egypt has for the most part been one of stability. Its population is homogeneous, and the majority is politically quiescent. At the same time, centuries of marginal existence have deeply etched a desire among Egyptians for a



Sadat with Nasir in 1962.

stable, decisive, central authority. All three changes of regimes in the past half-century have been accomplished quickly and without bloodshed. The odds probably are that the next change of government will be carried out the same way.

Within these broad parameters, however, Egypt is in uncharted waters. The provisions in the 1971 Constitution governing succession are untested and ambiguous. The liberalization of political life under Sadat has stirred long-repressed forces that could become dangerously divisive in a period of uncertainty. In addition, Sadat's departure would bring to an end the generation of leadership rooted in the 1952 revolution—and with it the mythologies and experience that have contributed to Sadat's strength.

Sadat's assumption of the presidency following Nasir's death in 1970—although on the surface a smooth constitutional ritual—was in fact an exercise in traditional Egyptian politics. Nasir's inner circle—made up of competitive men of roughly equal power—decided, rather than assumed, that the constitutional process would be observed. The decision apparently was made easier by the widely held assumption that Sadat would be little more than a figurehead, with real power exercised by the Prime Minister and the informal collegium of Nasir's closest aides.

In the months of political jousting that followed—during which turmoil was sometimes only narrowly averted—Sadat gained the upper hand. His underestimated political talents were instrumental, but he was helped immeasurably by the absence of a single, preeminent candidate among the many competitors for power. A constitutional process that automatically and immediately elevated Sadat from Vice President to President put him in a position to profit from the Egyptians' traditional preference for a single leader. Of perhaps greater importance, Sadat's ascendency was accomplished before the political sympathies of the military had fully jelled.

The Most Likely Successors

Similar behind-the-scene maneuvering is likely in any scenario for Sadat's departure, save an organized coup d'etat. Powerful individuals—not institutions or popular sentiment—will apportion authority and office. There is a very high probability that Sadat's key advisers will be able to control the selection process. Among his colleagues, those from the military establishment will dominate.

Vice President Mubarak, War Minister Jamasi, Prime Minister Salim, Assembly President Sayid Mari, and close confidants of Sadat's on the periphery of government, such as Osman Ahmad Osman, General Hasan Tuhami, and Ashraf Marwan, are likely to form the clique or cliques that will take the lead in determining Sadat's successor. [redacted]

There is a reasonable chance that they will act in concert to prevent private disagreements among themselves from inviting broader political agitation.

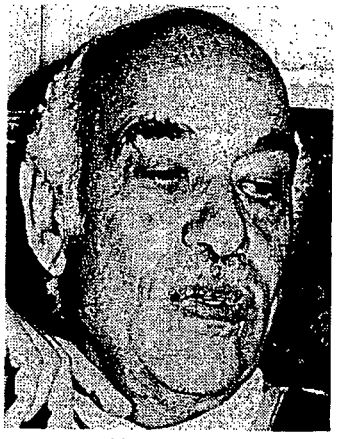
By virtue of their direct connections to the military—which is the ultimate arbiter of power in Egypt—Vice President Mubarak and General Jamasi are likely to be the leading presidential contenders. Mubarak, a career Air Force officer, was a war hero with neither political aspirations nor political experience when Sadat appointed him Vice President in April 1975. Sadat has put him through a rigorous apprenticeship designed to give him a solid grounding in domestic and

Sadat's Inner Circle

War Minister Jamasi

Vice President Mubarak

Prime Minister Salim



Assembly President Mari

Special Advisers

Hasan Tuhami

Ashraf Marwan

Osman Ahmad Osman

foreign affairs,

Mubarak's internship has been an experiment in developing a political leader, but Sadat himself has never clearly indicated whether he is satisfied with the results. It seems likely, however, that Mubarak would be Sadat's choice as his successor, if Sadat was serious about resigning. In recent months, Sadat has talked of Egypt's need for younger leadership that reflects the confidence instilled by the October War. Mubarak, whom Sadat continues to tutor, would seem to match the President's description.

General Jamasi, as leader of the professional military, has more potential power than any other contender for the presidency and could probably demand the position if he so desired. We have received mixed readings on Jamasi's political aspirations; until recently he was thought to be uninterested in higher office, but talk of Sadat's possible departure, according to some accounts, has led him to reconsider.

Until his appointment to the Cabinet in 1974, Jamasi's career had been that of a professional soldier, and even in his role as Deputy Prime Minister he has chafed under the "political" assignments Sadat has given him.

Prime Minister Salim has had more political experience than Mubarak or Jamasi, but has the disadvantage of being closely associated in the public mind with the price increases that sparked rioting in 1977 and with more recent government efforts to withdraw several newly granted political freedoms. He thus has little popular appeal. Salim does have the widespread support of the police because he served as a career police official before his appointment to the Cabinet. Moreover, he reportedly has promoted his proteges in key posts throughout the bureaucracy and the parliament. As a civilian, however, he has no standing with the all-important military establishment, and the latent rivalry between the police and military could work to his detriment.

There are no other obvious contenders, although a host of elder statesmen would qualify as figurehead candidates.

Policies of a New Government Led by Sadat Loyalists

Regaining Egyptian territory from Israeli occupation and alleviating economic difficulties that cause discontent would remain the primary goals of a new regime. Those most likely to emerge at the top after Sadat's departure generally agree with his approach to achieving these objectives and will probably not initiate any immediate, dramatic shifts.

Significant changes that derive from the loss of Sadat rather than from different ideas on the part of a new leadership, however, are probably inevitable. Moreover, the assertive role the military establishment is likely to play in a successor regime would require it to be more sensitive than Sadat has been to the interests of the armed forces.

Sadat's colleagues will probably continue his quest for a negotiated settlement with Israel. There has been a wide consensus among the military, the bureaucracy, and the public supporting the diplomatic approach. Moreover, the military establishment—from which a new president is likely to come—is acutely aware of the decline in its strength compared with Israel and

the risks it would run in initiating hostilities in the near future, even with limited objectives similar to those of 1973.

The Egyptians' belief that their humiliating defeat in 1967 was avenged in 1973 and their waning sympathy for the Palestinian cause have helped reinforce the view that the struggle with Israel should be waged at the negotiating table, not in another indecisive, costly confrontation. Even disillusionment over Sadat's "failed" Jerusalem initiative has not stirred any appreciable sentiment for waging another war.

Changes in the way a new regime pursues peace are inevitable, however, and even subtle departures from Sadat's tactics could have far-reaching consequences—perhaps leading ultimately to renewed hostilities.

A new leadership, for instance, because of domestic weakness and uncertainty about its standing among other Arab states, would be reluctant to take the lead as Sadat has done in making concessions to Israel. It almost certainly would abandon the direct public contacts with Israel started by Sadat's Jerusalem trip and would probably pursue more vigorously a *modus vivendi* with Syria, the Palestine Liberation Organization, and perhaps even Libya and Iraq. These actions would slow and could completely upset the settlement process, depending on how Israel reacted to the new Egyptian caution.

Sadat's difficulty in parlaying his Jerusalem initiative into concrete achievements has been a disappointing lesson for the Egyptians. It has dimmed their hopes and altered their perception of both enemy and ally. They have learned that Israeli politics are complex and that the psychological barriers Sadat hoped to break down are perhaps impenetrable among Israeli leaders such as Prime Minister Begin. Even if a new leader shared Sadat's penchant for the bold, inspirational stroke, he would probably adopt a firmer bargaining strategy to demonstrate that he could match the tough-mindedness of the Israelis.

Sadat's difficulties also seem to have taught those around him a renewed appreciation of the benefits of acting in concert with Egypt's allies. It seems highly unlikely that any new government would risk the ire of Egypt's primary financial patron, Saudi Arabia, or further antagonize Cairo's most powerful critic, Syria, through the kind of independent actions Sadat has undertaken.

Returning to a safer negotiating formula, such as working toward a Geneva conference or under some other form of UN auspices, would—in the view of new Egyptian leaders—not only please the Saudis and Syrians but would also meet the approval of the United States and the USSR. None of Sadat's colleagues seems to share his strong feelings on "sidelining" the Soviets from peace negotiations, nor did they think it was prudent for Sadat to have circumvented the United States in its role as central mediator.

These factors could be altered significantly if Sadat, in resigning, lashed out at the United States and Israel and cast serious doubt on the possibility of a negotiated settlement. Even then, a new leadership would have to consider the consequences of losing ground in another war or of a prolonged period of "no war/no peace."

A new government would not relinquish Egypt's claims to be leader of the Arab side in dealing with Israel, but its actions probably would be geared primarily to ensuring continued Saudi financial assistance and ending Syrian attacks on Egyptian policy. Developing a cooperative relationship with both countries would instill domestic confidence, reduce Cairo's exposure to radical Arab troublemaking, and possibly open up greater—albeit more conservative—negotiating options.

The complexities of Egypt's relations with Syria and Saudi Arabia, however, will cause a period of uncertainty, given the longstanding rivalry between Damascus and Cairo and Saudi Arabia's historical fear of Egyptian political hegemony. The Saudis' and Syrians' assessment of the new government and its stability would be as important, and perhaps initially more important, than Egypt's attitude toward them.

Egypt's relations with the Saudis—by far the more important—have been handled almost exclusively by President Sadat either directly or through his special emissary, Ashraf Marwan.

With the possible exception of Vice President Mubarak, Sadat's colleagues have not established close personal ties with Saudi leaders. Moreover, it took Sadat almost three years to develop rapport with the Saudis. Although his successors—should they come from the present power structure—might benefit some from the confidence already established, trust will not come automatically or quickly.

A new government's commitment to a moderate, or preferably right-of-center, political course, its stability and thus its ability to protect the Saudis' heavy financial investment in the Egyptian economy, and its commitment to a "comprehensive," rather than a separate, settlement with Israel are the criteria by which the Saudis will judge a new regime.

The Saudis will also want Egypt's policy toward the United States to remain in step with their own. The status of peace negotiations at the time a new Egyptian regime takes over would have a direct bearing on the Saudis' own attitude toward Washington, and they would not expect more from the Egyptians in the form of cooperation with the United States than they are prepared to extend themselves. On the other hand, until the Saudis are confident of the new government's stability and political coloration, it is questionable whether they would join Egypt in the kind of partnership that led to the 1973 war and the oil boycott against the United States.

The practical assistance—both diplomatic and economic—that the United States has extended Egypt and the fact that the United States, unlike the USSR, has handled relations with Cairo as a partnership would certainly facilitate continuing friendly US-Egypt ties. Recent evidence that the United States wants to pursue a more "balanced" policy toward the Arabs and Israelis—such as the decision to sell jets to Egypt—has helped bolster waning Egyptian confidence in Washington.

Nevertheless, those most likely to follow Sadat will probably be very uncertain of their standing with US leaders. Links between Cairo and Washington are still primarily viewed in personal rather than institutional terms, and Sadat's successors will not feel that they automatically inherit either the benefits or the obligations of a relationship Sadat personally forged and for the most part dominated. This perception could be critically important should the circumstances surrounding Sadat's departure involve a serious faltering in either the peace negotiations or the Egyptian economy. Almost all Egyptians believe Sadat's approach to both issues has been urged on him by the United States, which would be blamed, along with Sadat, for serious setbacks on either front.

In general, new Egyptian leaders would probably not be as trusting or cooperative as Sadat has been with the United States. Strong arguments made by former Foreign Minister Fahmi against relying so heavily on the United States were thought to have aroused sympathy among other members of Sadat's inner circle. Various positions taken by General Jamasi, for example, implied that he found some fault in some instances with Sadat's reliance on the United States. Finally, Sadat's inclination to think in global, long-range terms—a key factor in his policy of cooperation with the United States—is not apparent in any of the major contenders for his office.

An improvement in relations with the USSR in a post-Sadat Egypt would seem almost certain. Sadat's personal antipathy for the Soviets has been instrumental in bringing Egyptian-Soviet relations to an alltime low. None of Sadat's colleagues has expressed this deep-seated hostility nor has any been directly associated with the antagonistic actions Sadat has taken against Moscow.

The impetus for improving ties is likely to come from the Soviets, who have long awaited and at least indirectly worked for Sadat's removal. They could offer a new Egyptian regime a resumption of arms deliveries and spare parts, a formal accommodation on the Egyptian debt, expanded commercial exchanges, greater cooperation in peace negotiations, and the implicit understanding that better ties might be accompanied by a reduction in Soviet assistance to Egyptian dissidents.

If a new government were led by, or heavily influenced by, military leaders—which is quite likely—a Soviet offer to resume military supplies

is likely to be accepted, as long as it is not accompanied by an unreasonable political quid pro quo. General Jamasi and others have indirectly counseled Sadat to restore Egypt's Soviet arms inventory and would try to do so themselves or encourage a new civilian government to do so. An accommodation on the arms issue would not necessarily portend closer ties across the board. The Soviets' aggressive policy in Africa, their assistance to the Libyans in the border clashes in 1977, their highhanded treatment of the Egyptian military in years past, and their poor personal rapport with Egyptians in general will militate against a complete reconciliation.

Overall, a new Egyptian regime is likely to assign higher priority to maintaining its equities with Saudi Arabia and the United States than to the more uncertain task of reviving ties with Moscow. Nevertheless, a significant lessening of hostility in the Egyptian-Soviet relationship, which seems bound to occur, would raise Israeli concerns and could indeed open the way for Egypt's developing a more potent military threat.

Domestic changes are likely to be circumspect but significant. Sadat has been an inspirational leader with a well-defined vision of where he wants to take Egypt. His self-confidence has been a major underpinning of the key domestic policies of economic reform and political liberalization, both of which have been undertaken at considerable political risk. It is highly unlikely that a successor regime would feel safe in pursuing these policies with the same persistence.

Because of uncertainty about its strengths, a new leadership might want to ease some of the dislocations caused by economic reforms. And it almost certainly would not be willing to tolerate the criticism—especially sniping from parliamentarians—that Sadat has endured. Sadat's economic and political reforms have advanced to a point where they would be difficult to reverse quickly, but "freezing" the situation with "adjustments" might be both a workable and attractive option. The "popular" referendum Sadat engineered in May, which significantly narrowed the right to oppose government policy, was clearly a move in this direction.

Both Prime Minister Salim and War Minister Jamasi have periodically expressed reservations about the speed and scope of the liberalization programs. Jamasi's criticisms have been low key, except for his objections to the greater freedoms granted to political parties. Salim, too, has been generally guarded in expressing criticism of Sadat's policies, but has failed to back some efforts with the full weight of his office.

Sadat's own pursuit of a democratic, Western-oriented Egypt has involved considerable backing and filling, and he has moved forward only slowly. There seems to be some truth in his recent statement that Egypt is in a phase of critical transition, with its desire for greater political freedoms and economic opportunities outstripping its maturity and discipline.

A new government is not likely to have the strength or experience to manage the delicate balancing that Sadat has performed. Moreover, a regime led or dominated by individuals from the military is likely to exhibit considerable disdain for "politicians," who have traditionally been regarded by Egyptian officers as inept, corrupt, and self-serving. Should such attitudes prevail, the long-term prospects for further liberalization as Sadat has conceived it would be dim.

Other Scenarios

Although Sadat remains in control of events, his position is likely to become increasingly tenuous in the absence of significant evidence that his policies will succeed. In addition to posing serious risks to Sadat, escalating political unrest could render the succession process far less controllable than previously described. We believe the chances of a succession crisis or an extralegal seizure of power are fairly small but clearly within the realm of possibility. The Egyptian military, which is the only force capable of overturning the regime or, conversely, of restoring order and authority, would play a pivotal role in either circumstance.

Succession Crisis

The liberalization of political life under Sadat has unleashed long-repressed political sentiment that could become centrifugal forces in a period

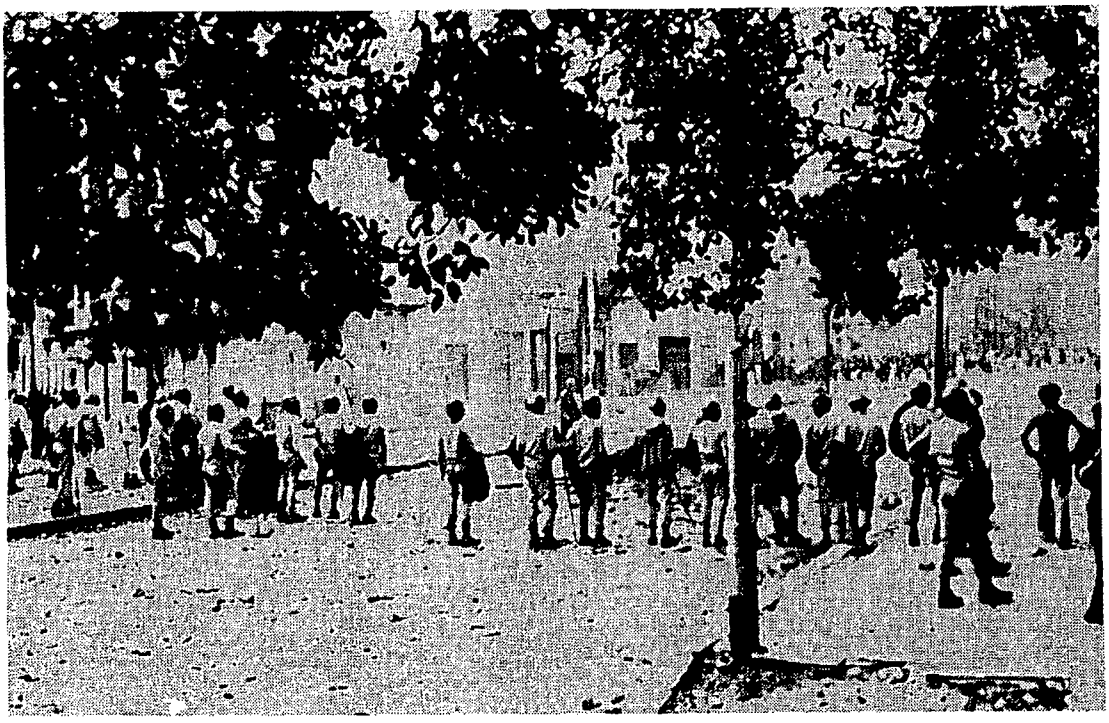
of uncertain leadership. Although the relaxation of government prohibitions has applied only to what in Western terms would be considered relatively tame political behavior, the shift away from the repression under Nasir's regime has encouraged greater activity and heightened political awareness that extends well beyond the small, legally sanctioned party system. Sadat's recent effort to reimpose some controls and the controversy it has caused indicate a new fluidity and potentially volatile political environment.

The Egyptian left proved its increased vitality during the disturbances in 1977, when Egyptian police were outflanked by a well-organized network of leftist agitators who turned spontaneous popular demonstrations into full-blown street riots throughout the country's major cities. In what may prove to be an ill-conceived maneuver to counterbalance the left, the government has been lax in controlling the resurgence of rightist religious groups—the Muslim Brotherhood in particular—which are now considerably stronger than their leftwing counterparts.

[redacted] either extreme might be capable of disrupting the succession process, especially if Sadat's departure was preceded or precipitated by a major government misstep, such as the "overnight" price increases that triggered the 1977 riots.

Although Egyptian leaders are not likely to repeat past mistakes, there are other problems such as housing shortages, seasonal food distribution bottlenecks, and shortages of certain employment opportunities, which could combine to spark new unrest. Since neither the right nor the left is in a position to mount a legitimate challenge, both probably see the exploitation of civil unrest as the only springboard to power available to them in the near term.

In addition to the possibility of exploiting economic grievances, there are potential hazards in the legal process governing succession that



Police stand guard outside the Ministry of Interior after it was stoned by rioters.

extremists could use to their advantage. Ambiguities in the new constitution, for instance, seem to invite trouble.

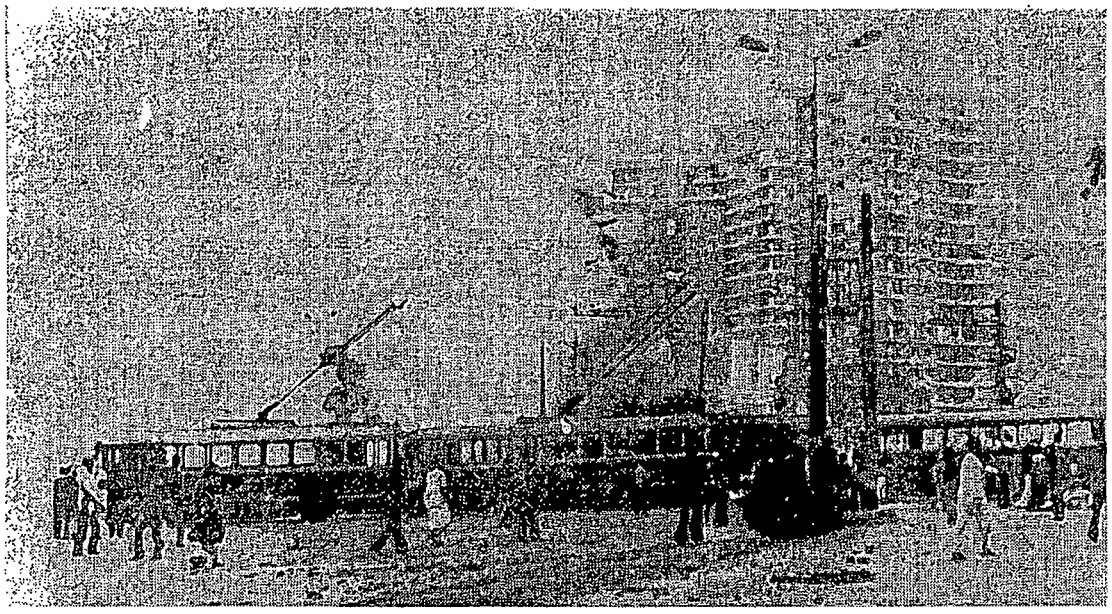
There is now no provision for automatic succession. The president of the People's Assembly, not the Vice President, assumes the presidency, but only for 60 days, during which he is to organize a new election. It is not clear, moreover, that the Assembly president is granted presidential authority during this crucial period; and he is constitutionally barred from being a candidate himself. Thus there would be a serious leadership vacuum during the interregnum, and presumably ample opportunity for the kind of political agitation that could disrupt the election process.

The constitutional provision charging the People's Assembly with nominating a single presidential candidate and submitting his candidacy to a popular referendum is clear enough. When the Constitution was drafted, however, there was no competitive party system in parliament. It is by no means certain that the increasingly assertive Assembly factions will, as they once did, execute their responsibilities as mere formalities.

Sadat's moderate center party currently holds an overwhelming majority in the Assembly; it acts in a disciplined way, however, only when demanded to do so by Sadat and might not hold together in his absence. Other parties appear less fragile in terms of cohesion and are determined to retain their right to "oppose." The "voluntary dissolution" of the popular New Wafd Party in protest over a government crackdown was more theoretical than real and may gain it new sympathizers.

The advent of a rightwing or leftwing regime in Egypt would pose a major threat to the peace process, primarily because of the likely Israeli reaction. Israeli concern over the extremes in the Egyptian political spectrum has been at the heart of the oft-repeated argument from some quarters that Egypt is simply too unstable to make a lasting peace. The realization of these fears would almost certainly have a hardening effect on the attitudes of even Israel's more flexible leaders.

In general, Egyptian leftists strongly oppose the concessions Sadat has made to Israel, his shift toward the United States, and what they considered to be an abdication of Arab leadership.



Downtown Cairo during price riots in January 1977.

Many—especially those in the military—hold up an idealized recollection of Nasir's handling of the Middle East struggle and the superpowers as their standard. The Egyptian left has been influenced by Communists, many of whom are or have been indirectly supported by Moscow, and a swing toward the Soviet Union would almost certainly occur.

Libyan influence—particularly among Nasir disciples—is fairly strong, and it is possible that Tripoli, with its vast Soviet arms inventory and financial largesse, would be viewed by a leftist regime as an alternative source of support to Saudi Arabia. The Saudis would view a left-leaning government in Cairo with extreme alarm and would no doubt curtail their financial and diplomatic support.

The Egyptian right is more diverse, stronger, and more experienced than the left. Moreover, its most influential components—the Muslim Brotherhood, elements of the prerevolutionary Wafd, and the legally sanctioned rightist party in parliament—are not as ideologically rigid as the left and have been generally supportive of Sadat's policies.

There is, however, a doctrinaire attitude toward Islam among most rightist groups which has, in many instances, anti-Western overtones. In its extreme, it has spawned fanatical elements strongly opposed to a sovereign Jewish state, deeply suspicious of the United States, and committed to desecularizing Egypt. The Soviet Union and Communists are the archenemies.

The impact of a rightwing regime coming to power in Egypt might not be severe initially, since the most prominent rightist leaders are fairly pragmatic men, several of whom had leadership experience before the 1952 revolution and in the succession of government under Sadat. Over time, however, such a regime could become subject to more extreme influences within its constituency.

The chances of a rightwing or leftwing regime coming to power and maintaining control depend heavily on the Egyptian military. In the rare glimpses we have had into political attitudes within the armed forces, opinions and political leanings seem to correlate closely with those in the general population. The majority is politically aware but without strong ideological persuasion; among the remainder, sentiment for a return to the "Nasirite" goals of socialism and Arab leadership coexists uneasily with rightwing religious sentiment.

The emergence of either a rightist or leftist government would probably involve a serious division within the armed forces and thus could presage a period of instability and internal repression.

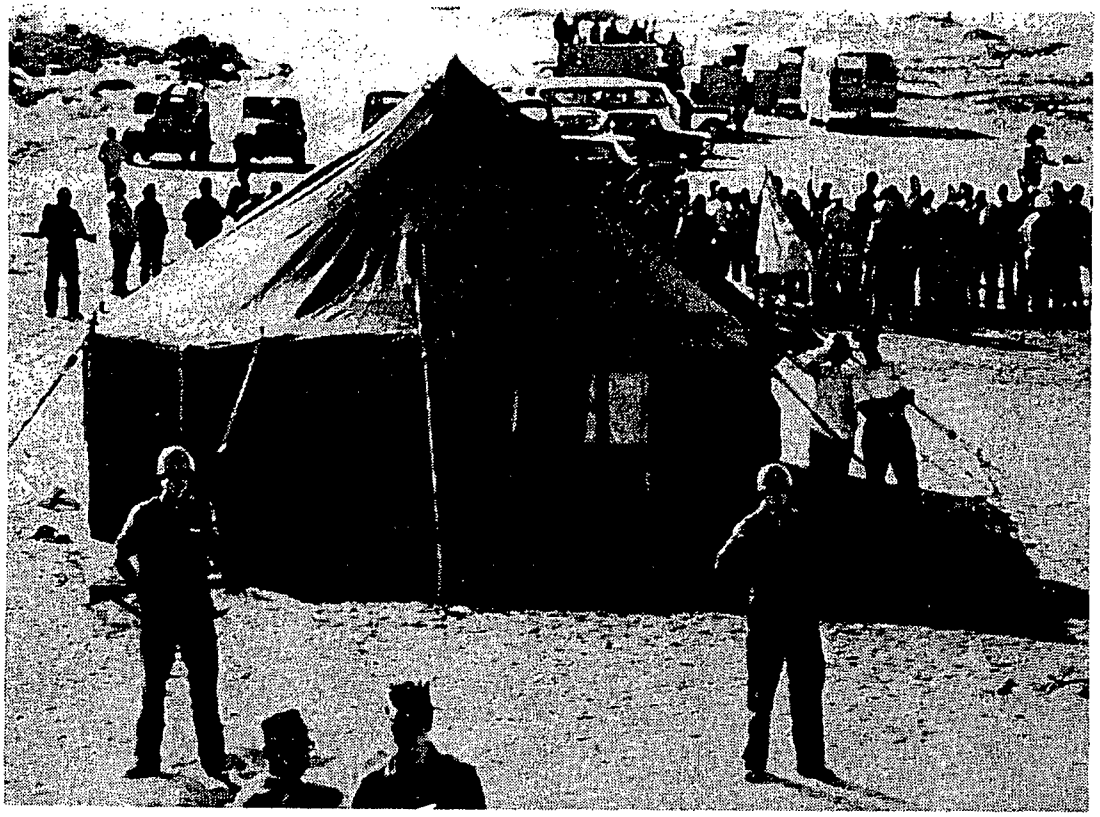
Military Takeover or Forced Resignation

Another scenario—also unlikely but not impossible—is that the military acting on its own, perhaps even while Sadat is still in power, might take over the country. Disillusionment over Sadat's handling of the economy and peace negotiations is on the rise. There is also growing concern over political ferment in the civilian sector and what it might portend.

In addition, the armed forces are forbidden to join political parties and have been disfranchised since 1976.

Nevertheless there is unhappiness with the regime, especially among low- and middle-grade officers. Grievances mainly involve economic hardships, particularly low salaries and housing shortages, and the poor state of Egypt's arms inventory, although there is also general grumbling over Sadat's antagonistic attitude toward Libya and the Soviet Union.

The military's suppression of the economic riots in 1977 had an especially unsettling effect on morale at all levels of the armed forces. The rank and file and much of the officer corps shared the frustrations that brought civilians into the streets, and military leaders—worried about the reaction of their troops—only reluctantly obeyed government orders. There is some evi-



War Minister Jamasi led the Egyptian side in negotiations with the Israelis at Kilometer 101 following the 1973 war.

dence, moreover, that the military is now falling behind civilians in terms of economic well-being.

Should economic or political grumbling cause new civil disturbances, the military might be induced, even if it were not organized to move against Sadat, to topple him. It is also possible that under less dire circumstances, key military leaders, perhaps even Sadat loyalists, might feel compelled to insist on his "retirement" should there continue to be unhappiness with his handling of key domestic and foreign policies.

The prospects for continuing efforts to arrange peace terms with Israel would not necessarily plummet following a military takeover. Since the negotiation of the second Sinai disengagement agreement, a rapport of sorts has gradually developed between the Egyptian and Israeli military establishments that could help offset fears of new Egyptian militancy. The Israelis might also reason—were an Egyptian military regime to declare its intention to continue negotiations—that a military government would be better able to ensure domestic stability that would facilitate the negotiating process.

If such a government were to show any hint of reverting to a Nasirist form of rule, however, the fate of peace efforts would be gloomy. The principles Nasir espoused—particularly his emphasis on secularism, socialism, restoration of an Arab nation and its corollary, regional unity—were anathemas, not only to the Israelis but to conservative Arab governments, particularly the monarchies in Jordan and Saudi Arabia. Even if a military government of Nasir's persuasion were able to convince Tel Aviv of its commitment to a peaceful settlement, it would probably be unable

to forge the cooperative relationships within the Arab camp that are a prerequisite to serious negotiations.

Although the officer corps would like to rehabilitate Egypt's Soviet arms inventory and gain advanced weaponry that has been unavailable to Egypt through Western sources, there does not appear to be strong sentiment for a return to the close relationship that previously existed with Moscow. On the other hand, frustration with the United States is greater in the military establishment than in the civilian sector. In at least some officer circles, it is felt that Washington has not responded adequately to Sadat's overtures. Thus, a postcoup leadership made up solely of military men would probably initiate changes in Egypt's policy toward the superpowers that would favor the Soviet Union, although such moves would probably be engineered cautiously and be intended—both in theory and in substance—to bring Egypt closer to a "nonaligned" profile.

The author of this paper is [redacted] *Middle East Division, Office of Regional and Political Analysis. Comments and queries are welcome and should be addressed to* [redacted]