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The agreements negotiated at the Camp David summit, which the Israeli parliament approved on 28 September by a large majority, have given Prime Minister Begin's popularity in the country as a whole a dramatic boost and further entrenched his government in power. Ironically, the adamant opposition of a vocal minority of ultra hardliners—especially to the required sacrifice of Jewish settlements in the Sinai—has weakened Begin's support within the ruling coalition. It has also reinforced the Prime Minister's already strong reluctance to consider major new concessions in future negotiations on politically delicate West Bank issues.

A poll taken shortly after the summit indicated that about 78 percent of the Israeli public approved of Begin's performance—an increase of over 15 percent since the previous poll in late August. The subsequent approval of the accords by an 84 to 19 vote reflects what appears to be the opinion of most Israelis that peace with Egypt, the major Arab confrontation state, is worth the "painful concessions" involved in abandoning Israel's Sinai airbases and settlements.

The comfortable Knesset majority for the agreements rests in large part on the support of opposition Labor deputies. A strong minority from Begin's own conservative Likud bloc and its closest coalition ally, the National Religious Party, either voted against the agreements or abstained, despite Begin's threat to resign if a majority of his coalition did not support him. Among those who refused to do so were some longtime close associates of the Prime Minister.

The hardliners' concerns, some of which are shared even by Labor leaders and other figures who support the accords, center around the possible precedents that



Enthusiastic Cairo citizens celebrate President Sadat's return from the Camp David summit

removing the Sinai settlements and returning to the pre-June 1967 border with Egypt could set for further negotiations dealing with the West Bank and Golan Heights. Many are equally worried that Begin's agreement to "full autonomy" for the West Bank could over time lead to an independent Palestinian state—something almost all Israelis are set against.

The strident outcries against the agreements from many of those who have been his closest political supporters doubtless have taken a heavy psychological toll on Begin. The conservatives' opposition, moreover, has left him little room in the short term for further maneuvering on key West Bank issues unless he relies again on Labor Party support, which he clearly is loath to do.

Begin already has laid the groundwork for a tough negotiating stance in further peace talks. In his public speeches in the US and Israel since the summit, he has repeatedly sought to underscore the tactical nature of his concessions and to emphasize that he has no intention of abandoning the West Bank. [redacted]

ARAB STATES

Egyptian President Sadat this week returned home from the Camp David summit and received an enthusiastic welcome in Cairo. Other Arab leaders continued efforts to search for a consensus against the Camp David agreements.

The Camp David agreements clearly have enhanced Sadat's domestic position, and he appears ready to forge ahead with a treaty with Israel despite continuing bitter Arab criticism. Of special importance to Sadat is the fact that the attitude of the officer corps, whose members applaud Sadat's success in restoring Egyptian sovereignty to the entire Sinai Peninsula, remains positive.

Among the hardline Arabs, Syrian President Assad has taken the lead in efforts to orchestrate Arab pressures on Sadat to drop the idea of a separate peace. The Syrians doubt that Israel will ever agree to negotiate a return of the Golan Heights and see that, without Egypt, Syria does not pose a credible military threat to Israel.

Assad and the other members of the "Steadfastness Front" formed last winter

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Libyan leader Qadhafi

in preliminary negotiations for the projected five-year transition period—and if the accords are revised “satisfactorily.”

Both Hussein and Assad began separate trips this week to consult with leaders of Saudi Arabia and the conservative Persian Gulf states. The Saudis remain deeply unhappy about the implications of the accords for Arab unity, but have been relatively restrained in their public comments so far. Assad probably has no illusions that he can secure active support from the Saudis, but apparently hopes he can convince them to continue their fence-straddling.

to oppose Sadat's peace initiative have been focusing their attention on Jordan's King Hussein since they believe the King could torpedo any West Bank arrangements by refusing to participate in negotiations called for in the broad framework agreement. Libyan leader Qadhafi and Palestine Liberation Organization chief Arafat on 22 September traveled to northern Jordan to present their arguments to Hussein. Early this week, Assad journeyed to Amman, where he reportedly took a very tough line against the accords.

Hussein is treading carefully in the face of the conflicting pressures on him. He has said that he found the results of the Camp David meeting wanting because they contain no assurance of eventual Arab sovereignty on the West Bank or Gaza, Palestinian self-determination, or total Israeli withdrawal from Arab territories. He maintains that he is not bound by the summit's outcome because he was not consulted on the accords applying to Jordan.

The King, however, is taking pains to make clear that he has not closed the door completely on Jordanian participation in the Camp David arrangements. He told an American correspondent on 23 September that he would consider entering talks if the US agrees to be a “full partner”—probably meaning strong US involvement

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