World reaction: Camp David could lead to World War III

Reactions to the Camp David pact for a separate peace between Egypt and Israel were not ambiguous. The pact was viewed as a dangerous signal that the foreign policy of the United States was geared to a strong NATO-style military presence in the Middle East. Commentary by Syria and the Soviet Union directly said that the agreement could spark World War III. Other countries directly stated their dissatisfaction.

The following selections include reactions of government leaders and influential press commentary on the significance of the pact.

Soviet Union

A joint Syria-USSR communiqué issued following last week's meetings in Damascus between Soviet Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko and Syrian President Hafez Assad, condemned the Camp David accord for "aiming to legitimize the occupation of Arab territory by Israel and to increase tension in the Middle East." Gromyko and Assad charged "the imperialist powers with seeking to extend their military presence in the Middle East region and call upon the Arab world to find a fundamental and global solution of the Mideast problem." The communiqué stressed the necessity of Israeli withdrawal from the occupied territories and the need to meet the inalienable rights of the Palestinians, including the right to establish an independent state. Gromyko and Assad also announced their decision to oppose any attempt to weaken Soviet-Arab friendship.

In the Soviet daily *Pravda* of March 25, Pavel Demchenko wrote the following commentary:

"An acquaintance with (the treaty's) documents shows that they take the Middle East problem away from genuine peace and that they hold the danger of new explosions, since the roots of the crisis are not pulled out and the right of the Palestinian people to create its own state is ignored....

"It is immediately striking that the Western press these days is devoting more and more attention to the military side of the question. The agreement of Israel and Egypt to conclude the treaty depended on huge supplies of American arms to these two countries.... Washington intends to give Israel and Egypt police functions in the Middle and Near East, in particular those which the Shah's regime in Iran formerly carried out.

"But this is only part of the problem, only one link in the Pentagon's strategic plans.

"American newspapers...conclude that 'an important decision' (in the Middle East) matured in Washington a long time ago. Despite the fact that the U.S. has found 'allies' in the person of the Peking leaders, the American strategists understand that on the whole, imperialism is losing one position after another.

"(In the Middle East) even such states as Saudi Arabia...have begun to slip out of the American grasp....

"In these circumstances, it was decided to reconcile Egypt and Israel no matter what the price, so as to tie them tighter to the American military machine and take other steps at the same time. The most important such step is the intensification of direct American military presence in the Indian Ocean, in particular in the oil-rich Persian Gulf. A detachment of navy ships was sent there. And the order was given to fly in arms and American instructors to North Yemen.

"Commenting on these steps, the *Christian Science Monitor* wrote that 'Carter, at last, is taking measures to save Arab oil.' And it went on to express the evil thought that the epoch in which the U.S. would 'refrain

from direct participation in conflicts' in the wake of the humiliating defeat in Vietnam, was over...."

Syria

Syrian Foreign Minister Abdel Halim Khaddam warned that the "conflict will deepen" in the Middle East and that "the rest of the Arab world has no choice but to turn to the USSR" for help. "If a new Middle East war breaks out, it will lead to World War III," said Khaddam.

In an interview with *Newsweek*, Syrian President Hafez Assad said that the treaty "gives us a pretty good picture of Washington's intention to let the region sink deeper into conflicts as a means for U.S. policy to achieve its targets.... There are also U.S. attempts to create an atmosphere of tension in the area."

Iraq

An article in the March 9 *Baghdad Observer*, written under the headline "1979: A Year of Limited Wars" had this to say:

"It is only March 1979, but with what is going on here and there it doesn't seem that it will be a healthy year. One can predict that it will be a year of limited wars, which in fact differ from that of a total war. Because from the present conflict one can say that these wars are fought for objectives less than the total destruction of the enemy and unconditional surrender.

"The development of nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction by the superpowers has forced them to keep war limited in scope and intensity...

"... Neither side in a limited war is likely to be able to win a victory in the traditional sense, since efforts by either to employ forces are balanced by counteractions from the other. Unless one side in this is willing to accept defeat, hostilities will escalate to the point of suicidal nuclear exchange ....

"To those who are involved or are thinking of doing so, we would like to remind them that this year is the international year of the child. So let it pass for the sake of the young ones. I shall conclude my article with this piece of poetry: 'His Name Is Today.'

We are guilty of many errors and many faults.
But our worst crimes are abandoning children.
Neglecting the fountain of life.
Many of the things we need can wait. The child cannot.
Right now is the time his bones are being formed.
His blood is being made, and his senses are being developed.
To him we cannot answer tomorrow.
His name is today."

Saudi Arabia

The official position of the Saudi Council of Ministers regarding the separate peace agreement between Egypt and Israel was announced by the Saudi Minister of Information Dr. Muhammed Abduh Yamani. Here is his statement reporting on the March 19 Council of Ministers meeting.

"... It is affirmed that the attitude of the kingdom is permanent and remains as it was — that is, to seek right, justice and peace for the entire issue, and that security and peace will not be realized except through complete withdrawal from all the occupied Arab areas, including holy Jerusalem, and granting the Palestinian people their legitimate right to self-determination."

Jordan

In a startlingly blunt statement, King Hussein of Jordan accused Washington, and in particular Zbigniew Brzezinski, of "armtwisting" the Arabs into endorsing the Egypt-Israel separate peace while giving a March 20 press conference in the capital city of Aman. Here are portions of his remarks as reported by the *Washington Post* and *New York Times* March 21:

"....Never has there been such misunderstanding between the U.S. and Jordan...

"I cannot understand why they (the U.S. delegation led by Brzezinski) came. When Washington sends people to get support for the great step forward, it is not taking into consideration the real feelings of the people. It is asking people to acquiesce or support a totally unacceptable situation....

"....Moreover the role spelled out for us in our absence was a very humiliating one; to put it mildly, to be the policeman in the occupied territories and to help in the security field. And so we asked, whose security? Against the occupied territories? For what end? What length of time? This is where we and Washington have been at opposite ends.

"We must return to the United Nations Security Council. I don't see any alternative."