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Abstract
The visit of Egypt's President Anwar Sadat to Jerusalem was the model for Dayan and Katz's conceptualization of the genre of media events, as live programs which have the power to transform history. Fifteen years later, a series of televised reconciliation ceremonies, which marked the stages of the peace process between Israel and its Arab neighbors (the Palestinians and the Jordanians), are used to re-examine the model. We demonstrate (1) how the effectiveness of these ceremonies depends on the type of contract among the three participants-leaders, broadcasters and public-each of whom displays different kinds of reservations, and (2) how the aura of the ceremonies draws on the prior status of the participants (Hussein), but also confers status (Arafat).

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Staging Peace: Televised Ceremonies of Reconciliation

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The visit of Egypt's President Anwar Sadat to Jerusalem was the model for Dayan and Katz's conceptualization of the genre of media events, as live programs which have the power to transform history. Fifteen years later, a series of televised reconciliation ceremonies, which marked the stages of the peace process between Israel and its Arab neighbors (the Palestinians and the Jordanians), are used to re-examine the model. We demonstrate (1) how the effectiveness of these ceremonies depends on the type of contract among the three participants-leaders, broadcasters and public-each of whom displays different kinds of reservations, and (2) how the aura of the ceremonies draws on the prior status of the participants (Hussein), but also confers status (Arafat).

Leaders attract the attention of assassins either because they are particularly successful in a controversial cause or because they symbolize an establishment which has been oblivious to some cause, or merely because the spotlight is on them. Heroes of media-events- JFK, the Munich athletes, the Pope, Sadat, Rabin- seem particularly vulnerable. The assassinations of Sadat and Rabin are parallel in this respect: fundamentalist opponents of the peace they were making saw them as traitors and almost-publicly declared them as legitimate targets. They were both shot down at ceremonial events. In this sense, the Rabin assassination and funeral is the latest installment in a televised serial which began with Sadat's overture to Menachem Begin in 1977 and continued through the series of interim agreements with Egyptians, Palestinians and Jordanians that were widely celebrated. This paper deals with these agreements, particularly with the ceremonial broadcasts that celebrated them, and sets out to examine the interaction among them and their audiences. A companion paper will deal with the "three dark days" of Itzhak Rabin, arguably the most transformative event of the series.

The series of live broadcasts of peace gestures begins with the live broadcast of Anwar el-Sadat's heroic visit to Jerusalem in 1977, offering Arab recognition to Israel in return for a territorial settlement.

It is the paradigmatic example of a media event in Dayan and Katz's (1993) analysis of the genre. In spite of the secret diplomacy that preceded it, Dayan and Katz argue that the broadcast itself with the whole world watching-not only celebrated a historic occasion but, in no small measure, constituted the occasion. They treat the broadcast as performative, publicly conferring a new status on the participants. They also imply that in this and similar cases the live broadcast accomplishes two further steps: it enacts, metonymically, some little part of what it is proclaiming and gives a push to a long term process which has a chance of bringing about an enduring transformation. The events in Eastern Europe offer further examples, from the Pope's first visit to Poland, through Wenceslas Square to the fall of the Berlin wall.

Two decades later, the series of live broadcasts of peace between Israel and the Palestinians, and Israel and Jordan, provides an opportunity to reexamine these conclusions, and to specify more clearly the conditions under which media events "work," both at the time of their performance and subsequently. From the analysis, it will be obvious that assessments of long term effects do not stand still; they have to be made repeatedly as time goes by. What

is more interesting, however, is to ask whether immediate assessments of the success and meaning of an event are not contradicted soon after, or even more important, whether the seeds of the future meaning of an event can be discerned, at least retroactively, in the ceremonies themselves. Thus, there was an evocative feeling of deja vu on seeing the handshake between Israeli Prime Minister Yizhak Rabin and PLO leader Yasser Arafat on the White House lawn, on live television, in September '93. To many Israelis this moment of euphoria recalled the Sadat visit and signalled the transformation of the hundred-year-long conflict between Israelis and Palestinians into a new era. Less than two years later, in the midst of a chain of the most massive terrorist attacks Israel had ever known, the public signing of the Oslo agreement had lost its aura as a marker of transformation, to both Israelis and Palestinians. Some believed it could have succeeded had we progressed faster, others-that we should never have started down this road. But by the end of 1995 both agreed that the effectiveness of the public ceremony itself, regardless of how miraculous it seemed at the time, deserved to be reconsidered.

This reinterpretation of a media event as an unkept promise--a spectacle that has created more expectations than it could fulfill- raises the question of the validity of any instant evaluation of the success of public ceremony. On the one hand there are media events which, at the time of their enactment, seem to fail in transforming reality but, in hindsight, turn out to be the catalysts of change. The Reagan-Gorbachev summits, for example, were regarded by observors as "rituals of pacification" which only paids elaborate lip-service to international reconciliation (Hallin & Mancini, 1994); and yet these summits may be seen from a distance as a major turning point in post-World War II history. The Anita Hill-Clarence Thomas contest, by the same token, seemed early-on as a failed event in terms of social change, but later proved "liberating" as it acted to make it possible "to speak about matters of race and gender without the barriers, the silences, the embarrassing gaps in discourse" (Morrison, 1992). One prominent outcome of this new form of conversation was the public legitimacy given to the condemnation of sexual harassment.

On the other hand, there are other media events such as the first men on the moon, Boris Yeltsin on the Soviet tank, and the Watergate hearings, that have "made history" instantly but their meaning has changed with time. The astronauts on the moon, live on TV, seemed like a beginning of man's conquering of cosmic space; now it looks more like a dead end, a wasteful one-time spectacle, that could be justified only within the cold war, its real heroes operating behind the screen. Nixon is now seen as an unfortunate scapegoat, whose conduct of the presidency did not differ from those of the presidents who preceded and followed (cf. Reagan and the Contras) (Schudson, 1992). Looked at from a distance, says Schudson, Watergate seemed to have stayed in the American collective memory as a "preemptive" metaphor that prevented pursuing the President rather than stopped the presidency from operating unconstitutionally; and Boris Yeltsin, cast in the US media as "the world's new hero of democracy- his ascent coinciding with the decline of Gorbachev as ‘a falling star'" (Alexander and Sherwood, in press)-may only have led Russia from bad to worse. In hindsight, the seeds of the events' destruction may even have been apparent in what seemed an immense success when it happened.

The crashing into tough reality of so many of the euphoric media events of recent years-in Eastern Europe and in the Middle East- brings us to reconsider Dayan and Katz's

specifications of the conditions under which a media event can be said to "work." These divide into three parts: (1) When does an event "succeed" as a performative, as an affirmation of an immediate change of status by participants and viewers? (2) When does an event work transformatively, taking part in a long-lasting process of social and political change? (3) Should these assessments be reexamined periodically?

Performative events according to Dayan and Katz depend on a kind of contract among three partners-principals, broadcasters, and public-each of whom must affirm that the event "deserves" media-event treatment. Beyond the contract which underlies the very definition of a media event, the success of the event--performatively (in the short run) and transformatively (in the longer run) further depends on the quality of the enactment of the contract: Do the principals acknowledge each other? Do they signal this to their publics? Do the broadcasters live up to their promise? In reviewing this series of events, we shall look for clues to their effectiveness in the nature of the contract and its enactment. We begin by recalling the conditions of the Sadat event, and then go on to compare this quintessential success story with the subsequent cases. With respect to each of these questions, we shall first recall the conditions of the Sadat case, and then go on to compare what we know of the subsequent cases.

ANWAR EL-SADAT'S VISIT TO JERUSALEM, NOVEMBER 1977

A heroic move- 1977

Israelis only knew the Egyptian president as the "hero of the crossing" of the Suez Canal in the Yom Kippur War, which had taken place only four years before the visit. As such he caused the worst trauma (defeat) in the nation's history, and, at the same time (in spite of losing the war) restored the honor that Egypt had lost in the Six Day War (Katz, Dayan & Motyl, 1983). This heightened stature allowed Sadat to reiterate his readiness to make peace with Israel (already stated in 1972), hoping, at the same time, to receive U.S. aid for his economically ailing country. There seemed no chance, however, that Israel would accept his condition of total withdrawal from the Sinai.

On the Israeli side, the belated reaction to the Yom Kippur War, at least in part, brought the rightwing Likud party to power for the first time in Israel's history. Prior to the election, Menachem Begin, the new PM, showed no hint of an interest in making peace.

It was a complete surprise, therefore, when it was learned that Moshe Dayan, Begin's Foreign Minister at the time, had met secretly with Hassan Tohami, Sadat's emissary in Morocco, whereupon Sadat announced again in the Egyptian Parliament that he may come to Israel for a visit of reconciliation. He had been promised that Israel would yield the Sinai in return. Katz, Dayan and Motyl describe how from that point on, events proceeded at a frenetic speed. Taking on the role of mediator, American TV anchor Walter Cronkite, in a filmed telephone conversation, asked Sadat whether "it might be as little as one week?" and Sadat replied, "You could say so, Walter," making the rendezvous concrete.

On Saturday night, at the expected hour, the plane arrived, the El Al stairway moved up to the Egypt Air plane, and Sadat emerged, followed by stars of U.S. TV news. Katz, Dayan and Motyl recall that "a thrill ran through the crowd and a cheer went up at the airport, (and)

echoed in every living room in Israel," while Bob Simon of CBS, reporting from the ground, exclaimed, "will miracles never cease?" Next, Sadat, walked down the reception line, greeting his Yom Kippur foes as old acquaintances.

For the next three days, from their living rooms, Israelis followed Anwar el Sadat's every move-worshipping at the (Muslim) holiday service of the El Aqsa mosque, visiting the memorial to the (Jewish) holocaust, laying a wreath at the tomb of the Unknown (Israeli) Soldier, receiving a standing ovation in the Knesset, accepting Golda Meir's gift "from a grandmother to a new grandfather," confessing that he used to refer to her as "the old lady."

On TV, Sadat presented himself as the hero who risked his life by coming, determined to extend a sincere and personal offer of peace to Israel. From the minute he stepped off the plane the Egyptian President made his visit into a grand gesture of sacrifice and reconciliation, offering his heretofore-unknown charismatic personality to the Israeli public, in order to overcome the psychological barrier (which, he claimed, constituted 70% of the conflict) and to turn suspicion into trust. In support of the idea that it was the exposition of his identity on TV rather than a change in policy that transformed the relationship between Israel and Egypt is the fact that Sadat's political message remained unchanged. In his Knesset speech, delivered in Arabic, his terms remained uncompromising, which did not prevent the visit from proceeding as a process of romantic conquest in which what counted was the strange discovery by Israelis that an unknown enemy could be revealed as a new friend, charming generals and Knesset members, and capturing the hearts of Israeli viewers. In their hunger for recognition Israelis seemed to be ready to give up tangible advantages for a gesture of friendship.

Rhetorics of reconciliation

Sadat's Knesset speech packaged the bitter pill of his uncompromising conditions for peace in words and associations that evoked the potential sympathy of both Arabs and Jews. For Arab viewers, the words, symbols and historical events mentioned by Sadat often signified meanings opposite to the one Sadat proclaimed. The most blatant example was his use of the word *salam* (the Hebrew *shalom)* for "peace." While Israeli Jews were overjoyed, Arabs knew that *"sulch"* is the Arabic term for "real" and complete reconciliation, while *"salam"* is a truce signifying temporary submission until conditions might be ripe for victory over the enemy. In prior speeches, when he explained the impossibility of ever making peace with the treacherous Jewish state, Sadat used the term *sulch;* now he chose to offer the temporary version of peace, *salam,* leaving the back door open (Liebes-Plesner, 1984).

In another passage, a peace treaty signed between the prophet Muhamad and the Jews of Medina was evoked as an historical omen guaranteeing success to the current initiative. For Muslim viewers, however, who know the unspoken end of the story, the evocation operated to throw doubt on the possibility of peace. The Jews of Medina, it seems, turned out to be traitorous; Muhamad killed them all, and pronounced that the Jews cannot be trusted. As in the case of *sulch,* Sadat himself, in other speeches, had often cited this story as "proof" that it is impossible to make agreements with the Jewish state.

Sadat made repeated use of this technique of "whitewashing" symbols. Thus, invoking Abraham, the ancient common ancestor of the Jews and the Arab peoples, Sadat directed his

audience to consider that Abraham was ready to sacrifice his only son for a higher cause. Unspoken again was the Koranic version in which Abraham does not intend to sacrifice his son at all but goes on a pilgrimage to the sacred mountain as a pedagogic act in order to be publicly instructed by God not to sacrifice his son. In addressing the Israeli public by a sophisticated choice of symbols signifying common ancestory and history, by omitting the elements of competition, conflict, and contradiction, the Knesset speech clinched the meaning of Sadat's visit as a romantic conquest of the hearts of Israelis, and a wink of reassurance to the Arabs.

The performative: What did television do?

Dayan and Katz (1993), offer several reasons to explain why the live broadcast of the visit was crucial to its success. If recognition by an Arab leader was what the Israelis most wanted, what more tangible manifestation could there be? Recognition lies in publicity, as in the case of the declarations "you are married," or "Jerusalem is the capital of Israel" which become performative by virtue of their publicness. Thus, in accepting the hospitality and authority of the Israeli government and its Parliament, with the whole world watching, the senior leader of a major Arab state in the Middle East redefined an illegal squatter, a pariah state, as a legitimate neighbor, and at the same time established Egypt as a trustworthy neighbor.

Second, live bargaining on TV allowed Israelis to see for themselves that the Egyptian President was determined not to budge from his condition that every last grain of sand in the Sinai peninsula be returned. Had they been told these conditions of peace by their own leaders, following the secret negotiations, they may have been left with a feeling that their government has not tried hard enough.

Third, in talking to Israelis over the heads of their political leaders, Sadat could present himself as making a huge sacrifice and taking enormous risks for the sake of peace, thereby gaining a moral right to demand an even greater sacrifice on the part of his hosts. In anthropological terms, says Dayan, he was performing the ceremony of "potlach" (Mauss, 1969), in which the chief of a neighboring tribe offers a gift which cannot but be reciprocated by an even larger gift. Fourth, the visibility of the gesture exercised major pressure on the U.S. to extend the aid it had promised both sides in return for making peace.

The contract

It will be seen that all parties to the event acknowledge its status a "high holiday." The principals saw it as momentous, and saw each other as worthy partners. Journalists and broadcasters from all over the world talked of it as a "miracle." In spite of voices, notably that of ex-chief of staff, Mordechai Gur, who warned against a Trojan Horse, the Israeli leadership, the media and the public rallied around Sadat's definition of his visit. The feeling of Israelis that "they were no longer an island, a Western outpost or besieged fortress in the Middle East" (Dayan & Katz, 1993) found expression in a major reversal of Israeli public opinion toward Egypt in the wake of the visit. Public affirmation of the contract was somewhat less apparent in Egypt, where there was far less solidarity, and the other Arab countries certainly stayed out.

The enactment of the contract can be shown to follow the succession of identifiable phases that characterize transformative events, according to Dayan and Katz: (1) *Latency.* The notion that Israel and its Arab neighbors will never trust each other was a long standing problem, crippling and incurable, that had become accepted as part of the order of things. (2) *Signaling a solution.* The announcing of an impending ceremony designed to openly address the problem. Thus, Begin's acceptance of Sadat's self-invitation, in his assuring answer to Walter Cronkite, suggested the possibility of change and awakened a wave of expectation and excitement.[1] *(3) Modeling,* as an expressive dramatization or illustration of the desired state of affairs-in our case, peace-took the form of a symbolic enactment of the newly proposed paradigm. Sadat was greeted in Lydda airport by a twenty-one-gun salute, translating the "as-if-ness" into a collective reality of normal diplomatic relations. (4) *Framing,* the delivery of the transformative message of the event, was carried out by Sadat, the "guest" leader. The message, his proposal of an ultimate remapping of social reality, was blended into the gesture of the modeling phase, in which he mobilized the full force of his charismatic power.

The ensuing public debate that is meant to assess the impact and to construct the event's significance, the phase of *Evaluating,* appears in Dayan and Katz's model as part of the event. But this phase carries on in time far beyond the ceremony, and only ultimately determines whether the event had indeed been the starting point for a historical and political transformation. On the Israeli side, the change in public opinion generated by the visit persisted and overcame the trauma of evacuating towns and agricultural settlements in the Sinai. The political right, that believed that the treaty with Egypt might ensure that the West Bank would stay under Israeli rule, was disappointed, however. On the Egyptian side, the event itself overshadowed the opposition at the time, although we know the reservations of intellectuals and other groups, such as the fundamentalists. This meant that the peace remained "cold," with one-way tourism, no collaborative projects, and continuing criticism by the intellectual elite, and by the extreme religious fanatics who finally succeeded in assassinating President Sadat. But on the whole, in retrospect, the case of Sad at in Jerusalem, which was the very basis of the media events paradigm, still meets the criteria of Dayan and Katz.

RECONCILIATION CEREMONIES, 1993-1994:

An attempt to apply the same criteria with which we examined Sadat's Jerusalem "conquest" to the ceremonies between Israel and the Palestinians and Israel and the Jordanians shows that important structural differences need to be weighed against the ostensible similarities.

It will be immediately apparent that the contract among principals, broadcasters and public was far less compelling in the case of celebrating the Oslo agreement between Israel and the Palestinians, and certainly less convincingly enacted. The principals certainly did not warm to each other; the event depended very heavily on the sponsorship of the White House. Moreover, the enthusiasm of two thirds of the Israeli public had to contend with a strong hawkish opposition that could express itself this time because the initiative had come from the dovish side. The broadcasters were unanimous in their endorsement of the contract, since nobody could doubt the drama of the occasion, but in their enactment of the performance they paid very close attention to the ceremonial and political gaffes.

Ostensibly, celebrating peace with Jordan should have eclipsed even the Sadat event, because there was de facto peace (in spite of three wars) even before it was formalized. But that is the problem: there was not enough transformative challenge to sustain the drama of the event. In the U.S., there was more juggling to fit certain ceremonies unobtrusively into the broadcast schedule (at breakfast-time, for example); certain events were pooled among the major networks, and, others were carried live only by CNN.

I. ISRAEL AND THE PALESTINIANS: RABIN, ARAFAT, CLINTON

Comparing Sadat in Jerusalem and Arafat at the white House makes apparent an important distinction. Sadat came for face-to-face talk with the enemy, in the enemy's own capital city, even while making the point that the city was holy to Moslems. Arafat could not allow himself this gesture because it would have meant recognizing the Israeli capital politically, whereas he had promised it to the Palestinians. Hussein has also avoided Jerusalem as a meeting place, except for the Rabin funeral. Thus, the first difference to note is that Arafat and Rabin held their first meeting on neutral ground, and this has important implications for the performance.

(1) Coronation, not conquest

Sadat, as hero, made use of his televised visit to confront Israelis with his conditions for peace, and to impress on them his sincerity and his determination. On TV, he conducted political negotiation openly, using his personal charm in order to strike a tough bargain, with the pros and cons laid on the table for everyone to judge. There was still time to disagree. The accord between Israelis and Palestinians, on the other hand, was reached in Oslo *prior* to the White House signing, by unknown heroes, “in virtual hiding, not just from TV cameras and journalists, but from almost everybody else in authority on both sides" (Katz, 1993). Washington was not a dynamic step in the process of *negotiation* but a seal of approval over what had been agreed, more the equivalent of the signing of the peace between Israel and Egypt on the White House lawn, on President Carter's mahogony table. The drama is of marriage or engagement, not of courtship.

In the language of Dayan and Katz (who see media events divide among three sub-types of the genre-conquests, contests, and coronations), Sadat, on live TV, made his visit a "conquest" of the hearts of Israelis, while Arafat and Rabin, on the White House lawn, in September 1993, were enacting a "coronation," a performative which celebrates the conclusion of an event, rather than portraying an event in the making, in *statu nascentdi.*[2]

Note, also, that the ceremony was conducted in the neutral domain of the go-between-not in Jerusalem, or in Gaza, not even on the border. True, Sadat also came to Washington for the final signing after Camp David; but, at the crucial initial phases, he made his conquest in the heart of enemy territory. Israelis may have been ready to grant equality to Arafat in 1993 in Washington but not to invite him home to meet the family (an invitation which, at the beginning of 1997, seems further than ever). It may also mean that, for Arafat, the invitation to the U.S. was just as important (and less complicated) than an invitation to Israel, as his

Palestinian constituency was the primary reference group from whom he was seeking legitimacy, no less than from the Israelis.

(2) History (makes heroes), heroes (make history)

Media events represent the epitome of TV's tendency to personalize history. Live on TV, Sadat established his identity as the indisputable hero of the peace he was offering. Television convinced us that he made history, right or wrong. Did Rabin and Arafat, the heroes of Oslo, similarly convince us that it was they who changed history? Commentators at the time supplied a lot of context- it could not have happened without the collapse of Russian support for the PLO, or without the Gulf War in which PLO backed Iraq (thereby shutting down the Saudi money taps, and remaining penniless), and without Arab fundamentalism which threatened to topple PLO leadership. The argument behind all these geopolitical reasons is that the accord would have happened whoever the actors. Television ceremonies, however, gives us heroes. But, in this case, the result looked rather less heroic, and more overdetermined, more like social science than ceremony.

Nevertheless, Rabin and Arafat do deserve recognition as heroes in their decision to recognize each other as partners to a mutual agreement. Each had to confront a strong "hawkish" opposition in his own community, each had a long record as a warrior, each risked his reputation. Unfortunately, their ambivalence and half-heartedness showed through in the ceremony. Rabin, said journalist Nahum Barnea, was forced into the ceremony, especially into the handshake. Arafat's entourage claimed that Rabin's signing in cheap ball pen showed his real attitude to Arafat. This ambivalence may also have spread the seeds of a possible self-destruction of the peace process. Ironically, the two leaders may yet pay the full price for celebrating something which they may not be able to carry out.

(3) Public and secret disintermediation

Sadat and Begin reached over ('disintermediated,' Katz, 1988) the hierarchy of officials surrounding them to make contact with the people. The Oslo team did something similar to the official teams of diplomats in Washington who believed for some months that they were charged with negotiating peace. But while Sadat and Begin went over the heads of their own establishment on television in full public view of both sides, for all of three full days, the Oslo team undercut the official negotiators behind their backs, with no one watching. All that was left to do in Washington was to sign on the dotted line. It was "the diplomacy of protocol" says Katz, "even less substantive than the Egypt-Israel peace treaty of 1979 ... little more than an engagement party, not even a royal wedding."

(4) Enter an unknown enemy/Enter a well-known enemy

While Sadat was almost unknown personally before his TV debut in Israel, Arafat was a too well-known enemy. For the Israeli public, Arafat had become identified, in the last ten years, as the hero of the *intifada,* an identity coopted from the young local Palestinian leaders who

started the spontaneous uprising, as a reaction to their sense of humiliation (Schiff & Yaari, 1990).

Having come to the signing, Arafat made a point of not changing his bizarre "veteran terrorist" getup-complete with the khaki uniform, the kaffia wrapped round the head (making spectators wonder whether he had had to hand over the pistol, usually stuck in his belt, for safekeeping). In the midst of men in dark suits and ties, he seemed to be gesturing that *his* battle is *not* yet over, almost signalling to Israelis and to Palestinians that he had not changed, that he had no choice but to participate while remaining true to his beliefs. This was far less subtle than Sadat's dual messages, and alienated, rather than charmed, the Israelis.

IS THE CONTRACT AMONG ORGANISERS, MEDIA, AND PUBLIC UPHELD?

As we did in the case of Sadat, let us consider the performative character of the event as a function of the concurrence of the three partners- public, principals and media. Do each of these grant the ceremony its status as a media event?

The participation of the Israeli **audience,** in this case, was tentative. Israelis were skeptical, as they had witnessed the failure of Rabin's negotiation team to deliver an agreement in Washington with the local Palestinian leaders, who were generally considered more moderate. This was added to the real reluctance of Israelis to agree to a major compromise over the territories, which is, ironically, why they had elected Rabin.[3] Thirdly, while Sadat was an unknown leader whom Israelis fell in love with at first sight, Arafat was well-known, perceived as terrorist, and disliked.

And yet, Israeli public opinion did respond to the announcement of the Rabin government that there was going to be an accord and a mutual recognition, and, presumably, to the ceremony itself, with a radical increase in dovish opinion.[4] Forty percent of Likud voters supported the accord in addition to 95% of Labor and Left, for a total of 64% (Katz, 1993). The Palestinian public was especially approving (Gilboa, 1995).[5] But in terms of the trans formative power of media events the following reservations should be noted: (1) The support of Israeli public opinion expressed a long term trend of creeping dovishness, accelerated by the *illtifada.* (2) The dramatic increase in support was already the result of the *announcement* preceding the ceremony, not only the result of the inspiration of the ceremony. (3) As the series of ceremonies continued, support declined on both sides (Gilboa, Table 1). For Israelis this may be ascribed partly to the inflation in celebrations which eroded the effect, partly to Arafat's delivery of blatantly contradictory messages to different audiences (leading Palestinians in Gaza, in his homecoming ceremony, in rhythmic cries "in blood and fire we'll conquer Palestine," and explaining to Muslims in a South African mosque that the treaty is only temporary). But Israeli support waned mostly due to the increase in terrorist acts, in contradiction to the expectation of Israelis that the accord would bring about its decrease. A year later, less than half supported the agreement, and a majority opposed extending it beyond Gaza and Jerico.

The principals' ("organisers") participation in the contract, in the Oslo ceremony, also seemed tentative. To begin with, there were two types of principals: the academics on both sides who had initiated the Oslo talks and the official leaders. The academic team, heretofore unknown, was sponsored by foreign Minister Peres (Rabin's long-time competitor) and

conducted negotiations away from the limelight of the official Washington talks, awaiting their moment. They received the go-ahead when front line formal talks reached a dead end. Some were not even invited to watch the ceremony from the lawn. Instead, the official leaders, Yizhak Rabin and Yasser Arafat, the heroes according to protocol, were invited to star in the celebration.

This division into the "doers" and the "sources of authority" gave rise to the question who would come to sign (and to uphold the contract with the public)? The identity of the signatories remained undecided to the last day. On September 12, the Israel National Radio announced that Nabil Shaat and Shimon Peres would go to Washington to sign. Rabin and Arafat were each awaiting the other's expression of readiness to walk jointly through the symbolic doorway. At the last minute, Rabin finally made up his mind, and Arafat followed suit. The true heroes had to make way for those in authority- and to the presence of the American President.

Once established, the two leaders had first to convince themselves to play the role prescribed by their seconds-in-command. Reporters watched closely for signs of regret, for hints of halfheartedness. Would Rabin shake Arafat's hand? was a major concern. The confusion about the identity of the "real" heroes remained throughout the following ceremonies. Would Peres be among the receivers of the Nobel Prize? Would Shaat also be nominated? As in Washington, this too was decided only three days before the ceremony- Peres yes, Shaat, no.

The ambivalence of Rabin and Arafat was revealed in various ways throughout the series of ceremonies. In Washington, Clinton was seen to help push the two together for the famous handshake, although it had been agreed. At the next ceremony, in Cairo, Arafat got last-minute cold feet, and, in mid-ceremony, live on TV, he refused to sign the maps demarcating Israel's stage-one withdrawal. With the participants standing on the stage, some whispering furiously in Arafat's ear, it was finally President Mubarak who convinced Arafat that he could not shame him as host. Was this a misunderstanding? Was it a wish to show his loyalists that he is not selling them cheaply? Was it a new sign of growing resistance to the accord among Palestinians? Probably all of the above. But this argues that while Sad at, ostensibly secure in his own constituency, focused on transforming the Israelis, Arafat was more concerned with his own side, less concerned that he was fast losing his credibility with the Israelis. In Oslo, in his acceptance of the Nobel Peace Prize, Arafat spoke of promising his people, the ones who are "painfully carrying the keys to their houses" (the houses they abandoned in the 1948 war) that they would come home. Now he was looking at them and wiping a tear. He declared the Oslo accord, which at times he had called "the peace of the brave," to be, "the first step in the battle of the brave," ending his speech with a warning to Israelis and the world on the issue of Jerusalem-"The holy places are holy for us all." It was a touching speech, but it exacerbated the worst fears of Israelis. The accord, one may recall, did not promise return to the homeland, neither did it solve the problem of the holy places.

The media, for their part, did accept the Washington signing ceremony as a media event. The Washington broadcast was interposed with vigniettes reporting live reactions from Jerusalem, Jericho and Gaza, including Soha, Arafat's new wife, as commentator. Star reporters were flown in Rabin's plane to attend, and peak moments were repeated in slow motion. It was broadcast live to the world.

But subversive notes started to infiltrate the ceremonies that followed. The move away from the "priestly" function is seen, for example, in the producers' choice of commentators. Thus, the two commentators chosen to accompany the Nobel Prize ceremony from the studios of the two Israeli TV channels, were opposition leaders (Benny Begin & Dan Meridor), whose job, it appears, was to pour cold water over the celebration by commenting on "the gap between the celebration in Oslo and Israeli reality." In keeping with conventions of reporting on conflicts, these commentators' opposition from the Israeli right was "balanced" with Palestinian opponents of the agreement. Thus, for Ali Machmud, a member of the
Popular Liberation Front, who sat seventeen years in an Israeli prison, Oslo became an opportunity to declare to the Israelis that the Nobel prize had lost all its moral value. True media events do not leave room for such critical commentary.

All in all, can the Washington ceremony (and Cairo and Oslo in its wake) be labeled performative? The answer is yes, as it granted equality to the Palestinians, and recognized their national aspirations. The Palestinians, in return, promised (but did not yet manage to carry through) the suspension of the Palestinian Treaty, whose aim is to abolish the State of Israel. But rather than a "warm" reconciliation, Oslo may be perceived as a kind of coming-of-age party for Arafat, which, while giving recognition, is an occasion to get rid of him, as one does with a difficult relative. The performative act consists of saying, "You are now on your own," adding a farewell gift (in the form of a promise to raise money for his future).

IS THE PALESTINIAN ACCORD A TRANSFORMATIVE EVENT?

More important, have the Oslo peace ceremonies transformed reality? In terms of the typical succession of phases that characterize transformative events, according to Dayan and Katz, the first two stages seem to fit. There was certainly the *latent,* long-standing problem, that of the struggle between Israelis and Palestinians over the same homeland, more crippling and incurable than Israel's conflict with its sovereign neighbors. The *signalling* of a solution was a gradual process of mutual recognition between Israel and the PLO, stretching over a number of years. It started at the Madrid conference (1991), in which the Likud government and Palestinians represented by local leaders agreed to start negotiation, under heavy U.S. pressure, with the world watching, and the PLO granted the status of observor. Signalling continued during talks in Washington between representatives of Israel's Labor government and local Palestinian leaders, with Israel closing an eye to the Palestinians commuting to Tunis in order to receive instructions, and (as it turned out) with a competing Israeli team secretly talking with the PLO in Oslo. All this activity, indeed, culminated in Israel's public recognition of the PLO.

The *modeling,* or symbolic enactment of the new paradigm, was far less convincing than in the case of Sadat, as we have pointed out, with noticeably reluctant gestures on both sides. As Benjamin Begin said on TV at the Nobel Prize ceremony, "Arafat received the prize wearing his (terrorist's) uniform, and (even) wanted to wear his pistol... " But Arafat and Rabin did stand on the same stage, did shake hands, and, as commentators have often observed, their political fates were tied together from then on.

While the gestures, if not effusive, did perform change, the *framing* of the situation painfully revealed the halfheartedness and ambivalence of the two leaders. Unlike Sadat's rhetoric, which, as we have shown, focused on turning the hearts of the enemy, Rabin and Arafat spoke mainly to their own publics-partly because the other side was not doing its part in inspiring confidence.

In terms of transformation, the *evaluation* phase is the most shaky. To begin with, only 45% of Israelis were for giving up more than Gaza and Jericho. On the Palestinian side, the opposition soon increased in strength. Gradually, all the parties to the accord- Rabin, the Israeli right, and Arafat- converged on terrorism as the criterion by which to judge Oslo's success. The criteria that are applied in the case of Egypt- tourism (in spite of its one-sidedness), open borders, diplomatic relations- are not relevant to the Palestinian case. The only equivalent criterion, the assurance of US aid, did not quickly materialize. Worst of all, Rabin and Arafat found themselves in a double bind- Rabin felt he could not progress as long as Arafat did not prove he could stop terror; but not progressing meant Arafat lost support among Palestinians. Thus, public approval on both sides diminished.

Still, the public accord with the Palestinians had some transformative momentum. It is evident in that (1) the Israeli public came to recognize that the government of Israel might decide to retreat from certain areas in the West Bank, and, even, to dismantle some settlements, (2) both sides were forced to start drawing maps, and to face the necessity of dividing territory between them, (3) the problem of the future of Jerusalem was placed on the public agenda of the two communities. And, perhaps most important, (4) the Palestinian accord made possible the peace treaty with Jordan.

II. ISRAEL AND JORDAN: RABIN, HUSSEIN

The signing of a peace treaty between Israel and Jordan is by far the least problematic of the three cases. If the peace with Egypt meant an act of recognition, of granting Israel equality, and the accord with Arafat was a form of a legalistic marriage which both parties desperately needed, even if there was no love lost between them, peace with Hussein was an act of legalizing a common law relationship. It was the celebration of a long-secret alliance, which heretofore the whole world knew about but could not, or did not have to condemn, as it had not been made formal. Formalization has the power of forcing the world to acknowledge a situation (or do something about it) (Lazarsfeld & Merton, 1945; Katz, 1981). This is the classic performative function of ceremonies such as marriages, declarations of war; this also means that by definition the only trans formative function of the event is the making public of an existing situation.

As there was no real conflict of interest, no major sacrifice was demanded on either side. Jordan may have suffered a loss of face among its Gulf War allies, but the Oslo agreement, which presumably neutralized the Palestinian problem, allowed the more moderate Arab states to agree to an Israeli-Jordanian accord.

Unlike the tortuous struggle to formulate the awkward agreement with the refugees-cum-terrorist Palestinians, in an effort to create an entity (not a state!), in a territory that is geographically not coherent and almost impossible to determine, a peace treaty with Jordan seemed a dream diplomatic marriage with a *real* "Palestinian" state. There was no

messy intermingling, nor embarrassing, sometimes violent, protestors; even the right wing Likud party was in favor, in the hope that the Jordan agreement would subsume the autonomy agreement with the Palestinians.

Ironically, then, while the Oslo agreement made possible the peace with Jordan, in no time the two agreements became competing, with Jordan constantly overtaking Palestine. While Israeli politicians were busy declaring that one agreement was not on account of the other, they repeatedly offended Arafat by assigning Jordan custody of the Holy places, and by not inviting him to the signing ceremony in EI Avrona over which Clinton presided ("a tragic mistake" according to Ron Pundik, an Oslo team member). In Jerusalem, at the same time, the Palestinians demanded that their own religious leaders replace the Jordanian clerics on the Temple Mount, and, after being refused, installed their people anyway, leaving the Jordanians unemployed.

Was the "media event" contract among politicians, broadcasters, and public, upheld in the case of the Jordanian peace ceremonies?

From **the organizers** point of view, the two leaders, not to mention Clinton in the role of overseer and guarantor, wholeheartedly carried out their share. Like Sadat, Hussein played an active part in the newly open relationship. He was sincere, profuse, sometimes embarrassingly emotional. He told his audiences that he regretted the lost years which were missed, and now he was in a hurry. Perhaps it was the economic crisis in Jordan, or the fundamentalist danger in the region (not unrelated), or perhaps it was more personal, having to do with the kings' advancing age, his mortality, maybe his illness.

As in Sadat's case, the gesture and the declaration of intent came *before* the negotiation over details. Like Sadat, Hussein evoked symbols of the past- the desert as common origin of Jews and Arabs, Abraham as common ancestor- connecting them with a Utopian future. He even went a step further in choosing the location of the main ceremony as a (symbolic) metonymic object. Talking from a spot chosen somewhere in the Arava desert, he could be effective in saying that together, Jordan and Israel would make the desert- the actual sand on which they were standing- bloom.

As with Sadat, the ceremonies became part of the dynamics of making peace. Experts on water, borders, economic collaboration, etc., met under TV floodlights, in full diplomatic gear of dark suits and ties, in a tent in the Jordanian desert at 40 degrees centigrade. They removed their jackets on live TV only after a formal request was made by one of the negotiators. Negotiations began in Washington, then in the King's palace in Akaba, a resort town on the Red Sea, then in El Avrona, on the border between the two countries, where a stadium-cum-TV studio was erected especially. Rabin competed with Hussein in rare warmth. He seemed to enjoy the ceremonies sincerely, perhaps as a moment of respite from the fraustrations of the effort to implement Oslo, and, as one sure achievement which he could cash in. So did Clinton, (who preferred El-avrona to electioneering for the 1992 Congress).

The media started by collaborating. It accepted the Rabin Hussein-Clinton signing ceremony in Washington as a media event. The ceremonies that followed, however, were rather redundant. They were recycled as a movable feast-wandering from Washington, to Akaba, to the Arava desert, to the Lake of Galillee. Instead of the electrifying experience of a unique encounter which characterizes media events, the peace with Jordan became a "miniseries" of coronations in which nothing new could be expected.

But beyond the broadcasters' weariness with reconciliatory events, regarding them as decreasingly attractive for the public, the effectiveness of the Rabin Hussein encounters suffered from their interweaving with massive terrorist attacks of the Palestinian *Hamas* movement on Israelis. The story in Israel became a kind of juxtaposition of ceremonies signalling hope on the one hand, and human bereavement signalling despair on the other.

Thus, the attack on a bus in the central square in Tel-Aviv, a few days prior to the most glamorous ceremony in El Avrona, cast a heavy shadow on the event, raising doubts about the participation of President Clinton, and destroying the atmosphere of expectation in the media. (On the day before the ceremony, the front page of *Yediot,* Israel's most popular daily, juxtaposed two color photographs- one of a bereaved mother mourning over her child, and the other of the smiling King Hussein and Queen Nur, with the captions, "tears of sadness," and "smiles of hope.") Instead of focusing on the grandiose preparations of the organizers--who invented a site in the heart of the desert, complete with electricity, water, food, and a stadium constructed for the event-or on the arrival of the host of international press reporters, or the proposed gowns (inadvertantly identical) of the three first ladies, or on whether the Russian Foreign Minister would be allowed to speak--the Israeli media were occupied with the human tragedy of the Dizengoff-square victims. The planning of festivities seemed to carry a discordant note.

Ironically, the most memorable image from the EI Avrona ceremony itself was a Muslim Sheikh, clad in a flowing white robe, who delivered a long prayer in Arabic, with monotonous, repetitive sounds, slow, unchanging, against all the rules of acceptable TV, who, nevertheless hypnotized the audience in the desert and at home in front of the television screen.

CONCLUSION

This paper tries to demonstrate that close reading of this series of media events goes some distance towards specifying when and how such events "work." Pointing to the "contract" among principals, broadcasters and public, we reiterate Dayan and Katz's contention that the definition of the event depends on the validation by all three that the event is worthy. However, there can be various chinks in these validations which become apparent both before the ceremonial staging of the event and during its progress. Analysis of these reservations provides a basis for both prognosis and retrospective understanding of the effectiveness of the event both immediately, at the performative stage, and over time. While it is often difficult to differentiate the role of the live broadcast from the delayed report of the event, we argue that television is uniquely equipped to concretize an essentially visual concept such as diplomatic "recognition," or to provide tangible evidence of what peace looks like (as when Hussein's helicopter is escorted into Israeli airspace) or to provide a shared experience- one more difficult to reverse-to millions of viewers on both sides witnessed by hundreds of millions of viewers elsewhere. Moreover, we suggest that broadcasters intervene by making the event more or less compelling by the reverential closeness versus the critical distance they maintain. We also suggest that the live broadcast has greater effectiveness the greater the initial gap between the principals.

These cases also permit several additions to the conceptualization of media events. First, the peace ceremonies of 1993 1994 illustrate the self-destructiveness inherent in overuse. The effectiveness of media ceremonies lies in their rarity, in the preciousness of their being unique. Redundancy invites boredom, public devaluation, even cynicism, reminding us that television has the power to demystify political figures even if, under certain circumstances, it may allow them to enchant us. Second, in order to have a transformative potential ceremonies need enough breathing space, enough freedom of action, without clashing with oppositional events- in our case, terrorist actions-which, unfortunately, they themselves may trigger. Ceremonies are delicate plants which need nurturing in order eventually to bear fruit. Undermining them too early may squash the process. Third, ceremonies may be bashed not only by non-ceremonial events but also by competing ceremonies, as was demonstrated by the competition which developed between the ceremonies of reconciliation with the Jordanians and the Palestinians.6 Such competition may destroy the effectiveness of one of the ceremonial events, or of both, in the process. Fourth, the process of public evaluation, which starts at a hopeful high (which relates to the relationship between the ceremonies and other events), should spiral upward, endowing it with increasing legitimacy rather than lose momentum, in a downward spiral, legitimating its opponents' oppositional readings.

NOTES

l. Giving rise to speculation (what would Sadat ask in exchange? Would Israel return the whole of the Sinai peninsula? and the million dollar question- did Sadat want peace?), and to the suspension of disbelief in confronting the paradox of "how could an offer of peace emanate from our worst enemy?"

2. While it is true that Sadat negotiated openly, laying his demands before the Israeli public, this was not much more than a dramatic gesture designed to influence public opinion, following the *secret* negotiations (between Sadat's emissary and Moshe Dayan, in Morocco), where Israel has given-in to Sadat's demands, i.e. to retreating from all of the Sinai.

3. Peres had no chance of winning the elections, as he was known as a compromiser for peace, and lost the Labor Party leadership to Rabin as it "tougher" and therefore "electable" politician.

4. Compared to surveys just months earlier, the accord led to a substantial increase in the proportion of Israeli Jews willing to cede at least some territory for peace, in the percentage willing to consider the prospect of a Palestinian state (from 25% to 40%). Support to the autonomy plan rose to 57% following the accord and to 61 % immediately following the ceremony.

5. Among Palestinians support for the accord went from 65% before the ceremony to 69% immediately after.

6. Thus, for example, the Jordanians demanded that Arafat not be invited to the signing of the treaty in El Avrona, and Israel agreed, thereby creating a major incident with the Palestinians.

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