

## **The Impact of Humiliation on Strategy**

### ***Applying Prospect Theory to Delineate Patterns of Diplomatic and Military Strategies for Collective Honor Restoration***

***Abstract:*** *This paper assumes that the “humiliation factor” matters. That is, that for the purpose of preserving or restoring the collective honor as an end in itself, states and political organizations may decide to use violence in the international arena. It addresses the following questions: (1) what rules would likely govern the pre-conflict diplomatic conduct of such political actors? (2) What would be a likely pattern of a military strategy that is designed to preserve or recover the national honor? (3) What domestic leadership communication strategy is likely to improve the odds of achieving the honor restoration goal? Methodologically, the paper adjusts and applies principles from Prospect Theory, a behavioral theory that explains human choices under conditions of uncertainty. The distilled principles are demonstrated using historical events surrounding the 1973 October War and contemporary examples from the practice of Honor Killings in the Middle East.*

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By Yohanan Plesner\*

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\* Yohanan Plesner is a Senior Analyst at the Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments (CSBA). He is currently working on a Long Term Strategy Project commissioned by the Office of Net Assessment at the Department of Defense. This draft paper does not represent the views of any of the above entities.

## Introduction

The underlying premise of this essay is that the humiliation factor in international politics matters. And indeed, at least among leading journalists, it is becoming widely acknowledged that sentiments such as humiliation and motivations such as honor restoration play an important role in international affairs.<sup>1</sup> Why should we care about it? We probably should because this motivation seems to be playing a key role in the initiation of violent conflicts at present and over the past decades. One recent example is the attacks of September 11, 2001. Osama Bin Laden himself presented the attacks on the United States as a response to "80 years of humiliation and disgrace."<sup>2</sup> Another example is Egypt in 1973. Saad El-Shazly, the Egyptian Chief of Staff during the 1973 war, stated retrospectively that, "The decision to go to war is a hard one; but the decision to remain in our present humiliation is just as hard."<sup>3</sup> While the assessment of the Egyptian war initiation motivation remains a controversial subject, it is safe to assume that the pursuit of the national honor played a role.<sup>4</sup> The rising influence of radical Islam and the continued instability in the Middle East render it reasonable to expect that such motivations would continue to affect our security environment in the near future.

What are the available conceptual frameworks that can help us explain and predict strategies that are primarily motivated by such motivations? Unfortunately, contemporary

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<sup>1</sup> Thomas Friedman, for example, stipulates, "The quest for dignity is a powerful force in human relations." See: Friedman, Thomas L., "Iraq, Upside Down," *The New York Times*, September 18, 2002. In another instance he goes even further to assert, "The single most underappreciated force in international relations is humiliation." See: Friedman, Thomas L., "The Humiliation Factor," *The New York Times*, November 9, 2003. In a recent assessment of the threat posed by radical Islamist groups, *The Economist* determines that, "jihadi groups draw their strength from a common pool of self-righteous anger at what they see as the humiliation of Muslims at the hands of the West." See: "Amorphous but alive – Al-Qaeda is still very much alive," *The Economist – U.S. Edition*, June 5, 2004.

<sup>2</sup> Of course, this statement does not provide proof that this was his genuine motivation. It does, however, indicate that such reasoning may resonate with his audience. From: Friedman, Thomas L., "Bush To Bin Laden," *The New York Times*, October 12, 2001.

<sup>3</sup> El Shazly, Saad, *The Crossing of the Suez*, San Francisco, CA: American Mideast Research, 1980. p. 204.

<sup>4</sup> This assumption is not straightforward and requires validation. However it is beyond the scope of this essay to analyze the motivations that led Sadat and the Egyptian leadership to plan and launch the 1973 Yom Kippur War. In a separate study, I have conducted this analysis and concluded that honor restoration was indeed Sadat's primary motivation. Essentially, there are two views about the subject. Henry Kissinger, on the one hand, believes that honor restoration was indeed a primary motivation. Thazhaa Paul, on the other hand, believes that the war effort was motivated by international political calculations that were concerned with breaking the diplomatic stalemate in the Middle East. For elaborate accounts of both views see: Kissinger, Henry A., *Years of Upheaval*, Boston, MA: Little Brown and Company, 1982. And: Paul, Thazha Varkey, *Asymmetric Conflicts: War Initiation by Weaker Powers*, New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 1994.

mainstream International Relations (IR) theory tends to disregard the honor and humiliation factors as central forces. Roughly, existing IR theories emphasize the pursuit of security and the desire for economic gain as the key driving forces in international politics.<sup>5</sup> Thus, while the humiliation factor seems to play a key role in various national security arenas, we seem to lack adequate conceptual tools that can serve as a good basis for policy. More specifically, if we believe that certain nations are prone to initiate a violent conflict on the basis of their self-perception of humiliation, we would greatly benefit from having a better understanding of what could the tangible features of such a conflict look like. The goal of this essay is to propose preliminary guidelines for such a conceptual framework.

Our intention is to outline a set of principles that may govern and restrict policies that are aimed at honor restoration. Methodologically, we will import and adjust principles that are distilled from Prospect Theory, a behavioral theory that explains and predicts human choices under conditions of uncertainty. Prospect theory has ample applications in the field of behavioral economics. In addition, prospect theory was applied to explain and predict risk propensity in the international environment. For example, Rose McDermott utilized those principles to explain risky choices in situations of uncertainty in American foreign policy. McDermott also provides a theoretical justification for the applicability of such a psychological theory in politics.<sup>6</sup> We intend to demonstrate that prospect theory may be equally useful in offering conceptual tools to analyze another category of risky political choices – namely, those that are motivated by a sentiment of humiliation.

The essay is divided into four sections. First, we outline the key principles of prospect theory and demonstrate how they can be applied to the realm of humiliation and honor recovery. This will establish the premise of the analysis framework. One of the implications that we

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<sup>5</sup> Daniel Markey's recent PHD Dissertation offers one exception to this general rule. He presents a comprehensive argument about the absence of the prestige-motive as a central variable in International Relations theory. He identifies prestige "with a variety of nearly synonymous terms such as honor, glory, status, reputation, grandeur, chauvinism, pride, greatness, respect, regard, and eminence (among others)." See: Markey, Daniel S., *The Prestige Motive in International Relations*, PHD Dissertation, Princeton University, November 2000. For another collection of articles that emphasizes the importance of the honor factor in international politics, see: Abrams, Eliot, ed. *Honor Among Nations*, Washington DC: Ethics and Public Policy Center, 1998.

<sup>6</sup> McDermott, Rose, *Risk Taking in International Politics – Prospect Theory in American Foreign Policy*, Ann Arbor, MI: The University of Michigan Press, 1998.

discuss is that a loss of honor, unlike a monetary loss, may trigger an even more pronounced risk-seeking behavior. Second, we examine potential policies for avoiding violent conflict when one side feels that it has been humiliated. Prospect theory insights regarding negotiations and conflict resolution will be applied. We will conclude by outlining a set of conditions that would increase the likelihood of a peaceful outcome. The flip side of that is that under certain conditions, conflict seems almost inevitable. Third, under the assumption that in some cases war or violent conflict would be the choice of the humiliated side, we speculate on the likely operational goals of a war effort that is motivated by honor restoration as its political objective. Finally, we emphasize the importance of the prospect theory concept of framing to a successful military campaign that is guided by the abstract objective of honor restoration. We ask, how important is it for a leader to communicate the message of honor restoration and how should the communication process be conducted? In applying the concept of framing, we suggest that it is the single most important factor in executing a successful honor restoration strategy. Framing is a leadership role and it is aimed at putting the events on the ground in an appropriate context. In this way, the desired interpretation of the events could emerge. Methodologically, we demonstrate the potential applicability of the various principles of prospect theory by analyzing Sadat's decisions surrounding the 1973 Yom Kippur War. In addition, phenomena such as honor killings and duels are also drawn upon.

From the perspective of a Western policy planner, this preliminary approach has the advantage of structuring and organizing the logic of an otherwise seemingly irrational and inconsistent set of political motivations. Since we are dealing with matters of war and peace its importance is compounded. To qualify our initial propositions, this preliminary essay merely aims to demonstrate the potential value of such an approach. Additional theoretical and empirical validation is required to further substantiate these propositions.

## I. Humiliation and Risk-seeking

*Gains and Losses as Key Determinants.* According to Kahneman and Tversky, “it is customary in decision analysis to describe the outcome of decisions in terms of total wealth.”<sup>7</sup> To refute this intuition, Kahneman and Tversky describe an experiment that demonstrates that people tend to think in terms of gains, losses and neutral outcomes rather than in terms of total states of wealth. If this is true, then an analysis of risky choices should “be applied to gains and losses rather than to total assets.”<sup>8</sup> This is one of the central assumptions of a decision-making theory that Kahneman and Tversky termed “prospect theory.” In analyzing risky decisions, prospect theory, then, focuses on the expected or past gains or losses that drive a decision.

How does this apply to honor restoration? While Kahneman and Tversky are mainly concerned about monetary gains and losses, we focus on a different domain. We care about gains and losses in the realm of honor and humiliation. We define the violation or loss of honor as humiliation. To apply the principles of prospect theory to the domain of the gain and loss of honor, we would be required to treat honor – rather than money – as the “currency” that is being transacted. While this is possible, it does pose some methodological challenges. For one thing, monetary gains and losses are easier to measure than degrees of humiliation and honor recovery.

Nevertheless, the fundamental intuition that gains and losses, rather than absolute states of wealth, affect risky choices seems intuitively just as applicable to the domain of honor and humiliation. It is beyond the scope of this essay to propose a research design that would validate this hypothesis. For the sake of this study we will assume its validity. At the same time, several anecdotal observations allude to the veracity of this assumption. First, the term humiliation usually refers to a certain event that violated the honor of an individual or a group. Rarely do we speak of a state of humiliation in a manner that is detached from a specific triggering event. Thus, it would make sense to deem a humiliation as an event that is primarily concerned with the degree of change in certain a “currency” (in our case: the total “stock” of honor). Second, we

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<sup>7</sup> Kahneman and Tversky, “Choices Values and Frames,” In: Kahneman and Tversky (Eds.), *Choices, Values, and Frames*, New York, NY: Russell Sage Foundation – Cambridge University Press, 2000. p. 3.

<sup>8</sup> Kahneman and Tversky, “Choices Values and Frames,” 3.

usually speak of a person's (or of a group's) honor when it is challenged or violated. That is, honor usually becomes an important "agenda item" when a certain group believes that its sense of honor has been violated and that it is compelled to act in order restore the equilibrium. 19<sup>th</sup> Century Germany provides an example for that. Apparently it was customary among the officer corps of the Prussian army to challenge people for a duel as a mechanism for honor restoration.<sup>9</sup> The Middle East of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century provides yet another example. Apparently, thousands of women are murdered every year in a practice that is labeled an "honor killing." This term refers to the practice of killing a female family member who is suspected of sexual misconduct that may damage the family honor.<sup>10</sup>

Both of the above examples demonstrate that a perceived change in the relative measure of honor served as a trigger for a risky choice. It is the gains and, in particular, the prospect of a loss of honor that seems to drive decisions. The assumption that honor restoration and humiliation events are usually motivated by gains and losses rather than by an absolute measure of honor has important implications. It means that the basic principles of prospect theory may help us explain and possibly even predict decisions that are motivated by the need to restore honor or to avoid humiliation.

***Risk-seeking in the Domain of Losses.*** Kahneman and Tversky propose a hypothetical value function. It has the following features: "(a) defined on gains and losses rather than total wealth, (b) concave in the domain of gains and convex in the domain of losses, and (c) considerably steeper for losses than for gains." In charting this value function we obtain the following S-shaped diagram.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Offer, Avner. "Going to War in 1914: A Matter of Honor?" *Politics & Society*, June 1995, Volume 23, Issue 2. pp. 213-242.

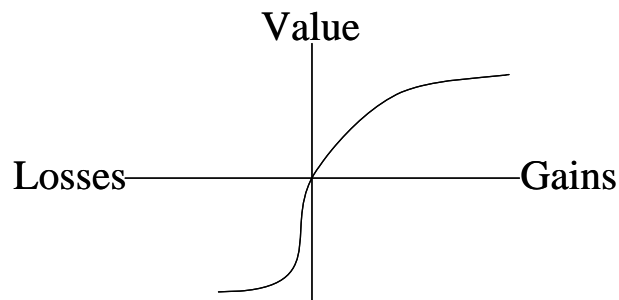
<sup>10</sup> "The United Nations Population Fund estimates as many as 5000 females being killed each year." In terms of geographic diversity, "honor killings have been reported in Bangladesh, Brazil, Ecuador, Egypt, India, Israel, Italy, Jordan, Morocco, Pakistan, Sweden, Turkey, Uganda and the United Kingdom." See: Katz, Nikki, *A Guide To Women's Issues*, Online Publication of About, Nov 2003. Available online at:

<http://womensissues.about.com/cs/honorkillings/a/honorkillings.htm>

For more information on the scope and rationale of the phenomenon see: Mayell, Hillary, "Thousands of Women Killed for Family 'Honor,'" *National Geographic News*, February 12, 2002. Available online at:

[http://news.nationalgeographic.com/news/2002/02/0212\\_020212\\_honorkilling.html](http://news.nationalgeographic.com/news/2002/02/0212_020212_honorkilling.html)

<sup>11</sup> From: Kahneman and Tversky, "Choices Values and Frames," 3.



The shape of the above value function has a number of implications. Its concavity in the realm of gains implies risk aversion. This is a standard assumption in economic theory. Its convexity in the realm of losses, however, implies risk-seeking in that domain. Kahneman and Tversky demonstrate the validity of these qualities in a number of experiments. For example, people's aversion to "bet on a fair coin for equal stakes" demonstrates risk aversion. Apparently, the possibility of gain is insufficient to compensate for the potential loss. Similarly, they observe that, "risk-seeking in losses is a robust effect, particularly when the probabilities of loss are substantial."<sup>12</sup> A third pertinent quality that is implied by the value of the above value function is that the slope in the realm of risk-seeking is steeper. This means that the negative value generated by the prospect of a loss of, say, \$1,000 would be larger, in absolute terms, than the value that would be generated by a similar amount.

How are the qualities of the S-shaped value function relevant to honor restoration? Let us assume that honor can replace money as the currency that we would want to maximize. Thus, an event of humiliation would necessarily lead to a risk-seeking behavior. This seems to conform to the observations that we mentioned above. For instance, a sentiment of humiliation led many men in Europe to risk their lives in duels in order to restore their sense of dignity. Similarly, once self-respect is restored, it would be reasonable to expect a risk-averse behavior. The prospect of

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<sup>12</sup> Kahneman and Tversky describe an experiment whereby most people would rather lose \$1,000 with a probability of 85% than accept a sure loss of \$800. This is a risk-seeking behavior because the expectation of the gamble is for a loss of -\$850 versus the sure loss of -\$800. A list of additional studies that confirm this observation is available at: Kahneman and Tversky, "Choices Values and Frames," 3.

gaining additional honor is not likely to induce risk-taking that would jeopardize the hard earned sense of respect. This is also demonstrated in the examples of duels and honor killings. In both cases we observe that once the sense of respect is restored the inclination to take risks dramatically diminishes. Again, the idea that Kahneman and Tversky's value function can be applied to explain post-humiliation behaviors constitutes a potential extension to standard prospect theory. In this study we demonstrate the plausibility of this approach. However, for further corroboration it would need to be subjected to empirical testing.

From a policy perspective, the steeper slope in the realm of risk-seeking suggests that we ought to be alert to the presence of a humiliation sentiment since it might drive people to take on significant risks. Our purpose is, then, to utilize this theory as a model for explaining – and possibly predicting – the likely behavior of people who are faced by the prospect of humiliation. Accordingly, when a collective, rather than a specific individual, develops a self-perception of humiliation, we would expect it to develop risk-seeking policies.

***Humiliation and the Risk-seeking Slope.*** What determines the amount of risk that people or collectives are willing to take on under a condition of humiliation? In other words, what affects the risk-seeking slope in the realm of losses? The value function predicts that a loss of honor would trigger a risk-seeking decision-making process. However, as it would be plausible to assume that different people would have a different slope, it would also make sense that the prospect of different forms of losses would yield different slopes. For example, the risk-seeking slope for monetary losses should not necessarily be as steep as the slope for a loss of honor that results from humiliation. A possible hypothesis that would be based on this insight would presume that a risk-seeking inclination as a result of humiliation would be higher than the inclination to take risks in the face of monetary losses. In other words, it would assume a steeper slope for honor losses versus monetary losses. Of course, to measure the change in slope we would need to develop an appropriate methodology. However, once again, the potential of this hypothesis is that Kahneman and Tversky's model can be expanded to account for risky choices in the non-monetary realm of honor and humiliation.

Intuitively, the examples of duels and honor killings are instructive. In both cases, substantial risk is associated with any potential attempt for honor restoration. Participants in duels face the risk of death. And, in some countries, perpetrators of honor killings face a substantial period in jail.<sup>13</sup> Those risks are higher in orders of magnitude than those presented in Kahneman and Tversky's examples. Thus, they can serve as initial evidence that proves that risk-seeking inclinations in cases of humiliation are greater than those in cases of monetary losses.

Assuming that indeed the risk-seeking slope in cases of humiliation is greater than in monetary cases: what are the practical implications of this greater slope? Our goal is to offer guidelines for the development of a potential model for explaining the political implications of a collective humiliation sentiment. Thus, if we are able to identify systematic risk-seeking patterns that follow from events of humiliation, we will be able to better predict and possibly mitigate those events.

Another factor that may affect the humiliation-triggered risk-seeking slope is cross-cultural variance. While it is probably advisable to avoid situations of humiliation in all cultures, the importance of this norm may vary across cultures. For example, it would be reasonable to suspect that a frequent occurrence of honor killings in some societies would be a good proxy for signaling the higher importance of this norm. Other proxies for identifying "honor-shame cultures" may be the prevalence of such concepts in the public civil and political discourses. In examining the cross-cultural factor, our hypothesis could be that the more the norms of "honor-shame" are embedded in a society, the steeper the risk-seeking slope in cases of humiliation. Thus, in extreme cases – that is, in societies that value their collective honor more than anything else – we may find societies that are willing to commit themselves to a "national duel" to restore their sense of pride. Naturally, a duel, at the collective or at the national level, would take the form of war.

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<sup>13</sup> For a review of the status of the legal struggle against honor killings, see: Al-Fanar, "Developments in the Struggle against the Murder of Women against the Background of so-called Family Honor," *Women Against Fundamentalism Journal*, No. 6, 1995, pp. 37-41.

Again, this is a proposition for modeling the political impact of humiliation. It does not offer systematic empirical evidence, but rather anecdotal evidence that indicates that this line of reasoning does indeed entail a possible promise. For instance, it may enable us to translate our intuition that humiliation matters into a more sound theory that begins to explore *how* it matters. So far, we have introduced the problem of understanding the role of humiliation sentiments in politics and overlaid it on the basic structure (i.e. the value function) of prospect theory. In doing so, we have created a framework that may prove useful for the analysis of the actual impact of honor considerations on political decision-making processes.

## II. Avoiding War – The Prospect of Negotiations for Honor restoration

Our analysis so far gives rise to the following substantive riddle. Assuming that “an honor-shame society,” with a steep risk-seeking curve for cases of humiliations, perceives itself as being humiliated by a peer society. Is war avoidable under such risk-seeking circumstances? What are the prospects for successfully negotiating a non-violent outcome? What would be some of the necessary features of a successful negotiation?

***Concession Aversion.*** In “Conflict Resolution: A Cognitive Perspective,” Kahneman and Tversky propose concepts that may help predict the behavior of political actors under such conditions.<sup>14</sup> Reiterating their finding that the value function “is steeper in the negative than in the positive domain,”<sup>15</sup> Kahneman and Tversky observe that losses have a larger impact than gains. Furthermore, “because the disadvantages of any alternative to the status quo are weighted more heavily than its advantages, a strong bias in favor of the status quo is observed.”<sup>16</sup> This has direct implications for negotiations. Each side in a negotiation is likely to require the opponent to make higher concessions because he values his potential gains less than the other side’s

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<sup>14</sup> Kahneman and Tversky, “Conflict Resolution: A Cognitive Perspective,” In: Kahneman and Tversky (Eds.), *Choices, Values, and Frames*, New York, NY: Russell Sage Foundation – Cambridge University Press, 2000. Pp. 473-487.

<sup>15</sup> Kahneman and Tversky, “Conflict Resolution: A Cognitive Perspective,” 481.

<sup>16</sup> Kahneman and Tversky, “Conflict Resolution: A Cognitive Perspective,” 481-3.

concessions. Kahneman and Tversky label this tendency *concession aversion*. They qualify this principle by limiting its applicability to “goods held for use” rather than for “good held for exchange.”

Given our assumption that the risk-seeking slope in circumstances of humiliation is even steeper than the slope differential assumed by Kahneman and Tversky for monetary cases, we would expect the phenomenon of concession aversion to be compounded. Accordingly, under the perception of humiliation it would be extremely difficult for an adversary to offer satisfactory concessions. They would most likely be regarded as insufficient by the humiliated side. By contrast, once the humiliation sentiment is no longer dominant, for whatever reason, the humiliated side would require fewer concessions in order to reach an agreement. This is because an affinity for the status quo would develop. The side that overcame humiliation would now be characterized as risk-averse and not as risk-seeking. This model suggests, then, that a reconciliation negotiation under circumstances of humiliation would be characterized by an extreme case of concession aversion. This would render the ability to settle the differences through negotiation an unlikely prospect.

***Cost-cutting Strategy.*** The principle of *concession aversion* implies that more weights are assigned to one’s own losses. Kahneman and Tversky conclude that, “it suggests that the most effective concessions you can make are those that reduce or eliminate your opponent’s losses; the least effective concessions are those that improve an attribute in which the other side is already ‘in the gains.’” Accordingly, “reductions of losses are evaluated on the steep lower limb of the value function –and the eliminations of losses are evaluated at its steepest region. In contrast, increments to already large gains are expected to add relatively little value.”<sup>17</sup>

This suggestion has direct implications for those who negotiate with a party that perceives itself as having been humiliated. Take, for example, the case of Israel and Egypt before October 1973. Let us assume that the repeated proclamations of various Egyptian officials and journalists indeed serve as an indication that there was a sentiment of national humiliation

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<sup>17</sup> Kahneman and Tversky, “Conflict Resolution: A Cognitive Perspective,” 484.

following the 1967 “Six Day War.”<sup>18</sup> Under such circumstances and applying Kahneman and Tversky’s suggestion to this realm, Israel would have gained little (in terms of reduction of potential Egyptian hostility) from offering, say, economic assistance. While this would increase Egypt’s gains it would have done little to compensate it for its perceived loss of honor. By contrast, any concessions that would have helped reduce Egypt’s sense of humiliation would have generated more value. The most valuable concessions would be those that would eliminate all together the humiliation sentiment.

In such circumstances, the negotiators challenge would be to identify concessions that may decrease, or preferably eliminate, the adversary’s sense of humiliation. This is problematic because, unlike in monetary disputes, it is difficult to identify specific concessions that would serve the purpose of humiliation elimination. Kahneman and Tversky’s theory, which analyzes primarily monetary transactions, would have to be expanded to account for this need. Its importance cannot be overestimated. It is one thing to be able to identify that the key factor to be addressed in a negotiation is the adversary’s sense of collective honor. It is yet another thing to be able to propose a mechanism for addressing this deficit without resort to violence.

Why is it so challenging to develop specific strategies, and in particular non-violent ones, for collective honor restoration? The answer, in my view, lies in the fact that there are no available pre-determined and agreed upon “scripts” for honor restoration at the collective or national level. To demonstrate this let us return to the examples of honor killings and duels. As we have mentioned, the duel ritual provided members of the officer corps in Prussia during late part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century with a clear “script” for restoring their honor. The potential costs were high but the possible benefit was high too. It offered the prospect of an elimination of the sense of humiliation and for that people were willing to risk their lives. Honor killings too are social

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<sup>18</sup> The humiliation sentiment is apparent as a repeating theme in numerous public pronouncements made by Sadat during the 1970-3 pre-war period. See: Israeli, Raphael, *The Public Diary of President Sadat: Part One The Road to War (October 1970 – October 1973)*. Leiden, The Netherlands: E. J. Brill, 1978. Others like Fouad Ajami and Mohammed Heikal provide a deep account and analysis of the Egyptian sense of humiliation in those years. See: Ajami, Fouad, *Arab Political Thought and Practice Since 1967*, Tel Aviv, Israel (Hebrew Edition): Yedioth Aharonot, 2001. Translated by Michal Sela. And: Heikal, Mohamed, *The Road to Ramadan*, New York, NY: Ballantine Books, 1975.

rituals. They provide a clear “script” for how to restore individual and family honor after a perception of violation became widespread. A husband, brother or cousin of a woman who is suspected with sexual promiscuity can follow a clear set of guidelines. Tradition, in some of the societies that perceive sexual promiscuity as a violation of the family’s honor, offers a “script” for honor restoration. It is harsh and many times it entails the murder of the suspected female family member. But it also eliminates the sense of humiliation. In the political and collective realm, no such clear and agreed upon mechanisms exist. When an entire polity senses that its collective honor has been violated, it cannot resort to a clear set of pre-determined policies. To some extent, improvisation is required. Usually it would be the responsibility of the leadership of that group to come up with an honor restoration strategy. Again, the challenge of a responsible leadership would be to come with a strategy that would not involve the use of violence.

***Rules of Fairness.*** Can the principles of prospect theory provide us with a direction as to how to reach a non-violent compromise when one side perceives itself as being humiliated? Our problem, again, is that, unlike in monetary transactions, it is more difficult to devise specific strategies for the elimination of a sense of humiliation. Kahneman and Tversky’s “*rules of fairness*,” however, may offer us applicable insights. They note that *reference points* play a key role in people’s judgment of fairness. The studies that they refer to were done in the context of business practices. They found that “as loss aversion induces a bias toward the retention of the status quo; the rules of fairness exhibit a similar bias favoring a retention of the reference transaction.”<sup>19</sup> A precedent of similar transactions that took place between the same parties, they explain, determines the “reference transaction.” In other words, the sense of fairness of a transaction is relative to the nature of the previous transactions that took place between the same parties.

One viable transaction that can serve as a *point of reference* in cases of humiliation is the event that generated the humiliation sentiment in the first place. In the case of Israel and Egypt before 1973, the 1967 Six Day War could be regarded as a “reference transaction.”<sup>20</sup> Thus, a fair

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<sup>19</sup> Kahneman and Tversky, “Conflict Resolution: A Cognitive Perspective,” 484-6.

<sup>20</sup> The “transaction metaphor” implies that rather than money, units of honor and humiliation are being exchanged.

settlement of the national humiliation that resulted from the Six Day War would rely on it as a point of reference. The “reference transaction” idea seems particularly fit for non-monetary cases. Since there is no simple “common currency” that can be traded, the importance of devising a new “transaction” with the previous “reference transaction” in mind rises.

From the perspective of those who seek to devise policies that will avoid the use of violence, this insight may have bleak implications. It implies that an act of humiliation that was inflicted in war would preferably be reversed in war. Since, in such cases, a war serves as the reference transaction, it would be difficult to suggest a new transaction that would disregard this legacy. As we have seen in the introduction to this essay, Saad El-Shazly – the Egyptian Chief of Staff during the 1973 war – attests that the general sentiment in Egypt of 1973 was that the Egyptian honor that was lost in battle should be re-gained in battle. Curiously, since Sadat did not possess the military capability necessary to return the entire Sinai desert to Egyptian hands, it made even more sense to fight for the restoration of honor rather than for the recovery of territory.<sup>21</sup>

The determining factor on whether honor can be restored peacefully, according to the “rules of fairness”, is whether the humiliation took place in a peaceful context. If it did, then it is likely that a peaceful honor restoration strategy may be devised. Otherwise, the likelihood of peaceful honor restoration diminishes. We have seen that this result corresponds with the pro-war sentiments that existed in Egypt prior to the 1973 war.

At the same time, this implication seems ostensibly in contradiction with the view that honor can be restored peacefully by working to expand the definition of the sources of honor. The idea would be that rather than relating to the “reference transaction,” we could restore honor by accumulating gains in other related dimensions. For example, assuming the Egyptian economy would have achieved staggering economic growth figures during the year of 1973:

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<sup>21</sup> The balance of military capabilities between Israel and Egypt rendered any Egyptian ambition to re-capture the entire Sinai Desert virtually impossible. For a more detailed account of the military balance see: Zeira, Eli, *The October 73 War – Myth Against Reality*, Tel Aviv, Israel: Yedioth Ahronot, 1993. pp. 175-185.

could that offset its sense of humiliation that resulted from the Six Day War? Could it have contributed to an overall gain in the national sense of dignity?

A separate study that I have conducted regarding possible policy remedies to the problem of honor killings, suggests that indeed overtime the sources of honor can be diversified and expanded. This may guide us towards the development of potential honor restoration policies that do not necessarily involve violence. However my study also indicated that the sources of honor couldn't be diversified in retrospect. Assuming an individual's, or a society's, sense of honor is not drawn from multiple sources, than drawing on other sources of self-respect may not be possible. This, in turn, would increase the effect of the "reference transaction". Thus, an identical event, say the Six Day War, can produce a sense of humiliation for collectives with a less diversified sense of honor. At the same time, it might not generate a similar sense of humiliation for collectives that draw their sense of self-respect from other sources as well.

Let us demonstrate this statement using the example of honor killings. In a previous study I examined the differences in the treatment of honor killings across Bedouin societies in the Middle East. I suggested that it is conceivable for the family honor to depend on a wider set of factors (e.g., the parents professional and economic status) than merely on the perception of the female's sexual promiscuity. In such cases, we could expect to substitute one form of honor loss for another form of honor gain. To examine my proposal, I looked at Qatar in which the practice of honor killings was virtually eliminated.<sup>22</sup> My argument was that Qatari men did not give up on their sense of pride. Instead they drew their pride from a broader set of factors that include their professional and economic status as well as the sexual behavior of the female members of their families. Thus, if a woman is perceived as violating the honor code, Qatari men do not feel as compelled to resort to the honor killing ritual. They have other sources of pride that offset this

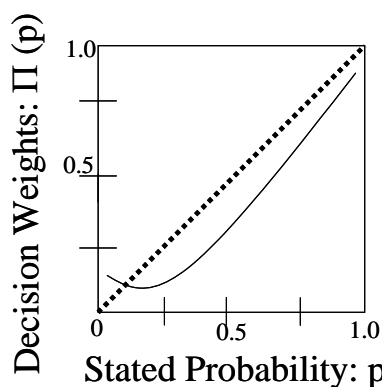
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<sup>22</sup> "The legal system allows leniency for a man found guilty of committing a 'crime of honor,' a euphemism that refers to a violent assault against a woman for perceived immodesty or defiant behavior; however, **such honor killings are rare.**" From: USA Department of State, Country Reports on Human Rights Practices, Released by the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, February 23, 2001. Available online at: <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2000/nea/815.htm>

sense of loss. Using the language of prospect theory we could say that Qatari men have status quo bias.

The case of Egypt in 1973, however, is different. This is because it is probably impossible to expand the sources of honor in retrospect. Many Egyptians in 1973, it seems, felt humiliated by the events of the Six Day War. Once the sense of humiliation takes root the “reference transaction” matters and it is too late to diversify the sources of honor at this point. Thus, it is likely that the “rules of fairness” would dictate, “what was taken by force should be returned by force.” From this perspective, the prospects for a successful political negotiation that would prevent the violence were not very high. For Sadat, it seems, “the rules of fairness” mandated the choice of war.

**Weighting Bias.** Kahneman and Tversky observe a phenomenon that they label “the non-linearity of decision weights.” They note that, “decision weights are regressive with respect to stated probabilities. Except near the endpoints, an increase of 0.05 in the probability of winning increases the value of the prospect by less than 5% of the value of the prize.”<sup>23</sup> This finding implies that a similar gain of say 5% of the value of a prize would be valued differently depending on the actual point. For example, for a given prize of \$1,000 people would tend to value more the prospect of winning the first or the last of the \$50 increments. Kahneman and Tversky demonstrate that the prospect of transforming a potential gain from an impossibility to a possibility and from a possibility to a certainty are more valuable, to most people, than a mere



increase in possibility. For them, this is one of the two factors that explain “the failure of invariance.” In rational choice theory, the principle of invariance requires that “two versions of a choice problem that are recognized to be equivalent when shown together should elicit the same preference even when shown separately.”<sup>24</sup> Kahneman and Tversky demonstrate that similar outcomes generate different preferences depending on the way the decision weights are presented. For example, an outcome is more likely to be preferred if the decisions are presented in two phases whereby the second transforms a certain probability from a possibility into certainty. The below diagram demonstrates how different values can be associated with similar outcomes depending on their distance from the endpoints.

<sup>23</sup> Kahneman and Tversky, “Choices, Values, and Frames,” 7.

<sup>24</sup> Kahneman and Tversky, “Choices, Values, and Frames,” 4.

In what way are those insights relevant to our analysis of patterns of collective honor restoration policies? It seems plausible that when matters of honor and humiliation are at stake the weighting bias tendency would be compounded. Graphically, it would mean that the above decision weight chart would have a wider right curve. In practice, it would reflect the additional value that would be associated with, say, transforming from a situation of less humiliation to a complete elimination of the humiliation sentiment. This results from the fact that the honor “currency” has different features than those of monetary currencies. Whereas, the actual value of \$50 dollars, at a given point, would always be the same, it is more difficult to “parse out” similar increments of honor gains. Therefore, when dealing with matters of honor there is a tendency to assign more importance to increments at the endpoints.

Let us demonstrate this abstract claim. During the peace negotiation between Israel and Egypt, the Egyptians insisted on claiming every “grain” of Egyptian land. As the negotiations over the Taba beach strip (a seaside strip less than a couple of miles long) in 1986 demonstrated, the Egyptians forcefully insisted on the return of “every grain of land.” They were willing to take the risk of forfeiting the entire peace treaty for that land. Applying prospect theory principles to analyze this case, we can claim that the value of the last small increment of land was extremely large because it transformed the status of Israeli withdrawal from partial to complete. In some Bedouin cultures, for example, it is customary to associate the integrity of the land with the honor of its owner.<sup>25</sup> If we apply a similar logic to the Egyptian case, we may deem the return of land to Egypt as a final element in the restoration of its pride.

If the above speculative analysis holds water, it would entail grim implications regarding the prospect of achieving a negotiated settlement following the underlying conditions of a violence-related humiliation event. This is because the prospect of successful negotiations is rooted in the ability of both sides to compromise. However, given the disproportionate value that

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<sup>25</sup> From: Bailey, Clinton. “Revenge and Peace Among the Bedouins.” *Articles in Bedouin Matters (An Annual Conference on Bedouins In Memory of Yitzhaki Netzer)*, Issue Number 9, Sde-Boker, Israel: 1978.

the humiliated side would assign to any final increment that would completely annul its sense of humiliation, the achievement of mutual compromise becomes virtually impossible. The humiliated side would not be likely to accept any compromise except for a complete acceptance of its claims.<sup>26</sup> In other words, the need for honor restoration may lead the humiliated side to demand a complete capitulation. Obviously, such an approach cannot serve as a successful negotiation strategy.

To sum, we have applied four principles of prospect theory to analyze the conditions that would enable a non-violent collective honor restoration outcome. Our assumption was that the perception of national humiliation emerged as a result of a violent event. We argued that, in most cases, it is unlikely that a peaceful negotiation would lead to a successful honor restoration outcome. That is, that since the “reference transaction” was a violent event such as a previous war, another violent event would be required to offset the sense of humiliation. This outcome would probably depend, though, on the cultural features of each given society. Assuming the humiliation took place in a violent context and assuming a dominant “honor-shame” culture, some form of policy-mix that would involve a violent response is probably unavoidable.

### **III. Executing War – Operational Planning and Honor Restoration**

The previous section explored ways for preventing the humiliated party from devising violent honor restoration strategies. We have concluded that in some cases, the humiliated side would opt for a violent honor restoration strategy. Naturally, if the humiliated side is a state such a strategy could take the form of a war plan. In this section we apply prospect theory principles to speculate on the likely operational features of a war that is designed with honor restoration as one of its primary political objectives.

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<sup>26</sup> A similar attitude was presented by President Assad of Syria during the peace negotiations of the 1990s. He was completely unwilling to give up on a “grain of land” of the Golan Heights that were captured by Israel during the Six Day War. He often explained his refusal using terms such as the need to restore the Syrian national honor.

***Measuring Honor Restoration.*** Unlike money, it is difficult to measure losses and gains of honor. Honor is not measured in numerical units. It is an abstract concept. However war is very tangible. Brigades and divisions are ordered to capture specific sites. Commanders are instructed to kill enemy troops. How can a tangible operational plan be developed to achieve the abstract goal of honor restoration?

As we have previously seen, there are pre-determined “scripts” that dictate a sequence of activities that need to be carried out for honor restoration to take place at the individual level. Duels and honor killings were examples of that. However, no such “scripts” are available for political leaders who are faced with the challenge of restoring their nation’s injured honor. A further expansion of the idea of the “*reference transaction*” may yield valuable policy insights. As we have previously noted, a successful honor restoration strategy is likely to be derived from the features of the event that brought about the humiliation in the first place. Our argument before was general. It stated that if the humiliating event was violent then the honor restoration event is likely to be violent too. However, we can further expand on this logic. One way would be to delineate specific operational guidelines from the failures that occurred in the humiliating event.

***Reference Points for operational Planning.*** Let us demonstrate the “reference transaction” logic by evaluating the Egyptian war plans of the 1973 Yom Kippur War in light of the failures of the 1967 Six Day War. Without entering into a detailed historical analysis, which would be beyond the scope of this essay, the Six Day War had a number of features that resonated strongly among the Egyptian leadership.<sup>27</sup> First, Israel conquered the Sinai Desert and managed to deploy its troops on the shores of the Suez Canal. Moreover, Israel has built a seemingly impenetrable line of defenses along the Canal, which accentuated the sense of humiliation. Egyptians took pride in the Canal and the fact that Israeli soldiers controlled one of its shores was perceived as a humiliation. Second, the Israeli army inflicted heavy casualties on

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<sup>27</sup> A detailed historical account of the events that led to the war and of the war itself is available in the following source. However the short list of factors that resonated with the Egyptians is based on my interpretation. See: Oren, Michael B., *Six Days of War*, New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2002.

the Egyptians during the war fracturing their sense of competence. Third, Israel's surprise move at the start of the war affected the sense of fairness that many Egyptians felt. For them, Israel was an aggressor that initiated an unwarranted surprise attack on June 1967. The surprise further amplified the Egyptian sense of incompetence at anticipating and preventing this effective form of warfare. Fifth, the speed of the war further augmented the Egyptian sense of incompetence. Egyptians were wondering, how could the Israeli army inflict such a devastating blow to the Egyptian military in such a short period?

Indeed, Egypt's war plan was designed to address the above key features of the "reference transaction." First, it emphasized the need to redeem the shame of the loss of the Suez Canal. And indeed Sa'ad Al Shazly, the Egyptian Military's Chief of Staff during the 1973 war, titled his war memoir: "Crossing the Canal." Throughout his book he emphasizes the symbolic importance of recapturing the canal and of removing the Israeli soldiers from the waterfront. Since Israel has erected a massive line of strongholds along the Canal the elimination of Israeli presence gained an even greater symbolic importance.<sup>28</sup> Second, an Egyptian war plan that would address the 1967 sources of humiliation would have to inflict heavy casualties on the Israeli side. The emphasis was not on the absence of casualties on the Egyptian side. Sadat realized that he would have to sacrifice many Egyptian lives. However he was willing to do that providing the Israelis would pay a dear price as well. Third, to rectify the sense of injustice that was created by Israel's surprise attack in 1967, a successful war plan would have to surprise the Israeli side. Finally, a successful war plan would achieve the above goals at a record pace to offset the impression of the Israeli six-day victory of 1967.

Indeed the Egyptian war effort successfully incorporated the above parameters into its war plan. This is not trivial. Note that the above war goals do not include the confiscation of maximum territory from the Israeli side. They did not call for the elimination of Israeli strategic capabilities such as the air force. In this sense, the Egyptian war plan was rather minimal. It was designed to capture and hold onto a narrow strip of 5-10 miles along the eastern shore of the

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<sup>28</sup> See: El Shazly.

Suez Canal. This is not to say that if Sadat could have captured the entire Sinai desert he would not have ordered it. It simply states that Sadat was aware of Egypt's limited capabilities. Accordingly, he approved a war plan that was designed to achieve a political objective of national honor restoration. The political requirements of honor restoration, as outlined above, were within the realm of capabilities that the Egyptian military possessed.

To sum, wars are fought to achieve political objectives. Operational war plans are designed in view of those objectives. What is unique about the above analysis is that it is focused on analyzing the operational implications of an unusual political objective, namely, the restoration of a national sense of honor. A unique objective requires a unique war plan. And indeed we have seen that the features of the Egyptian war plan were difficult to anticipate. It aimed for supposedly irrational goals such as the capture of a very narrow strip of land at a vast cost of lives and treasure to the Egyptian state. However it followed a set of operational parameters that were derived from the "*reference transaction*," namely, the Six Day War.

In this way, the application and the expansion of the prospect theory principle of the "reference transaction" enables us to make sense of a war plan that could otherwise be deemed incoherent. Looking ahead, this theory does not have to be limited to improving our competence in historical analysis. Similar principles may be applied to analyze the strategic behavior and options of other political collectives that seem to desire to overcome their own sense of humiliation.

#### **IV. Framing War – Communicating the Message of Honor Restoration**

So far we have applied prospect theory principles to explain the following. First, we demonstrated why it is less likely that a collective sentiment of humiliation which is perceived to have been inflicted in a violent context would be peacefully resolved. Negotiations or diplomatic maneuvers, under such conditions, are unlikely to yield the desired outcome of both stability and honor restoration. Second, we demonstrated how the rather abstract political objective of honor

restoration could guide a development of a specific war plan. Does this, however, imply that a meticulous execution of such a war plan would necessarily yield an honor restoration outcome? This section explains why war alone would probably fail to yield this desired outcome.

The Egyptian experience of 1973 informs us that an execution of a war plan alone would not bring about the restoration of honor. A successful and precise implementation of a war plan that is designed with honor restoration as its political objective is a necessary but insufficient condition for collective honor restoration. If the honor restoration message is not credibly communicated to the members of the community by its leadership, the perception of honor restoration would fail to take root. This observation is key to understanding the dominant role that the leadership needs to play when honor restoration and humiliation are at stake. It is insufficient to achieve the tangible goals set for the battlefield commanders. For honor restoration to take place, a determined and focused leadership needs to communicate the message that the national honor was indeed restored. It has to assign this meaning to the events on the ground and it ought to interpret those events in this fashion. Otherwise, it is likely that the events would lead to an ambiguous outcome that would not serve the purpose of restoring a stable and honorable equilibrium. What are the principles, then, that govern a successful leadership communication strategy? How are leaders to communicate the honor restoration message?

Kahneman and Tversky's prospect theory outlines possible principles for that. In their terminology, they stress the importance of framing in shaping people's perceptions of various outcomes. Below, we outline relevant framing principles that can help delineate guidelines for the formulation of a successful honor restoration strategy. We validate the viability of those principles by evaluating them in view of Sadat's 1973 honor restoration communication strategy.

***Framing and the Perception of Victory.*** A salient aspect of prospect theory is that it systematically explains situations whereby the *invariance principle* is violated. As we have mentioned invariance requires that changes in the description of outcomes would not alter the preference order. We have already demonstrated why that the non-linearity of decision weights can account for some of the failures of invariance. Kahneman and Tversky add that the framing of probabilities is another cause of invariance failures. They demonstrate that changes in the

formulation of similar outcomes affect people's value judgment. Formulation effects are effective as a result of two factors: (1) People's tendency to evaluate options against reference points; and (2) the non-linearity of the value function.<sup>29</sup>

We have discussed both principles in theory so let us examine how they might be helpful in analyzing Sadat's framing strategy during the Yom Kippur War. According to the principle of invariance, regardless of the way Sadat would have chosen to communicate the events of the war, the outcome of honor restoration (or lack thereof) would have been unchanged. That is, the objective developments in the battlefield would have determined the fate of the honor restoration effort regardless of Sadat's delivery tactic. Kahneman and Tversky's emphasis on the importance of framing alludes to a different conclusion. They demonstrate that depending on the reference point that is chosen people may change their inclinations for risk-seeking to risk-aversion and vice versa.

In Sadat's case, I do not think that we can assume that he could have manipulated the reference point to such an extent. As we have already demonstrated the sentiment of humiliation and loss in Egypt of 1973 was widespread and it is doubtful whether Sadat could have used a framing strategy to, say, create a false sense of gain.<sup>30</sup> However, within the realm of losses Sadat could have employed different framing strategies that would affect the people's perception of success. For example, he emphasized that the crossing of the canal was successfully accomplished within six hours. In doing so he anchored the Six Day War as a point of reference. Sadat's framing seems to have been designed to magnify the Egyptian sense of achievement. His speech from October 16, 1973, as the war was still raging, demonstrates it:

*"Dangers were great and the sacrifices huge, but our achievements during the initial six hours of the battle were tremendous. The arrogant enemy lost his equilibrium, and at that*

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<sup>29</sup> Kahneman and Tversky, "Choices Values and Frames," 4-7.

<sup>30</sup> Mohamed Heikal, a former Egyptian journalist and information minister, describes other sources of loss that dominated the Egyptian public sentiment prior to the war. This indicates that while Sadat could not have created the impression of gain in this public atmosphere, he could have manipulated the reference point to focus on the economic loss that the country was suffering as well. See: Heikal, Mohamed, *The Road to Ramadan*, New York, NY: Ballantine Books, 1975.

*very same moment, our injured nation recovered her honor. The Middle Eastern map has been altered.”<sup>31</sup>*

Because of his choice of point of reference Sadat does not feel the need to conceal the risks associated with the war effort. He acknowledges that the Egyptian people had to make major sacrifices. However since the nation’s injured honor was at stake, the risk was well worth it. Sadat focused his speech on the need to recover Egypt’s honor. This allowed him to declare that the map of the Middle East had changed. In fact, it would be more accurate to say that he was referring to the psychological map of the Middle East. After all, its physical map was hardly affected by the war. As we have mentioned, Egypt merely conquered a marginal strip of land. This could not have accounted for a grand change in the continental map. Furthermore, towards the end of the war the Israeli army was deployed 101 kilometers away from Cairo and Egypt’s entire Third Army (a contingency comprised of dozens of thousands of troops) was surrounded by Israeli units. Those facts did not affect Sadat’s framing strategy. Both during and after the war he continued to relate to the war as a success and to emphasize its honor recovery dimensions.<sup>32</sup>

Framing is not equivalent to lying. Sadat was not misleading the Egyptian people when he labeled the war a success. He was simply evaluating its achievements against a different point of reference. For him, the measure of success was not whether the entire Sinai desert was conquered nor was it whether the Israeli army was annihilated. Indeed, the Egyptian army’s success in dealing a blow and a strategic surprise to the Israeli army in the first few days of the war demonstrated his people’s competence. The crossing of the Canal and the high levels of casualties in the Israeli side served a similar purpose. To convey this message, Sadat made sure that he consistently communicates it to his people. This, in essence, can account for a violation

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<sup>31</sup> A quotation from Sadat’s first speech to the Egyptian Assembly after the war broke out. It was delivered on October, 16 1973 a week before the ceasefire came into effect. See: Israeli, Raphael, *The Public Diary of President Sadat: Part One The Road to War (October 1970 – October 1973)*, Leiden, The Netherlands: E. J. Brill, 1978. pp. 428.

<sup>32</sup> Clinton Bailey mentions numerous events that immediately followed the war in which Sadat continued to name the Egyptian people: “The People of October!” See: Bailey, Clinton. “Revenge and Peace Among the Bedouins.” *Articles in Bedouin Matters (An Annual Conference on Bedouins In Memory of Yitzhaki Netzer)*, Issue Number 9, Sde-Boker, Israel: 1978. Also available online at: <http://www.snunit.k12.il/beduin/arti/0910.html>

of the invariance principle. The perception of the Egyptian people regarding the value of the war effort was dependent on the way Sadat framed the endeavor and not on any absolute operational features of the war.

To understand the importance of framing we could try to imagine the likely outcome whether Sadat would have chosen a different communication strategy. For instance, he might have framed the war as an initial attempt to re-capture the lost Egyptian territory. In this version, the Six Day War would remain the “reference transaction” and the assumption of prior losses would still prevail. Accordingly, Egypt would still be in the realm of risk-seeking. Ostensibly, there is no reason to believe that such a difference in framing would have affected the realities on the ground. In fact, by applying prospect theory principles we can demonstrate that not only such framing would dramatically alter the perception of the outcome of the war; it would also have an effect on the actual realities.

Under the honor recovery framing, Sadat was able to credibly communicate that Egypt successfully achieved its goals within six hours. Another hypothetical framing strategy could have presented the war as an effort to recover from the 1967 loss of territory. This would have created the expectation among the Egyptian people that the entire Sinai Desert would be re-captured. Since Sadat was unable to deliver on such an ambitious goal, the same war would be perceived as a total failure. This different choice of frame, thus, would have tangible implications not merely on the perception of victory. Below are a couple of examples of how different frames can lead to different actual outcomes.

First, Sadat’s honor recovery framing managed to generate a sense of “optimistic overconfidence.”<sup>33</sup> A framing tactic that would emphasize the loss of land, rather than the loss of honor would be unlikely to generate a similar motivating sentiment. Kahneman and Tversky describe “optimistic overconfidence” as a state whereby people have more confidence in their conclusion as a result of having access to partial information. Such optimism increases the levels of persistence and commitment to the cause. By delivering partial information regarding the

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<sup>33</sup> Kahneman and Tversky, “Conflict Resolution: A Cognitive Perspective,” 474.

achievement of the honor recovery goal (e.g., by insisting that it was achieved within six hours), Sadat created a competitive advantage for his war effort. If he, instead, would have addressed his people with a measured and balanced speech that would emphasize the difficulty of re-capturing the Sinai desert, it is unlikely that he would have garnered similar levels of enthusiasm. Again, the choice of frame had tangible implications on the effectiveness of the war effort.

Second, let us assume that the risk-seeking slope that would characterize the loss of honor would be steeper than the slope that would characterize a mere loss of territory.<sup>34</sup> One implication of this statement is that framing can affect the casualty tolerance of the public. Thus, Sadat's choice of frame provided him with a greater leverage to execute his war effort. The public was more willing to tolerate risk for the sake of recovering its honor than for a mere territorial recovery campaign. The broader implication of this finding is that an effective framing strategy would begin by identifying the risk-seeking slopes for various losses. A frame that would emphasize the loss with the steepest curve would provide the most leverage.

***The Endowment Effect.*** As the war was reaching its end, how was Sadat able to reconcile the need for compromise in order to seal a ceasefire with the need for preserving the national sense of accomplishment? Ostensibly, the two needs were in conflict. The Egyptian Third Army was virtually surrounded by Israeli forces and it would seem difficult for Sadat to frame the war as a success story under such circumstances. To understand why Sadat's situation was not as fragile as it might seem, let us introduce Kahneman and Tversky's "endowment effect."<sup>35</sup> It denotes that people's loss aversion produces a preference for stability. This explains why the status quo is preferred unless if we are in the realm of losses.

Once Sadat was able to rapidly and credibly communicate the message that the national honor has been restored, Egypt's location on the value function has shifted. It was no longer in

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<sup>34</sup> It is important to note that in some traditions territory is a component of the national honor. Sadat mentioned it several times during his speeches. Our point above is that a neutral reference to territories like a resource would yield a weaker outcome than an explicit reference to the national honor. For Sadat's association of territory and honor see: "People in Egypt often fought for fifty years over a meter of land separating neighbors. This is our way of living... if it is a matter of our land, it means that our honor here is something very precious and one dies for this honor. My first priority is removing this aggression." From: Israeli, Raphael, *The Public Diary of President Sadat: Part One The Road to War (October 1970 – October 1973)*, 15.

<sup>35</sup> Kahneman and Tversky, "Choices Values and Frames," 13-14.

the realm of losses. Instead, it shifted to the realm of gains and, consequently, it became risk-averse. The newly acquired endowment of national honor was to be preserved. This is why the terms of the United Nations Security Council Resolution 338 were acceptable by him although they meant that Israeli soldiers would occupy the western side of the Canal.<sup>36</sup> Sadat's war objectives were achieved during the first few days of the war. At this point he became risk-averse and wanted to protect his new gains.

## Summary and Possible Implications

This essay proposed an analytical framework for explaining and predicting the logic of risky policy decisions that are motivated by objectives of honor restoration and humiliation elimination. As a conceptual framework, we have imported, adjusted and applied principles of prospect theory.

From a methodological standpoint, it is clear that this approach requires additional formulation and testing. For instance, psychological studies should help us determine whether honor can indeed be treated like a currency. In addition, we should examine whether indeed risk-seeking tendencies grow when a sense of humiliation is prevalent. Another study that may have important implications from an international political perspective could compare risk-seeking tendencies in cases of humiliation across different cultures. In this way, we might be able to develop a psychological profile for different cultures that would help us predict their political behavior.

The initial policy implications that this framework has produced are of practical value. The section that analyzed the prospects of negotiations, for example, instructed us to make

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<sup>36</sup> The script of the UNSC Resolution of October 22, 1973 is available online at: [http://usinfo.state.gov/is/Archive\\_Index/UNSC\\_Adopts\\_Resolution\\_338\\_on\\_Middle\\_East.html](http://usinfo.state.gov/is/Archive_Index/UNSC_Adopts_Resolution_338_on_Middle_East.html)

concessions that would be aimed at reducing the sense of humiliation of the other side. It also warned us of being too hopeful regarding the prospects of negotiations. Sometimes our real choice would be between total capitulation and conflict because of the excessive value that the humiliated side would assign to gaining the complete concession. The section that reflected on military operational planning warns us that sometimes the war plans of our adversaries would be very unconventional because they are motivated by less intuitive political objectives. Finally, we were exposed to the importance of framing if a successful honor restoration strategy is to be executed. Accordingly, we have seen that a successful honor restoration strategy depends, first and foremost, on the presence of a competent leadership that would frame the events in this spirit. In this sense, one of the key factors in determining whether a violent conflict moves beyond the killing phase is the existence of a leadership that can credibly frame and communicate the message that honor has been restored and that it is time to move on.

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