**Chapter One**

**Dilemmas and Strategies**

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Whether on matters domestic or international, political action requires decision-making in the face of considerable uncertainty and ambivalence, belying images of the process as formulaic, a “no-brainer,” or a “slam-dunk.”

**Case Study 1.1 Thomas Jefferson: Subjects or Citizens?**

*“It is well known, that in July of 1775, a separation from Great-Britain and the establishment of a republican government had never entered into any person’s head.”*

*Thomas Jefferson*

*Notes on the State of Virginia*

Every school child learns that the American colonies declared their independence from Great Britain in July 1776 and the establishment of a Republican government had never entered into any person’s head. But, said Jefferson, independence was unthinkable a year earlier. Anger toward the British had been building over the past decade, prompting the colonists to take up arms against them in July 1775. However, their initially stated goal was not independence at all but restoration of their rights as British subjects.

Into this turbulent situation came Thomas Paine, an essayist whose Common Sense resonated with the vast number of colonists.*-* estimated at 500,000 or more;who read it, read of it, or heard about it from others. The timing of its publication was fortuitous; it coincided with news of a widely reviled speech by King George III that rejected the colonists’ earlier peace overtures. Especially important was the buzz that the pamphlet and the accompanying news from abroad created in taverns and meeting houses. Those who were already convinced found their opinions confirmed.  Those who were not yet convinced experienced the uncomfortable sense of being in the minority. Thus, did one word get replaced by another in the final version of the Declaration. Thomas Jefferson changed “subjects” to “citizens.” (Kaufman, M. (July 3, 2010). And thus, did the gentlemanly aristocratic Jefferson become a militant movement activist.

[Artist rendering of signing here] [(<http://www.loc.gov/rr/program/bib/ourdocs/DeclarInd.html>)

This is the conventional tale of the American revolution, but it continues to fascinate. Was this an anti-slavery rebellion? But Washington and Jefferson owned slaves and kept them after the fighting had ended. Was it an unnecessary revolution, the Brits no less committed to Enlightenment thinking as the Colonists, and as eager to settle matters peacefully with them as the Canadians and Australians had done? Asked the New Yorker’s Adam Gopnik, “What if *it* (i.e., the Declaration of Independence, the American Revolution, and the creation of the United States of America) had been a mistake from the start, and if the injustice and madness of America life since then have occurred not in spite of the virtues of the Founding Fathers but because of them, producing a country that was always marked for violence and disruption and demagogy?” (Gopnick, May 2017, p. 79). [I invite readers to weigh in on this question.]

 Thus Thomas Jefferson, in drafting the colonists’ grievances against the Crown replaced “subjects” with “citizens,” a fateful change only recently discovered by recent technology. Until then going to war had been unthinkable to most colonists, but the re-worded Declaration of Independence changed all that and the bespectacled, aristocratic Jefferson became a militant movement activist! (Kaufman, July 3, 2010)

**Dilemmas**

Dilemmas are conundrums, tight spots, predicaments--tough choices between the proverbial rock and the hard place. Here are recurrent dilemmas, of particular interest, that resist all efforts to spirit them away. Their predictability does not stop them from being painful at times, debilitating at others, but dilemma-centered political analysis can nevertheless be of great value in diagnosing difficulties and in assessing strategic alternatives. Anticipating dilemmas and getting a handle on how others in similar situations have dealt with them can thus assist in strategic planning—a prerequisite to effective management of dilemmas. Discovering similar dilemmas in seemingly different situations can yield insights about the challenges of leadership and about political persuasion more generally.  And it can also help make sense of seemingly inconsistent pronouncements by would-be political leaders who claim to know what’s good for us.

**Strategies**

Of parallel interest to dilemmas are the strategic alternatives available to political actors. Strategizing involves means-end considerations about how best to realize goals, overcome obstacles and exploit opportunities. Or, as Marshall Ganz put it far more succinctly, “it is how we turn what we have into what we need to get what we want.” (Ganz, 2004, P.  181).

            The strategies defined and illustrated in the book include: dividing and conquering, commenting on the form taken by an exchange or on the message context, “Yes-Yes” and “Yes-But,” concessions, and silence where talk is expected. Also threats and promises, transcendence (i.e., proposing to rise above our apparent differences), triangulation, (shifting this way then that, so as to move one’s boat in the desired directon), typification (presenting the desired alternative , and double games (i.e. alternating between aligning with and then against another’s position on a matter).  Here from the trade book literature is a sampling of recommendations to would-be persuaders on adapting strategies to ends, audiences and situations:

* To get others to give you what you want, says Gerry Spence (1995, give them at least some of what they want. His advice dovetails with my co-active approach to persuasion, introduced in Chapter 2.
* To transform an organization or institution, say brothers Dan and Chip Heath (2010) gather the would-be reformers together and “rally the herd.” Decide what’s working and what’s broken. Build new habits and grow new identities. “Shrink the change” through a sequence of small victories rather than trying for big solutions. Script the critical moves needed for change and provide clear directions. If forced to choose between appealing to reason or emotion, opt for emotion. “See-Feel Change” usually works better than “Analyze-Think-Change.” (Heath & Heath, 2010) For purposes of confronting opponents of needed reforms, community organizer Saul Alinsky (1972) advised fellow radicals to “Pick the target, freeze it, personalize it, and polarize it.”, “Go outside the experience of your enemy, if you can”, but “never go outside the experience of your own people.” Like the Heaths, Alinsky advised leaders to “pick a cinch fight.” Like the legendary military leader Sun Tzu (n.d) he prescribed the deceptive manipulation of appearances, what these days is called perception management e.g. “Power is not only what you have,” Sun Tzu said, “but what the enemy thinks you have.” He added that “The threat is more terrifying than the thing itself.”
* But, said “dilemmas” theorist, James Jasper (2006, pp. 88-9?) persuasion is a form of intelligence…the alternative to “weighing nine hundred pounds,” – “to be clever, to outflank the larger army, to outwit the giant in the fairy tale, to surprise and confuse opponents with novel or unexpected moves…”

As contrasted with other forms of goal-directed (i.e., instrumental) activity, strategic action is tacitly if not overtly a kind of strategic interaction (Jasper, 2006, pp:7-8) Erving Goffman’s examples of expression games may help to clarify the point.

*Expression games* are contests over the control, and detection of control, of expressive behaviors (Goffman, 1969). They can get extremely complicated, particularly in military conflicts. Rival nations may go to great lengths to stage deceptions and to prevent their detection from those who were deceived.

During World War II, the British launched an ambitious program of deceptions, including one dubbed Operation Mincemeat.  They arranged for the Germans to discover false secrets detailing Allied attack plans on the corpse of a high-ranking but fictitious military officer. This single deception was critical to misdirecting the Germans, regaining control of the Mediterranean, and ultimately winning the war.

Sometimes it was not the only the enemy who was deceived; it was also necessary to mislead the communicator of the deceptive message as well. Rather than instructing French resistance workers not to warn the Germans about Allied invasion plans, the British gave them false information and assumed that as a matter of course, some would be captured by the Germans and would reveal the false information very credibly under torture. (Yagota, June 1980, 66-69).

**Leadership Dilemmas and Political Dilemmas**

Nearly all of the examples provided in the book are about attempts at influence by leaders of one kind or another. Most such leaders are in positions of authority such as public officials. For them the dilemmas of leadership are closely aligned with the roles they are expected to play in the organizations or social movements or institutions with which they are affiliated. An obvious case: public officials administering health care programs will very likely experience tensions between their fiscal responsibilities and their obligations to provide quality care. (Nugent and Abolafia, 2007) Here organizational dilemmas become leadership dilemmas and leadership dilemmas translate into political dilemmas necessitating attempts at persuasion or other forms of influence as these same officials are called upon to justify their strategic decisions to stakeholders.

But in other senses of “leadership,” not all authorities really lead and not all leaders are in positions of authority. By “really lead,” we might mean “really exercise influence,” or, even more significantly, “really exercise adaptive influence” (Heifetz, 1994) finding ways, for example, of bringing about changes in organizational practices that reconcile oppositions between fiscal responsibilities and obligations as health providers. Those in positions of authority are sometimes leaders “in name only,” unable to enlist voluntary cooperation or consent. Others who are un-credentialed or whose organizations are viewed by officialdom as not just illegitimate but threatening, may serve society well by their moral leadership. Disambiguating these multiple senses of leadership and illustrating relations between leadership conundrums and political dilemmas for different kinds of situation are among the tasks of this book. Tracking the origins of political dilemmas in the organizational and situational counter-pressures on leaders is yet another task of this book.

**A Framework for Analysis: The “RPS” Approach**

As in the foregoing examples, much of this book differentiates between the pushes and pulls on political actors in different leadership roles. Its case studies reveal striking commonalities as well. For Chinese Communist Party leaders as for American heads of state, tensions inevitably arise between seemingly incompatible goals, or between goals and values, or between the need to adapt to multiple audiences, or to seem consistent while being opportunistic, or to combine combative and cooperative modes of influence, or to achieve desired short-term effects without experiencing unwelcome long-term effects. (Lu and Simons, 2006)

            These and other such tensions are the “P” for Problems in dilemma management that I call the “RPS” approach. (Simons, 1970; Simons, 2001; Simons and Jones, 2011) Here in brief are its basic concepts and principles:

*Requirements (R)*

By dint of their roles and of the situations they confront, political leaders are rarely free agents. The “demands” or “pressures” upon them constitute rhetorical *requirements.*

*Problems* (P)

Problems are broadly defined as troubling situations. (Best, 2013) They often arise from cross-pressures on political actors to realize seemingly incompatible or contradictory demands such as acting consistently and opportunistically, cooperatively and competitively, or ethically and effectively. (See my “top ten” list of recurrent dilemmas. See also Chapter 3 on Dysfunctional Political Systems.) They become labyrinthine or “wicked” when one problem leads to another and gives rise to still another in a series of “loops.”  Rice and Cooper, 2010, Rittel and Webber, 1973). Said political economist Robert Reich (December 11, 2012), for example, tactical games and partisan maneuvers are often symptomatic of big problems that rarely get discussed:

Public debate over the fiscal cliff is really a prelude to negotiations about how best to shrink the federal budget deficit. “This, in turn, is a fragment of a bigger debate over whether we should be embracing austerity economics and reducing the budget deficit in the next few years or, alternatively, using public spending and investing to grow the economy and increase the number of jobs.” Reich adds that “Even this debate is just one part of what should be the central debate of our time—why median wages continue to drop and poverty to increase at the same time income and wealth are becoming ever more concentrated at the top, and what should be done to counter the trend. The dilemma isn’t just economic. It’s also political. As money concentrates at the top, so does power. That concentrated power generates even more entrenched wealth at the top, and less for the middle class and the poor.”

*Strategies (S)*

In response to problems, and in an effort both to fulfill requirements and exploit opportunities, political leaders devise *strategies*ofinfluence. Particularly as they seek to thread their way through difficult dilemmas, they must be practiced at selecting strategically from the available *resources of communication*.

“RPS” provides a general framework for strategizing and analysis, but is insufficient for most purposes. Much as leaders can profit from learning about how others coped with similar dilemmas in somewhat comparable situations, ultimately all rhetorical situations are unique.

Greatly complicating strategic planning is that *dilemmas come in bunches.*What’s missing in lists of recurrent dilemmas are their interrelations. Strategies once implemented also have a way of creating new problems. The experience for organizational leaders of managing multiple dilemmas at once is akin to a high-wire juggling act. Heifetz (1994) aptly called it *Leadership without Easy Answers*. Heifetz, Grashow and Linsky (2009) write of the need “for new forms of improvisational expertise” to find “better ways to compete and collaborate.” (p. 2). Persons, countries, organizations, are challenged, they say, “to sift through the wisdom and know-how of their heritage, to leave behind lessons that no longer serve them, and innovate, not for change’s sake, but for the sake of conserving and preserving the values and competence they find most essential and precious.” (p. 2) In similar ways, James Jasper (1997) foregrounds the creative dimensions of what he calls the art of moral protest: "In little ways and big, protestors experiment with novel ways to think, feel, judge, and act. Effective strategizing, especially, relies not only on good timing but artful innovation and choice.” (Jasper, 2007, p.66)

**Typologies of Dilemmas**

Of the many dilemmas, that we humans experience, some are generic and therefore highly predictable, others are specific to particular roles and situations, and still others are idiosyncratic and therefore highly unpredictable.

Dilemmas can be classified in other ways as well. Dilemmas arising when interests collide over issues such as taxation and charitable giving can loosely be described as moral dilemmas. Even collectively minded citizens who happily pay their taxes and donate generously are apt to demur over placement of a foul-smelling community dump near to their own backyards. This “NIMBY” problem bespeaks our interests simultaneously in competing and collaborating with one another.

Two variants of these moral conundrums are “Dirty Hands” and the “Tragedy of the Commons.” In the first case, ethically questionable means are used in service of ends presumed to justify them. (Coady, 2009) A government’s obligation to protect its citizens may be at odds with its prohibitions against torture, even as used for purposes of national security. (See Chapter 3)

Political philosophers have quarreled over the circumstances that might justify the overriding of moral constraints. Would defending against the possibility of an enemy attack justify the use of torture or the firebombing of one of its most populated cities? Is everything fair game in love and war? Does one become dehumanized in acting inhumanely against another?

The “tragedy of the commons” is so named for an area adjacent to a rural village or town used without immediate cost for the grazing of farm animals. But there is a longer term cost if the grazing potential of the commons is depleted by excessive use. Those farmers bringing more animals to graze are advantaged in the short run, just as those bringing fewer are disadvantaged, but all of the farmers suffer if the commons can no longer be replenished. Substitute any number of modern day problems for the tragedy of the commons—overpopulation, pollution, economic inequality—and you get some sense of the dilemma’s reach.

Some dilemmas are ideological, as when commitments to guaranteeing freedom for all clash with commitments to economic equality for all. Does providing equality of economic opportunity resolve this dilemma? Conservatives generally argue that it does, but liberals counter that it unfairly compels the previously disadvantaged to compete with the previously advantaged on an uneven playing field.

Ideologies are widely shared core beliefs and values, such as liberalism and conservatism, equality of opportunity and equality of results. Scratch at a moral dilemma and you are likely to discover its ideological underpinnings. Believers in American exceptionalism, for example, may justify for themselves the use of torture by “our” side but not our opponent’s side. (McDougall[h4] )

Some dilemmas are procedural as when groups engaged in delicate deliberations are torn between the need for confidentiality and the need for transparency, or when mediators committed to the appearance of neutrality in handling disputes also look for ways to steer the conversation toward avoiding what they foresee as disastrous outcomes. (Jacobs and Aakhus, 2002)

“Approach-approach” dilemmas (e.g., the choice for me between Butter Pecan ice cream and Cherry Vanilla) differ from avoidance-avoidance dilemmas (e.g., the choice between death by hanging or by firing squad) and from what Miller and Dollard (1941)-not listed in citations [h5] called double approach-avoidance conflicts. In these cases two or more alternatives are each attractive and repulsive. Most of the examples to be found in this book are of this kind and nearly all find expression in communication.

Here is my “Top Ten” list of predictable predicaments.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Table 1.1: Top Ten Predictable Predicaments | | | |
| 1 | Ethics | vs. | Expediency |
| 2 | Cooperation | vs. | Competition |
| 3 | Myth | vs. | Reality |
| 4 | Consistency | vs. | Flexibility |
| 5 | Power Strategies | vs. | Persuasion Strategies |
| 6 | Competing Values & Interests (e.g. justice vs. mercy) | | |
| 7 | Competing Beliefs  (e.g. free will vs. determinism) | | |
| 8 | Multiple Audiences | | |
| 9 | Multiple Leaders | | |
| 10 | Trust | vs. | Suspicion |

1. Ethics vs. Expediency.

This is the choice between “doing things right” and “doing things smart”? When, if at all, do the ends justify the use of “dirty hands” strategies? Were the British justified in their use of “Operation Mincemeat”? The tools of political persuasion are called upon in navigating the shoals of conflicting interests. Not uncommonly, in times of war, political leaders act first and justify later, presenting their audiences with the *fait accompli* effect.

1. Cooperation vs. Competition or Conflict)

Another name for this conundrum is the *mixed motive dilemma.*Sue wants to buy Lou’s house for $100,000, “not a penny more; Lou is willing to sell it for $150,000, “not a penny less.” But these are opening gambits in what could be protracted negotiations. (Reardon, 2004). “Splitting the difference” and “round numbers” are motivational appeals that often succeed in negotiations of this kind.

“Let’s settle for $125,000.”

A conflict is a struggle over seemingly incompatible interests. Its outcomes for the respective parties are “win-win” (for both), “lose-lose” (for both) and “win-lose.” In “mixed-motive” conflicts the two parties are simultaneously motivated to compete and cooperate. The situation’s mixed motives can be described as incomplete antagonism. Rife as it is with the potential for conflict escalation, it also has the potential for creative, “win-win” solutions. Chapter 3 offers examples of dysfunctional political systems leading to destructive conflict. (Simons and Jones, 2011). Systems of this kind are characterized by runaway feedback loops of increasing mistrust and hostility. For examples of productive ways out of destructive conflict in the political communication literature, see Corman, Trethaway, et al. (2008) and Ellis (2006)

3. Myth vs. Reality

Nation-states, social movements, and political campaigns (among others) are energized by myths of togetherness, sacrifice, moral superiority and exceptionalism. Witness, for example, Britain’s “white man’s burden as justification for colonialism, Ronald Reagan’s importation of Puritanical belief in American exceptionalism (with the nation’s capital as the “shining city on the hill,” and Adolph Hitler’s blood myth of Aryan superiority.

Myths are animating falsehoods, based on widely believed legends, fables, and other such stories from which they derive ideological justification. All too often, however, leaders come to believe their own myths

Under domestic political pressure to go to war to avenge the 9/11 bombings, President George W. Bush became entrapped in Iraq and Afghanistan, a victim of belief in his own mythic rhetoric and of his premature declaration of “Mission Accomplished” in Iraq.

Politicians who champion peaceful alternatives to war are also at risk.  Former President Bill Clinton observed that Americans prefer a president who is “strong and wrong” to one who is weak and right[[1]](#endnote-1).

4.  Consistency vs. Flexibility.

Political leaders must strive to appear consistent, but not if it means remaining true to a failed position. Pragmatism dictates that they act flexibly, indeed opportunistically, albeit at the risk of being seen as “flip-floppers”.

On controversial issues such as gay marriage, policy makers who appear calculated rather than principled may lose not only their opponents but also their supporters. But woe unto policy makers who aren’t calculating. Calculations may even be necessary on how to appear uncalculated.

5.  Power versus Persuasion

At first blush, power and persuasion would appear to be incompatible, the former imposing, as in the threat or use of force, the latter predisposing, as in reasoned arguments and motivational appeals. But persuasion is needed to make threats credible and force to appear morally justified. Persuasion too serves to make offers of increased advantages or benefits—called *inducements—*seem credible and well-intended. (Simons and Jones, 2011) All told, then, coercion (the “stick”), inducements (the “carrot”) and persuasion are best conceptualized as corners of a triangle, with the various combinations of power and persuasion in between.

One such combination of power and persuasion has been used successfully, it appears, by The Islamic State, otherwise known as ISIS or ISIL, which presented itself as the sole guardian of Sunni Muslim interests throughout the Arab world and took over wide swaths of land in Syria and Iraq.

The winning combination was well evinced in the Syrian desert city of Palmyra when ISIS militants blew up the Tadmur Prison there, notorious for Syria’s use of it to detain and capture of political prisoners.  The Islamic State is also highly regarded in the Arab world for its adept use of social media.

6. Clashing values

Justice versus mercy, freedom of opportunity versus equality of results are examples of values controversies, frequently played out in electoral campaigns with support from social movements engaged in what the media has called the “culture wars.” Does freedom of opportunity lead to equality of results? Conservatives argue that it does, liberals that it favors the previously privileged by enabling them to compete on an uneven playing field.

7. Clashing Beliefs.

Beliefs are judgments as to what is true or probable. Clashing beliefs figure prominently in heated conflicts, as between gun control advocates and the National Rifle Association, proponents of increased surveillance to protect against terrorists and opponents who argue that it is counterproductive, advocates of legalizing the sale and use of marijuana and those who would continue to criminalize it. In each such controversy the arguments used in arguing pro and cons display a narrative rationality (Fisher, 19xx), not necessarily false to fact or illogical but extra-factual and extra-logical in the sense of involving more than fact and logic to buttress their cases.

8.   Multiple Audiences

This conundrum is at play whenever what is seen or heard reaches more than one audience, including in some cases, unintended audiences. What persuades one audience boomerangs with another. Barack Obama and Hillary Clinton faced the problem in 2008 when they squared off in a presidential primary debate focused in large measure on the issue of NAFTA (the North American Free Trade Agreement) involving the U.S., Canada and Mexico. Their debate was televised before audiences in Ohio and Texas. A majority of Ohioans opposed NAFTA, and it was likely to be a swing state in the general election, whereas most Texas Democrats supported NAFTA, although there were opposing factions in each state. Relatively few Ohioans and Texans could explain the complexities of NAFTA and neither candidate addressed them. Instead they presented themselves as compassionate candidates, cognizant of NAFTA’s costs and benefits and determined to delay passage of a NAFTA bill that was not in the voters’ interests.

9. Multiple Leaders

Martin Luther King, Jr. had help from Reverend Abernathy in whipping up the frenzy of a crowd, Baynard Rustin, who served as a theoretician for the nonviolent factions of the civil rights movement, Fred Shuttleswoth, a respected minister, Jesse Jackson, a prominent agitator for change with ties to Chicago and northern liberals, Clarence Farmer who headed up CORE, and Harry Belafonte, a prominent entertainer. Cooperation among them was essential, but by temperament and ideology they were inclined to go separate ways. Thus, King needed to find common ground on which they would work together. The multiple leadership problem was never fully resolved.

10. Suspicion Versus Trust

A recurring conundrum for individuals and societies pairs suspicion of political persuaders against trust. Like loans from a bank, trust is the credit that individuals extend to one another. (Rickard, 2006/2012) In societies as in interpersonal relationships mutual trust grows as it is reciprocated. Institutional norms of reciprocity evolve into mutually beneficial codes of ethics and rules of law. Communicators bridge differences by way of reasoned argument backed by credible evidence. They also signal openness to the ideas of the other rather than a readiness to pounce. Winning another’s assent becomes far more important than winning arguments. Collaborative problem-solving replaces strategic manipulation and exploitation of others. Societies prosper as people pool their resources in contributing to it.

But politics often gives us reason to mistrust. Said J. Murray Edelman (1964), politics is most usefully seen through the prisms of theater and of spectator sports. For most of us politics’ “passing parade of abstract symbols” offers objects of emotional attachment and the illusion of participation through ritual acts such as voting and signing petitions. Those in office offer *appeals*in their public presentations and *deals*in private to powerful elites. Citizens are easily led—and misled—through a politics of fear and misinformation. (Edelman, 2001:3-4). “A very high proportion of the beliefs that guide political conduct and political rhetoric are myths.” (Edelman, 2001:4)

**Persuasion in the Guise of Non-Persuasion**

Except for those whose intent to influence is obvious (e.g., pundits, political campaigners, editorialists), would-be persuaders often present themselves as innocent of any persuasive designs on the recipients of their messages. Rather, they are just out to inform, to entertain, to ask a few questions, or to express their innermost feelings. (Miller, 2012)-listed as 2010 in citations

     Masking persuasive intent is designed to overcome defenses. Persons forewarned that a communicator intends to persuade them are likely to tune out or to recite counterarguments to themselves even in advance of exposure to the communicator’s message (e.g., Petty & Cacioppo, 1981/1996). This defensive reaction is especially likely if the issue is of some importance to message recipients or if they suspect that the communicator is up to no good—that he or she is manipulative, exploitative, and perhaps deliberately deceptive (Benoit, 1998; Fukada, 1986; Papageorgis, 1968; Petty & Cacioppo, 1977).

          As a general rule, whatever yardsticks used by one person to distinguish persuasion from non-persuasion will be exploited by others to deceive their listeners or viewers about their persuasive intent or to make their messages appear more authentic or more objective. Is looking away from the job interviewer a sign of the non-persuader? By a type of perverse logic, some persuaders deliberately shift their gaze away from the job interviewer from time to time to create the appearance of being sincere, honest—not too slick. Similarly, “yes-men” learn to disagree with their bosses enough to negate the impression of pandering while still playing up to them. Is one-sided argument evidence of promotional intent? Skilled persuaders learn to appear impartial by presenting both sides of an issue while subtly questioning the merits of the opposing view and the credibility of their opponents. (Jacobs & Aakhus, 2002, Billig, 1996). They also have an interest in at least appearing truthful if for no other reason than that the perception of dishonesty diminishes their chances of being believed the next time around.

On this view, then, political accounts, descriptions, expressions of opinion ought not to be taken at face value. They are least believable when uttered with what appears to be the utmost of sincerity. Expressions of opinion are usefully conjectured to be partisan-angled strategic stances, whatever their relation to actual beliefs. (Billig, 1996) Accounts and descriptions- of motives, situations, heroes and villains, good and evil, actions and agencies ought to be hypothesized as self-serving, though not necessarily to the disadvantage of others. (Appel, 2011, Burke, 1969, Edelman, 1964)

            But it would be overly cynical and unrealistic to claim that suspicion always drives out trust. John Daly’s *Advocacy* (2011) offers numerous examples of sound arguments, ably stated, overcoming mistrust. Persuasion functions to sell good ideas and, equally important, discourages people from investing in bad ideas. Says Daly (2011:15), “Advocacy means persuading people who matter to care about your issue. It is about being listened to, about being at the table when decisions are made, being heard by people who make decisions. It is about facing and overcoming resistance.” (Admittedly, adds Daly, persuasion can also be used to crush good ideas. Daly’s is one of many books lending credulity to Aristotle’s dictum that, other things being equal, compelling evidence and sound reasoning have a natural advantage over weak evidence and fallacious reasoning. (e.g., Van Eemeren, 2010) Alongside this truism is another: that things are seldom equal, with the advantage usually going to those better able to purchase or control the instrumentalities of persuasion.

And so, the dialectic of trust versus suspicion goes on, to be returned to in subsequent chapters of this book.

      In forthcoming chapters, these and other dilemmas are brought to bear upon issues of governance. Their common denominators are conflicting ideologies, clashing interests, the corrosive effects of money and other such forms of power. These come together in legislative skirmishes, especially at election time.

**Tools of Influence**

To influence others is to make a difference in the way they think, feel or act. Power is potential influence and influence is power put to use. (Gamson, 1970) Persuasion is one among a number of ways of exerting social influence, as opposed to cultural and structural influences. Its aim is to influence peoples’ autonomous judgments, not just their behaviors*.*It often does so co-actively by moving toward others psychologically in hopes that they will be moved in turn. (See Chapter 2)

The fully persuaded message recipient, likes what you promise, fears what you say is imminent, hates what you censure, embraces what you command, regrets whatever you build up as regrettable, rejoices at whatever you say is cause for rejoicing, sympathizes with those whose wretchedness your words bring before his very eyes, shuns those whom you admonish him to shun . . . and in whatever other ways your high eloquence can affect the minds of your hearers, bringing them not merely to know what should be done, but to do what they know should be done. (St Augustine, quoted in Burke, 1950/1969, p. 50).

In these respect, persuasion differs from other types of social influence such as *information-giving*, *conformity* pressures, the *authority* of the powerful, the carrot of *material inducements*and the stick of *coercive influence*.But in conflict situations, persuasion works hand in hand with these other forms of influence. In Saudi Arabia public information is largely controlled by the state. The royal family exerts conformity pressures in the name of Islam, even as it exempts itself from many of these strictures, and rewards obedience to princely authority. More influential than coercion is the use of material inducements. When other nations in the Middle East were rebelling against authority during the “Arab Spring,” Saudi Arabia was relatively quiet. Said Theodore Friend (2011),

‘King Abdullah and his government have pumped the equivalent of $5000 per person into the social economy. While upheavals proceed elsewhere, the Saudi people appear lulled or even stupefied. When adventurous women proclaimed June 17, 2011 a day for themselves to drive in defiance of custom and police, only thirty or forty were estimated to have done so across the country. Twenty years previous, more women- 47 exactly- had gone briefly to jail in Riyadh for taking the wheels of their cars. (Friend, 2011)

*Persuasion’s Weaponry*

Persuasion is less controlling than the carrot, the stick and conformity pressures, but it is not without its weaponry. Persuasive communications can be highly manipulative, seductive in a way that more controlling forms of influence cannot be. The auto salesperson who hands you the car keys for a trial run is not being generous. She knows that nearly all of us are inclined to respond in kind to favorable treatment and that some of us feel obligated to go one better. She is aware too of the power of self-persuasion, as when during the trial run of the Zippo sedan the auto customer fantasizes about impressing his neighbors, rationalizes maxing out on his credit card, rehearses the arguments he’ll need to counter his wife’s objections, feels an unaccountable bond of friendship with the saleswoman, and for the first time in years begins to think of himself as sexy.

Whereas coercion, material inducements, and conformity pressures are analytically different from persuasion, nothing prevents influence-seekers from combining them. Threats are a form of coercion but they are made more or less persuasive by the manner in which they are delivered. This is true as well of promises (a form of material inducement) and of pressures toward conformity. Bargaining combines persuasion, threats and promises, and may utilize conformity pressures as well.

*Compliance-Gaining*

*Compliance-gaining*tactics effect changes in overt behavior, not just in beliefs, values, or attitudes. A physician convinces a sick patient to take the prescribed medication, a son or daughter gets parental permission to use the family car for the evening, a rousing campaign speech brings more supporters to the polls.

Compliance gaining isn’t always a matter of persuasion. Force or the threat of force can coerce compliance. Large sums of money or promises of same can also induce people to work long hours, endure unpleasant working conditions, and risk their lives. But these “power” strategies need persuasion to make them palatable; without it, coercion and material inducements produce only grudging compliance. A sampling of compliance-gaining techniques is provided on my web-site[[2]](#endnote-2). They include guilt inductions, flattery, appeals to altruism or to self-interest, fear appeals combined with recommendations and reassurances, favor-giving or gift-giving designed to elicit reciprocation, endorsements from third parties and authoritative commands.

*Instrumentalities of Persuasion*

As discussed in Chapters 6 and 7, the power of the carrot and the stick may also assist communicators in purchasing or otherwise controlling the instrumentalities of persuasion. In the business of politics, money buys candidates, access to decision-makers, media outlets, media talent, expertise and sometimes information. Coercion can be used to intimidate would-be critics of governmental policies and to cow regulatory agencies. This happens repeatedly in time of war. (See Chapter 11.) Presidents, as “communicators-in-chief”, attempt to frame (or reframe) the issues, telling us what’s at stake and what’s at issue while rendering dissent impolitic.

Framing/Reframing [need more on this, example going meta]

*A frame is one among a number of possible ways of seeing something, and a reframing is a way of seeing it differently, in effect changing its meaning*. (Simons and Jones, 2011) Frames commonly rely on visual metaphors: the glass as half full (or half empty), the biased journalistic account as akin to a doctored photograph, the one-sided account as similar to a battle between cowboys and Indians filmed only from the perspective of the cowboys, the case against an attorney’s client as a house of cards.

In one form or another, persuasion is a matter of *frame alignment*(Benford, 1988). In *frame bridging* the persuader builds on common ground by those already in sync with their views so as to narrow the gap in their respective ways of thinking.  Fr*ame amplification* seeks to intensify others’ commitments to a cause or way of thinking, perhaps by enlisting them as volunteers in efforts to win new converts. In *frame extension* persuaders enlarge the perspective they present to others so as to accommodate their way of thinking. For example, a social conservative opposed to abortion concedes that there may be circumstances in which it is justified. Fr*ame transformation*involves conversions from one cause to its seeming opposite. The habitual pessimist is now consistently hopeful, the former liberal now a conservative. (See also Best, 2013, pp. 10-12.)

***Case Study 1. Framing Photojournalism.***

On his way to a charity ball, Senator Jones is photographed walking down a hotel corridor with a priest on one arm and a gorgeous model on the other. This presents the photo editor of a newspaper with an interesting question. Should the photograph be used as is to accompany the newspaper’s story on the charity ball? Why not? The senator, after all, is Catholic and, at the time of the photograph, had something of a reputation as a philanderer. Photographing the senator between the priest and the model is therefore appropriate. The newspaper could also reframe the senator’s visit to the charity ball by cropping the photograph. Depending on its politics, it could cut out the priest and leave the model, or cut out the model and leave the priest, or perhaps downplay the senator’s presence altogether by selecting instead a photograph of the charity host and hostess dancing together.

**Commentary**

As this example makes clear, language is not alone in being able to frame or reframe others’ perspectives. Whether photojournalists should be in the business of visual persuasion is an ethical question. But consider the dilemma for those who want their news photos to inform and not persuade. Every presentational decision, whether it involves photo selection, editing, or placement, has the potential to influence viewers’ perspectives.

There is clearly a good deal of ambiguity surrounding the notions of framing and reframing, and some writers have therefore attempted to rein the terms in. (e.g., Fairhurst, 2005) To frame, suggests Entman (1993), is to ‘select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicative text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem, definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation for the item described.’

Entman (1993) adds that frames reside in four locations in a communicative process, which may or may not coincide. These are (1) the communicator, (2) the text, (3) the receiver, and (4) the culture.

*Communicators* make conscious or unconscious framing judgments in deciding what to say, guided by frames (often called schemata) that organize their belief systems. The *text*contains frames, which are manifested by the presence or absence of certain key-words, stock phrases, stereotyped images, sources of information, and sentences.  These textual elements work together to provide clusters of facts or judgments that reinforce the messages. The frames that guide the *receiver’s* thinking and conclusion may or may not reflect the frames in the text and the framing intention of the communicator. The *culture* is the stock of commonly invoked frames. In fact, culture might even be *defined* as the empirically demonstrable set of common frames exhibited in the discourse and thinking of most people in a society or other social grouping.

*Re-contextualizing Situations*

A close cousin of issue framing/reframing is re-contextualizing. Husband complains: “I drink because you nag.” “Wife replies: “I nag because you drink.” In this ongoing vicious cycle, each offers a different punctuation of the sequence of events. (Watzlawick, Beavin-Bavelas and Jackson, 1967). Charged with philandering while in office, an elected official attempts to shift blame or minimize its significance in the larger scheme of things. Alerted to the massive protests against the war in Vietnam, President Richard Nixon calls attention to those patriotic, God-fearing Americans who did not protest, calling them the “silent majority.” Similarly, as newscasters report on the swelling numbers of protestors in Cairo’s Tahrir Square calling for an end to military rule, a representative of the military junta points to evidence of the military’s continuing popularity

All this is to suggest that descriptions of contexts (i.e. situations) can be highly malleable. Says organizational theorist Keith Grint (2005, p. 1467), “Conventional contingency accounts of leadership suggest that accurate accounts of the context are a critical element of the decision-making apparatus but such accounts appear incapable of explaining the decisions of those engaged.” Grint cites as an example the decision to push ahead with the Allied Forces’ invasion of Iraq based on the flimsiest of evidence. He adds that “decision-makers” are much more active in the constitution of the context than conventional contingency theories allow, and that a persuasive rendition of the context then legitimizes a particular form of action consistent with the decision-maker’s preferred mode of engagement, rather than what ‘the situation’ apparently demands.” (Grint, 2005, p. 1468)

Motives also enter into decision-makers’ contextualizations. Leaders may be corrupted by power, or be reluctant to admit to error, or be blinded by passion, or torn between competing values. On this view contexts are rhetorically constituted and socially constructed; they “are not independent of human agency, and cannot be objectively assessed in a scientific form.” (Grint, p. 1471)

But lest his readers conclude that individual political actors have unlimited freedom to bend social constructions of situations to their will, Grint adds that their ability to make a difference “is only marginal in comparison to the influence of more structural features like the economy or religion or political party or social class or gender of any other of the myriad variables on offer.” (p. 1470) I will argue in Chapter 4 that some situations are more malleable than others; i.e. more open to interpretation and recontextualizations.

*Communication Resources*

In the proverbial toolbox of persuaders are all manner of communication resources that can be used honestly and powerfully. They include lines of argument, stories that pack a punch, questioning techniques, framing and reframing devices, modes of appeal, stylistic possibilities, arranging materials, media selections, and means of self-presentation. (Simons & Jones, 2011) These and other such tools should be readily accessible from memory in adapting communications to our ends, audiences, and circumstances and in decoding, interpreting, and assessing what others have said and symbolically done. The toolbox will probably be organized for quick response, as when we need without much forethought to make a good first impression on others or to handle the routine tasks of bridging interpersonal and substantive divides. Aristotle conceived of such a toolbox as the source of rhetorical invention.

Then as now the Aristotelian tool-box has been a cultural product, a repository of collective wisdom, suited to the times, and selected from a theoretically much larger array of possibilities. (Tilly, 2008) But the toolbox has grown exponentially bigger and more specialized since Aristotle’s day, this so as to handle the diverse and multiple needs to influence others in our media-saturated, message-dense societies. (Cialdini, 2009). In recent years political activists have added to their repository of collective actions for purposes of contentious politics (Tilly and Tarrow, 2006) as well as to the use of information technologies and social media for purposes of mass mobilization, fund-raising, and exposure of potentially embarrassing government secrets. Furthermore, television entertainment is playing an increasingly important political role, as in the use of reality-TV to undermine dominantly traditional patriarchal cultures in the Middle East (Kraidy, 2010)

The foregoing is but an introduction to social influence processes, to be further illustrated and elaborated upon in this and succeeding chapters. It should be clear at this point that persuasion may take place apart from or in combination with other forms of influence, that persuasive intent may be masked or revealed, and that while the language of any given communication may perform multiple functions, persuasion is by no means limited to what gets said.

Consider also that what persuades is seldom a function of just one communication. Political actors lead campaigns, join together in social movements, and take part in extended negotiations. Moreover, in our media-saturated societies, multiple messages from seemingly independent sources often reinforce each other, as when the hundreds of medicinal ads we see in the course of a week promote different products but the same premise: Got a problem? Take a pill. Even a single message—say a State of the Union Address—is likely to have multiple effects on multiple audiences, including unwelcome effects on unintended audiences. Little wonder that for political communicators, message-making tends to be dilemma-laden.

***Case Study 1.2. Donald Trump’s Campaign Dilemma.***

A good deal will be said about Donald Trump’s dilemmas and strategies as candidate and president.  Suffice it to suggest here that his road was a rocky one.  Said NY Times reporter Mark Leibovich (May 29, 2015)

            ‘The [Donald] Trump campaign may be a win-win for Trump but it is a monstrous dilemma for other people. It is a dilemma for the Republican Party and a dilemma for the people Trump is running against. They would love to dismiss him as a sideshow and declare his shark jumped, except he keeps dominating the campaign and the conversation. The other candidates have no clue whether to attack, ignore or suck up his response.  It is a dilemma for the elected leaders, campaign strategists, credentialed pundits and assorted parasites of the “establishment”. And, of course, it is a dilemma for the media, who fear abetting a circus.’ (Leibovitch, May 29, 2015)

**Questions for Thought and Discussion**

1.Office Politics: The “wog” on the chin.

You’ve answered an ad for a high-level job as a personnel director and you’re eager to make a good impression, but you’re late for the appointment. At lunch, you discover that your prospective, seemingly self-important employer has a piece of fish (or “wog”) on his chin.When it’s your turn to speak you’re speechless, unable to concentrate with that fish on his chin. What can you do?

Answer, said Times columnist, Russell Baker, is to casually bring your napkin to his chin as you make small talk. Having removed it you gather confidence and in the same motion bring the napkin to your face, thus giving yourself deniability. What do think of this tactic?

 2. Define and illustrate the commonplace conundrums.

**Summary**

This book presents a dilemma-centered approach to understanding, practicing and analyzing political persuasion, focused on conventional “Big P” politics but not to the exclusion of “politics with a small p.” Its many case studies illustrate the pushes and pulls on communicators as they seek to realize their ends in the face of conflicting role pressures and other situational constraints. They provide examples, and sometimes exemplars, of dilemma management along with analysis and commentary.

Of particular interest in this book are recurrent dilemmas. Their predictability does not stop dilemmas from being painful or even debilitating, but it can nevertheless be of great value to political actors, news analysts, and engaged citizens in diagnosing difficulties and assessing strategic alternatives. Anticipating dilemmas and getting a handle on how others in similar situations have dealt with them can greatly assist political actors in strategic planning and communication. At the very least it can assist with damage control. But dilemmas come in bunches. Without careful analysis of a task’s many dilemmas, the one not anticipated may prove to have been the most problematic.

For persons in position of legitimate authority dilemmas of leadership are closely aligned with the roles leaders are expected to play in the organizations and institutions with which they are affiliated. Not all legitimate authorities “really lead” and not all leaders are in positions of legitimate authority. To meet this book’s definition of “leaders” they must “really exercise influence,” or, better still, “really exercise adaptive influence.”

Related to leadership dilemmas are moral and ideological dilemmas: in choosing, for example, between justice versus mercy, equality versus freedom, individualism versus collectivism, nationalism versus internationalism.

To exercise influence, we call upon our storehouse of communication resources. Many of the examples provided in this chapter are designed to illustrate requirements and problems as well as the range of available resources for dealing with them, including power resources and not just persuasion resources, non-obvious persuasion as well as clear-cut efforts at persuasion, and various ways of combining persuasion with the power of the carrot and the stick.

To exercise adaptive influence, as Heifetz defines it, requires innovation in dealing with “ill-structured” problems. For these sorts of challenges formulaic rules don’t apply. Comparisons (and contrasts) with somewhat similar cases can be helpful, but ultimately one needs “theories of the particular situation.”

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1. Note: I would cut this endnote [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. [http://[astro.Temple.edu/~hsimons](http://astro.temple.edu/~hsimons).] [↑](#endnote-ref-2)