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Herb Simons

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**Chapter One**

**Dilemmas and Strategies**

In this chapter:

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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-centred 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 direction), 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)

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)

1. *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).

1. *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.

1. *Power vs 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 wideswaths 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.

1. *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 favours the previously privileged by enabling them to compete on an uneven playing field.

1. *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.

1. *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.

1. *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 findcommon ground on which they would work together. The multiple leadership problem was never fully resolved.

1. *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 1.2 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 1.3 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)

**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.”

**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 you think of this TAC

1. Define and illustrate the commonplace conundrums.

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**Chapter Two**

**Tools for Critical Analysis: Concepts, Cases, Commentaries**

**In this chapter:**

* Presuppositions
* “Genre-alizing” About Social Influence: Notes on Method
* Seven Key Concepts
  + Genre
  + Rules-of-Thumb
  + Core Dilemmas
  + Core Strategies
  + Retrospection
  + Theory
  + System
* Some Conceptual Tools
* Examples
  + “God Words” and “Devil Words” Identification As, Identifying With Association/Dissociation
  + Contradiction/ Paradox
* Cases and Commentaries
  + Case Study 2.1 Obama’s Cautious Optimism
  + Case Study 2.2 the Rhetoric of “Child Abuse”
  + Case Study 2.3 Cluster Analysis of a Mobil Advertorial: “Logical Allies of Business”
  + Case Study 2.4 Obama’s Charleston Eulogy
* Co-Active Persuasion
* Appealing to Reason and Emotion
* Summary
* Questions for Thought and Discussion
* Works Cited

This chapter offers theoretical and conceptual tools for dilemma-centered analysis of political persuasion as well as case studies. It presupposes cyclical influence processes, in contrast with linear models that either begins with persuasion as the driving force of history or that minimize its significance in the larger scheme of things. In what sociologist Peter Berger (1967) called the “outpouring of human being into the world,” humans develop the wherewithal to respond to challenges, some so urgent as to constitute structural imperatives. We are accustomed to thinking of these imperatives in material terms—the needs, for example, of food, clothing and shelter. But they include the tools and tool-making building blocks of language as well and reasoning that Kenneth Burke (1973) called our “equipment for living” (Simons, 2013). Together we create (and sometimes subvert) social organizations, political institutions, and civil societies. Among our most indispensable tools are persuasive acumen and critical acuity.

It is possible to interrupt the never-ending cycle of history at any point—for example, by marking the Montgomery, Alabama bus boycotts as the beginning of America’s civil rights movement. But, as my colleagues and I have argued,

‘Sooner or later …any student of movements must come to grips with the mix of elements that make up movements of whatever sort: their structural and functional characteristics, their origins in society and culture, their evolution over time, the resources they mobilize and deploy, the power wielded against them, the ideas that animate them, the symbolic acts and artifacts that embody those ideas, and the intended and unintended effects that movements produce. (Simons, Mechling and Schreier, 1984, p. 793)

            James Andrews’ (1969) rhetorical analysis of the Chartist movement in the UK during the 19thCentury illustrates how all of these elements enter into the mix. Public rhetoric, said Andrews, served as filter and creator of situation. The Chartist movement provided “popular interpretations of phenomena” (p. 208) and “left a rhetorical legacy, a memory of strategies which failed and hopes that did not materialize, a stock of arguments to be exploited in other ways and the example of working-class leadership and its problems and advantages” (p. 207). In these ways the Chartist movement indirectly influenced the repeal of the Corn laws, the Ten Hours Act, the softening of the Poor law, and even the subsequent development of the trades union movement.

            Yet Andrews did not conceptualize “situation” as simply the product of rhetoric. He also recognized conditions to which political actors and their audiences had to react. As Andrews conceived it, the situation for the Chartists included structural factors so compelling as to constitute “rhetorical imperatives”—industrialization, urbanization, and the poverty and misery that followed in their wake—and included other factors, more fluid, pliable, but nevertheless impelling, that constituted “strategic indicators” for the movement’s leadership. The more malleable factors included equations, by those who opposed the Chartist movement, of working-class rule with mob rule and rioting, and of aristocratic rule with stability and liberty. Strategically, then, Chartist leaders would have to cope with these challenges.

            We have, then, by Andrews’ account, a process by which situations impel and constrain rhetoric, and rhetoric in turn alters situations. That account applies more generally to political organizations and institutions.

**“Genre-alizing” About Social Influence: Notes on Method**

What factors impel and constrain rhetorical choice? What must be said when eulogizing an assassinated head of state? What can’t be said? What are the norms and role expectations for situations of this kind? What constitutes a fitting response? Are there precedents to draw upon and role models to follow? What finally can and can’t be said in eulogizing *this* assassinated head of state?

**Seven Key Concepts**

1. *Rhetorical Genre*

Stripped of its aura of mystery, the term genre vaguely denotes some type of categorization. Familiar rhetorical genres include the eulogy, the political apologia, protest rhetoric and the political attack ad, each appropriate to particular roles and situations. Genre may likewise be formulated at various levels of abstraction. The eulogy is a genre but so too is the eulogizing of an assassinated head of state. (Cap & Okulska, 2014; Simons, 1978a)

Genre to be illustrated in this book are corporate issue advocacy campaigns, political crisis rhetoric, the political apologia, the eulogy, American exceptionalism and how autocrats manage to talk the talk of democracy without walking the walk.

1. *Rules-of-Thumb*

A rule-of-thumb is a generalization of the "as a rule" variety that is intended to cover types of practices such as the eulogy and the political apologia, rather than specific acts. We might call such rules “genre-alizations.” Just as genre may be identified at various levels of abstraction, so rules-of-thumb may be formulated for particular occasions or episodes, for delimited roles, and for ongoing relationships of a certain type or combinations thereof.  They cover such tricky tasks as engineering a quick exit of troops from a country you’d pledged to defend, serving up a credible account of an ethically questionable political ad, and out-manoeuvring a political debate opponent who’s determined to put you on the defensive.

1. *Core Dilemmas*

These are the crux of a political leader’s problems. Dilemma management begins with diagnosis of problems, and an analysis of the rhetorical challenges they pose but also with an eye for the opportunities that a situation presents. Every politician faces the dilemma of not wanting to appear weak-willed or wishy-washy but also not antagonistic and uncompromising. Their actions and words walk a line between these two extremes.

1. *Core Strategy*

Just as identifying core dilemmas is a way of capturing the central rhetorical problems for a political actor, so core strategies name key plans for managing the dilemma. In political campaign debates, candidates behind in the polls need to go on the offensive while frontrunners can usually present themselves as being above the fray. In the 2008 election Barack Obama won his presidential campaign on the slogan of “change,” a strategy that overcame his perceived shortcomings as a young and inexperienced political candidate.

1. *Retrospection*

Applied to dilemma-laden cases retrospection involves efforts at accounting for successes or failures. How did the post-Mao Chinese leadership manage to advance China’s political fortunes without going to war? What has been the secret of their “soft power” approach to international relations? (Lu and Simons, 2006) What enabled the Republicans to achieve electoral dominance in 2014? Was it money, better candidates, greater determination, superior strategizing, or Democratic ineptness?

1. *Theory*

A theory is like a funnel. Into the funnel go the ingredients for theory-building: facts and statistics for scientific theories, and stories and descriptions for theories of the more “muddleheaded” variety (Simons, 1978b). Theories of every type attempt to summarize and explain a phenomenon while directing the search for additional knowledge. The heart of any theory is a set of assumptions, basic concepts, definitions of those concepts, and explanatory statements or theorems that relate the concepts in a condensed and organized way. As a theorist, I move vertically between the general and the specific to ground my abstract claims and horizontally between cases for purposes of comparison and contrast. The result is a *scaffoldin*g, none too secure, but which serves as an entry point into analysis of particular cases and which can be modified as a result of these analyses.

1. *System*

Various on-line dictionaries coalesce in characterizing *system* as an aggregation of interacting, interdependent items or elements forming a unified whole. Examples include: an educational system, an ecological system, a political system, and an economic system. ([www.thefreedictionary.com/system](http://www.thefreedictionary.com/system)*;*[www.merriam-webster.com/ dictionary/system](http://www.merriam-webster.com/%20dictionary/system)*)*

Systems impel and constrain political action and may be changed as a result of that action: hence the importance of systems analysis in understanding dilemmas and in assessing strategies of political persuasion for coping with them. In James Andrews’ analysis of the rhetoric of the Chartist movement the system included structural factors that impeded rhetorical choice and other, more malleable, “strategic indicators. (Andrews, 1969)

*Functional political systems facilitate problem-solving and dysfunctional, “crazy” systems make problems worse. At the University of Iowa in 1975, a functional system of informal communication and decision-making enabled urban planners to head off a crisis in plans to move ahead with an ambitious urban renewal program for Iowa City. The occasion was a cocktail party welcoming me as a visiting professor. As I stood chatting in a small group, another guest at the party brought news of the crisis and our circle suddenly enlarged. In short order, the discussants came up with a viable plan. It was then I discovered that the key decision-makers on urban renewal in Iowa City were all at the party. It occurred to me that rhetorical studies may have gained traction in small, Midwestern college towns like Iowa City because they were similar to the Athens of Aristotle’s day where rhetoric had flourished. In Athens, as in Iowa City, the decision-makers had a sense of common purpose and civic friendship was highly valued. Said Edwin Black, “ideological conflict in Athens was foreign to their way of thinking.” (Black, Rhetorical Criticism: A Study in Method, 1965)*

Beginning in Chapter 3 and in several subsequent chapters I provide examples of “dysfunctional” political systems, some delusional, others sociopathic, others exhibiting signs of repetition compulsion disorders, but all of them incapacitating except for those who have learned how to “game” the system.

The remainder of this chapter is given over to teaching by example, the cases used to make concepts and theories come alive, the commentaries serving to introduce additional concepts, suggest methods of theory-building and illustrate dilemma-centered rhetorical analysis.

**Some Conceptual Tools**

Among verbal rhetoric’s most powerful tools are: names, classifications (i.e., categorizations), definitions, descriptions, explanations, comparisons and contrasts, examples, and extended narratives (Simons and Jones, 2011; Tilly, 2006).

Table 2.1

**Examples**

1. *“God Words” and “Devil Words”*

In any culture, certain words function as symbols of approval or derision. In the West, such "god" words include freedom and democracy, while slavery, totalitarianism, and plutocracy are considered “devil” words. Words of this kind tend to be defined and differentiated from other terms in ways that reinforce the prevailing values of a society or those of its ruling elites. In service of these ends, the culture provides "persuasive definitions," defini­tions consistent with its mythical beliefs rather than its harsher realities. When examples of "god" words and "devil" words are offered, they also tend to be one-sided. Distinctions between them tend to be rockbound and rigid; there is no middle ground. In conventional parlance, for example, a nation is either "democratic" or "autocratic"- it cannot be neither or some of both. The net effect of these verbal treatments is persuasive indeed. When a society strongly identifies with its "god" words and strongly "dis-identi­fies" with its "devil" words, its values become highly resistant to change because they are no longer even regarded as values. They become as real and as solid as the ground beneath our feet.

Consider in this context the negative onus often attached to such words as persuasion, rheto­ric, propaganda and indoctrination. The conventional wisdom holds that schools "educate" or "acculturate," but school teachers rarely claim to "indoctrinate." Employers "orient" or "train" but never "brainwash" their employees. Situational comedies "entertain" us but do not "persuade" us. Scientists and philosophers "describe," "explain," "reason," or "prove" but seldom are said to utilize "rhetorical strategies" or "persuasive appeals." When "propaganda" and "rhetoric" are used in references to artists, scien­tists, newscasters, etc., they are almost always terms of derision; ways of indicating a speaker's belief that artists, scientists, or other profes­sionals have pretended to be what they are not; that they have somehow violated principles held in high esteem by their professions. In these con­texts, the terms have come to mean "deception" or "impurity," something that the speaker wishes to expose. In popular discourse we might say, "I wish my teacher would stick to the facts and stop preaching that malicious rhetoric." Or, "his argument that males are inherently better than females isn't scientific, it's chauvinistic propaganda.”

1. *Identifying as, Identifying with*

Some political candidates identify themselves as ordinary folk, others as “super-representatives” of their audiences, still others as superior by virtue of their greater expertise, experience and trustworthiness (Simons and Jones, 2011). In the film ‘All The King’s Men’, Louisiana’s up-and-coming Huey Long (known as Willy Stark in the movie) made adroit use of the “Plain Folks” device in a campaign speech at a state fair. To an audience of down-at-the heels farmers he declared that they were all a bunch of hicks (pause), that he was a hick (pause), and that together they were going to run the state legislature. Stark identified *with* his audience by identifying himself *as one*of them*.* By implication he was *decidedly not* your average uppity politician. Here are some other examples of identification:

Appeals to shared beliefs, values or attitudes. “We stand for freedom.”

Appeal to shared memberships (“Fellow Americans”)

Shared opposition (“Axis of Evil”)

“My enemy’s enemy is my friend” (e.g., The Afghani military, as against the Taliban)

Flattery (“Our brave fighting men and women”)

Encouraging opposition to a group by identifying things we hate with things they like (e.g., “Did you know that the North Koreans eat raw fish heads?”)

Embodying an object of mimetic identification (Being photographed with firemen on the scene at the Trade Towers in 2001 in the wake of their collapse)

Identifying hypothetically or conditionally; taking the perspective of the other (“If you want to be re-elected, you should…”)

Selective naming, whether true or not (Barack Obama is a Muslim.)

Finding any common “substance” from which X and Y derive shared meaning (“We Americans and Israelis who have witnessed the dark face of terrorism.”)

1. *Association/Dissociation*

Political actors *associate*by linking themselves to favorable ideas or attributes while *dissociating* themselves from that which is hated or feared by their audiences. Many of the attributes that politicians associate themselves with invite mindless approval, as when on office-seeker declares that she is for “faith, freedom, and family.” Candidates for public office can find lists of “positive, governing words” to use in campaign speeches. Just some of the words beginning with the letter ‘*c’* are *candid, caring, change, commitment, common sense, and courage.* Similarly, candidates have a list of negative words and phrases that they can use when speaking about their opponents, such as, betray, coercion, corruption, endanger, failure, greed, hypocrisy, and incompetence. *[Figure. use with PI cartoon on Saudi Arabia & ISIS]*

Consider the various associations/dissociations that can be made of Medicaid:

1. Medicaid is more similar to other health insurance programs, like Medicare, that help people pay for health care.
2. Medicaid is more similar to welfare programs like food stamps that help people pay for food.
3. Most Americans prefer the Medicaid they liken to Medicare (Martin, J. and Burns, A., June 23, 2017, NYTimes.Com).
4. *Contradiction/Paradox*

A *logical* *contradiction*asserts what it denies and denies what it asserts: for example:

* We’ve ordered Iraqi political leaders to act more independently.
* General Lovenot said “I’m a simple man, who enjoys the finer things in life.”
* Senator Snoop is so ugly she could win a beauty pageant.
* More broadly one might speak of beliefs and position statements that embrace contraries as contradictory and as a sign of dilemma-laden confusion or ambivalence (Poole, Seibold, and McPhee, 1985; Putnam, 1986).

Consider the conundrum of John Dickinson in 1767. In his “Letters from a Farmer in Pennsylvania”, Dickinson implored American colonists to take on the burdens of patriotism against usurpations of their rights by King George, and cast them as loyal subjects of the Crown to whom they were duty-bound to obey.His blatant inconsistency resonated with the colonists for they embraced the same ideological contradictions.

A *paradoxical statement*appears contradictory on first hearing but may not be, as when a professor who is soaked to the skin announces to the class with a wink that it is *not raining outside,*or to improve upon his joke, that it *is* raining outside. Both statements appear contradictory until we realize that the speaker is being comically *ironic*. The ironist’s implicit claim is that things are not as they seem or are contrary to what they seem.  Social constructionists risk contradiction when they insist that reality is socially constructed, save for the “literal truth” of its being socially constructed.

**Cases and Commentaries**

***Case Study 2.1 Obama’s “Cautious Optimism”***

In 2009 the Obama administration inherited a recession that threatened to become a full-fledged depression. No one in the administration wanted to fuel the pessimism that comes with loss of jobs, homes, and credit, because optimism about the future is key to lending and spending; it is essential in getting a market economy back on track. Neither did they want to paint too rosy a picture out of fear of a boomerang effect, as President Bush had done with Iraq in declaring “Mission Accomplished.”**(**Art of the Sayable, Lyne 1990; see also Campbell and Jamieson, 2008)

As political persuaders seek to thread their way through difficult dilemmas, they must reach out to their audiences but not overreach to the point of tarnishing their personal credibility:

As repairs were gradually introduced into the economy, the administration sought ways to bolster confidence incrementally. “Glimmers of hope” were upgraded to “signs of recovery.” Warning that “real recovery is months, if not years, ahead,” Obama reported that “the gears of our economic engine do appear to be slowly turning once again”. (Sanger, 2009)

“There’s a kind of artistry to this, isn’t there?’ said [Robert Dallek](http://topics.nytimes.com/top/reference/timestopics/people/d/robert_dallek/index.html?inline=nyt-per), the presidential historian best known for chronicling how Lyndon Johnson, was unable to lead the public out of its view that everything was falling apart. “You don’t want to come out and say the recession is over. You want to do a version of Churchill’s line about how this isn’t the end, or the beginning of the end, but rather the end of the beginning” (Sanger, 2009).

Situations like the one Obama confronted occur with sufficient frequency that “cautiously optimistic” has become a stock phrase in the argot of press secretaries, diplomats, and corporate executives. The language of the genre is calibrated so as to address the core dilemma: how to buoy up the dispirited while protecting against future criticisms of having created “false expectations.” In dire situations minimalist projections of reason for optimism point to “new beginnings,” “seeds of hope,” “the start of what could be a turnaround.”

***Case Study 2.2 The Rhetoric of “Child Abuse”***

Do societies discover social problems objectively, or do they construct them rhetorically? This question continues to perplex social theorists (Hacking, 1991). Seventy-five years ago, the terms *child abuse* and *sexual harassment* were not in use in the United States. At one point in its rhetorical history, child abuse was surrounded by quotation marks—testimony to its iffy status (Pfohl, 1977; Hacking, 1991). But did that mean that the problems designated by the terms also did not exist?

The issues in the child abuse controversy are common to the genre of social problems discourse generally. Child abuse, sexual harassment, and for that matter such suspect “problems” as satanic abuse and alien abductions are rhetorically similar. Joseph Gusfield (1989) identified three types of claims makers in what Ian Hacking (1991) called their “making and molding.”

* 1. *Moral crusaders* frame the alleged problem in melodramatic terms, i.e., in the language of good versus evil, us versus them. Alarmed at what they saw as the brutal mistreatment of poor waifs on London’s East End in 1884, upper class social reformers likened it to animal abuse and urged the creation of a human equivalent to the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, in existence since 1824.

(2) *Putative experts* such as health professionals lend legitimacy to the claims of moral crusaders. For example, Doctor David Gill of Brandeis University testified before a committee of Congress in 1973 that the average number of child abuse cases was approximately 8,000 per year. (1973) But his definition restricted child abuse to intentional physical harm by parents or parent substitutes such as guardians. In subsequent testimony, Gil greatly expanded his definition of child abuse to include sexual abuse, emotional abuse, and neglect, whether conscious or unconscious, deliberate or inadvertent. By that greatly expanded definition, influenced at the time by feminists and other moral crusaders, Gill estimated that the number of instances of child abuse was closer to 55 million. By that definition nearly all parents abused their children at least some of the time by failing to help realize the child’s full potential.

(3) *Image-makers*, such TV talk show hosts, tended to take putative experts and moral crusaders at their word, if anything exaggerating the alleged problem by presenting extreme cases as typical cases and displaying attractive “poster children” to win their audiences’ sympathies.  Sensationalists hinted at links between child abuse and satanic abuse, while other media professionals took seriously claims that child abusers included aliens from other galaxies who had abducted the children, taken them to their space ships, and returned them somehow without the children’s or their parents’ awareness. (Nugent, and Baumeister, 1966)

*Commentary*

In *The Rhetorical Turn,*I cited sociological scholarship and critical analysis on rhetoric’s role in the construction of social problems as exemplary (Simons, 1990).Here is a literature, focused initially on rhetorical histories, which has long since moved beyond particular problems (or alleged problems) to studies of claims-making about social problems as a rhetorical genre. Their recurring patterns have provided grounds for the aggregation of knowledge about the process of “disquotation” (Pfohl, 1977) by which some “problems” come persuasively to be regarded as problems and others not.

            I will refrain from passing judgment at this point on the “reality” of child abuse, preferring instead to use the genre as Exhibit A in the “objective” use of naming, categorizing, explaining and the like as verbal devices.

***Case Study 2.3 Cluster Analysis of a Mobil Advertorial: “Logical Allies of Business”****[copy of ad needed here]*

Many organizations take public stands on controversial issues but until relatively recently large corporations were reluctant to get into the fray lest, in pleasing some consumers, they offended others. Times have changed, and corporate America, led by the Mobil Corporation (now merged with Exxon), has led the way.

Mobil’s issue advocacy campaigning began in 1970. Since then, it has placed editorial ads, known as advertorials, in major newspapers and magazines. From time to time, it has purchased access to the television airwaves, but its most enduring campaign medium has been print. Mobil’s Herb Schmertz believed corporate America had a story to tell, one that might reach the intellectual establishment with correctives to what he and his colleagues at Mobil took to be anti-business editorializing and reporting by the mainstream press. (Simons and Jones, 2011; Smith, G., & Heath, R. 1990)

The need for the petrochemical industry to tell its side of the story seemed especially pressing. Mobil and the other big oil companies had been accused during the 1970s of creating oil shortages, exerting monopoly control of resources, reaping windfall profits, pollution, colluding with oil-producing nations, bribing politicians in other lands, making illegal campaign contributions, and withholding information. But Mobil was also at this time riding the winds of change toward political conservatism in America, a trend manifested in part by shifts among some leading liberals toward the conservative camp. There was already a movement in Washington toward lower corporate taxes and deregulation—a movement, by the way, that Mobil executives claimed to have helped propel by Mobil’s advertorials. Here I focus upon one campaign message.

*[FIgure 2.1 about here: “Liberals: Logical Allies of Business][needed – Julia should have a copy]*

The advertorial reproduced in figure 2.1 appeared early in Mobil’s efforts to answer industry critics while attempting to win support for its pro-business philosophy. Before pronouncing judgment on this message, consider where Mobil is coming from and where it is heading. A clue to its image management objectives is to be found in the ad’s title. Mobil is surrounding itself here with the aura of objectivity.

The core strategy in the ad is ‘divide and conquer’. Although liberals are typically identified with one another by way of a single cultural stereotype, they are here divided into two types, the better to vilify the “unthinking” liberals, while permitting Mobil the opportunity to woo “thinking” liberals. Grouped in a “favorable” cluster of terms, along with business (including Mobil), rationality, help for the needy, and democracy are thinking liberals. Grouped in the “unfavorable” cluster, along with pro-government, anti-business attitudes, are “knee-jerk”, “unthinking” liberals. Anti-business liberals are also identified with help for the needy and democracy, but its members’ inability to realize these values places them at odds with themselves. Mobil seeks to drive home their dilemma.

Recall how language choices may be used to play up an alleged problem or downplay it. Then consider how Mobil frames business and government. Business is represented in paragraph 6 as a company’s “management,” while government is represented by “City Hall” and by “government bureaucrats.” Imagine, by contrast, if government had been represented by a popular governmental building (“When the White House calls...”), while business had been represented as “corporate bureaucrats.”

Note also Mobil’s use of caricature. The “professional liberal” is consistently caricatured in the Mobil ad as an unthinking fool and is likened in paragraph 5 to another stereotypical character in our culture, the haughty dowager type who scoffs condescendingly at anything new or different. Who but such a snob would use such phrases as “impossibly vulgar,” “aesthetically offensive,” and “unbearably plebeian”? Mobil achieves something of a rhetorical coup by these language choices. Government, conventionally viewed as being on the side of the people, is now to be seen as distant and uncaring, whereas government’s liberal supporters emerge as false friends of ordinary folk.

Who, asks Mobil in subsequent paragraphs, is truly responsive to the people? Not those foolish, snobbish, antibusiness liberals and certainly not those government bureaucrats. No, it is business that cares; indeed, it is business that is truly democratic. By Mobil’s rational way of thinking, democracy is responsive customer service. Missing from Mobil’s argument is the full sense of democracy, not just customer service but government “of the people, by the people and for the people.” Still, Mobil’s brief for business is a powerful one, and in helping make that case, it helped itself.  (Simons, 1983)

Public Relations is either the scourge of modern society or the source of much of its progress. Stuart Ewen (1996), author of *PR! A Social History of Spin*, described PR executives as hired hacks who will do virtually anything to make malodorous clients smell sweet. But in its defense Weaver, Motion and Roper (2006) cite Michel Foucault post-structuralist position:

Each society has its regime of “truth”, its “general politics” of truth: that is, the types of discourse that it accepts and makes function as true.” (p. 131)

Does this mean that “truth” is contingent on power? PR proponents deny the charge of ethical indifference. They insist, in any case, that their clients, like defendants in a criminal trial, have a right to the best possible representation. PR critics respond that the courtroom is inherently adversarial: This entitles each side to place its best possible case before the judge and jury. PR firms, by contrast, offer their services to one side only, and that side tends to be richer and more powerful. PR proponents deny that they operate in noncompetitive environments—sometimes yes, more commonly no. Moreover, the tactics of persuasion they use in making a corporate client look good are not much different from those any one of us uses on a day-to-day basis in making ourselves look good. PR critics respond that this is just PR about PR. (Ewen, 1996; Jackall, 1995)

The last word in this “pro-con” discussion goes to the even-handed Grunig (2001) who writes that ‘public information practitioners are journalists-in-residence who disseminate accurate but usually only favorable information about their organizations. {They} conduct scientific research to determine how to persuade publics to behave in the way their organizations wish. (11-12)

# *Case Study 2.4 Barack Obama’s Chaleston Eulogy*Photograph by Stephen Crowley / The New York Times / Redux

# *Insert Figure 2.4*

One hundred and fifty years after Abraham Lincoln delivered his second inaugural address, Barack Obama eulogized nine parishioners people killed at Charleston South Carolina’s AME church by a racially motivated assailant. Just as Lincoln counseled charity for all and malice toward none, so Obama offered a way to comfort and inspire, bringing “new life to the 5500 mourners in Charleston and “move all Americans closer to justice, equality, and ever elusive grace.”(Hobbs, June 29, 2015) The *Atlantic’s* James Fallows said it was Obama’s most “fully successful performance as an orator” (July 27, 2015) best adapted to its ends, audiences and circumstances.

Transcripts of the speech are available via Google, but it should be seen and heard. A video can be screened on YouTube. There viewers will see how Obama moved his audience, speaking as a man in possession of his soul. Said Obama, “He (God) has allowed us to see where we’ve been blind. He’s given us the chance where we’ve been lost, to find our best selves”. In the speech Obama appears alternately, and in some moments together, smart, funny, cool, black, bi-racial, sexy, serious, knowledgeable and passionate.

Comparisons have also been drawn with Martin Luther King, Jr’s “I have a dream” speech. Lincoln framed the civil war as an enormous tragedy, but a necessary evil, requiring atonement by North and South for slavery, “with charity for all, malice *toward* none.”Months later the Emancipation Proclamation was signed, freeing the slaves. King’s nonviolent leadership of the civil rights movement, as exhibited in “I have a dream,” led to passage of significant civil rights legislation in the U.S. But for Bill Clinton and Jimmy Carter as possible exceptions, no recent American President has done more for the cause of racial equality in the U.S than Obama.

The Obama eulogy combined reason and passion. It began conversationally with a remembrance of Reverend Pinckney and the other eight parishioners gunned down at AME church, this in keeping with the “as-a-rule” rules for eulogies of this sort, honoring them for their ability to forgive but by no means excusing what the assassin had done. It then moved from religion to politics, Obama reminding the congregants how far America must come toward becoming Lincoln’s idea of “a more perfect union

The eulogy is a genre of ceremonial rhetoric, called *epideictic* by Aristotle, dealing with what is rather than what was or should be. But, as Aristotle observes the eulogy also provides an opportunity for self-advertising, which Obama does by way of display. In a rousing series of arguments, he calls America and its civil religion to its higher purpose, that of obeisance to the Almighty who will forgive us for our sins if we are repentant. Obama’s recurrent theme: “We’ve been blind and now can see.”

In keeping with expectations for the genre, Obama provides a way of remembering those murdered in the AME church. Here is his recollection upon first meeting the AME’s Reverend Pinckney:

Friends of his remarked that when Clementa Pinckney entered a room, it was like the future arrived, that even from a young age, folks knew he was special, anointed. He was the progeny of a long line of the faithful, a family of preachers who spread God’s words; a family of protesters who so changed to expand voting rights and desegregate the South...Reverend Pinckney embodied a politics that was neither mean nor small. He encouraged progress not by pushing his ideas alone but by seeking out your ideas, partnering with you to make that happen…What a good man. Sometimes I think that’s the best thing to hope for when you’re eulogized, after all the words and recitations and resumes are read, to just say someone was a good man. You don’t need to be of high distinction to be a good man.

In cadences reminiscent of King and the African-American church, Obama builds to the finale of his eulogy with a celebration of soul, this by way of singing the Gospel hymn, Amazing Grace, and enjoining AME’s parishioners to sing with him. In the process, he displays the virtues of bi-racialism (a concept both useful and of dubious scientific value), this by way of code-switching, the alternation of “white” and “black” vocal patterns, originally made necessary by slavery and continuing through white supremacist racism well into the present moment.

Shelby Steele has written that some blacks—Obama and Oprah Winfrey included-have triumphed over racism by explicitly or implicitly conceding that slavery is no longer a problem, thus earning the right to level with whites about other remaining problems (Steele, 2015). This, it may be recalled, is a variant of the “yes-but” strategy, introduced in this chapter in the section on co-active persuasion. Among the other problems that remain, said Obama, are the black incarceration rate, inadequate gun control, Jim Crowism (segregation) and race-related poverty, a conjunction of race and class. (Steele, 2015. he list is far from complete, as his audience must surely know, and Obama elected to engage in tactful blindness (Goffman, 1967) lest he appear as a grouch. Instead he accents the positive, saying that the federal courts have come a long way on affordable health care, gay marriage, and immigration reform. As a consummate politician, Obama says nothing about his Administration’s role in bringing these good things about.

While appreciating Obama’s speech we need also to subject it to reasoned critique. Others of a theological bent can comment on its correctness. The analysis which follows takes note of the dilemmas Obama confronted in preparing the speech and assesses the strategies he employed in dealing with them.

Obama’s Jeremiah Wright dilemma. Obama came into politics under the tutelage of liberation theologist Jeremiah Wright, but at the Democratic National Convention Wright lost control of his anger, becoming for Obama a political liability. At that convention Obama praised the Wright who had nurtured him but distanced himself from Wright in an act of dialectical transcendence, thus moving the issues needing consideration to higher ground.

Obama’s Identity Dilemma. Obama has been a puzzle to Americans. Was he born and raised a Kenyan, as his enemies had claimed, and was he also reared a Muslim? Over the years Obama has overcome concerns in the U.S. about his identity, but problems persist due to ambiguities in the meanings of race in the U.S. as a social construction. Should race be defined by skin color? By blood? By DNA? By whatever contrived definition the U.S. Census Bureau comes up with? However defined it would have political consequences. In the south you could be marked as colored by the infamous “one drop” rule; a different mix and you were a mulatto or perhaps by the skin color criterion you could pass as white. The designation, “bi-racial,” rests on a different criterion, a child of mixed race, born of white and “colored” but not Hispanic parents. So tortured are these markers of race that *New York Times reporter,* Peter Baker, could ask whether conservative Warren Harding was America’s first black president. (Baker, August, 2015)

The spontaneity/control dilemma. Persuasive speaking requires controlled spontaneity, the use of its argumentative and narrative resources, and measured release of passions that comes off as authoritative expression. Obama has on many occasions come off as emotionally distant, but not on this occasion. His words and song seemed to flow effortlessly.

The Multiple Audience Dilemma. Politicians requires sailing skills, the ability to tack right, then left against a headwind in order to reach their destinations The problem arises when competing interests and ideals must be dealt with, ideally by reconciliation but more often by *triangulation*, political leaders conceding here, standing firm there, and making the necessary compromises by giving opposing factions at least some of what they’ve wanted.

Not so in Charleston. There Obama comes across as committed to a higher politics, one that links rather than divides, eschewing power politics, Reverend Pinckney’s Politics of the “good man.”

**Co-Active Persuasion**

Coactive persuasion is an umbrella term for the ways that persuaders might *move toward*message recipients psychologically so that they will be moved, in turn, to accept the persuaders’ position or proposal for action. Just what form it takes depends on the situation, for example, whether it uses the media or involves interpersonal communication: if interpersonal, on whether persons A and B are locked in a conflict of interests or merely have a difference of opinion; if the media, whether the object of their talk is to convince each other or to persuade some third party such as the voters in a political contest. In a staged confrontation, as when two presidential candidates are facing each other in a television debate, coactive persuasion may be highly combative toward the adversary even as it appeals coactively to the target audience.

The coactive persuader moves toward the audience psychologically by establishing relational bonds. Verbally but also nonverbally, the coactive persuader expresses caring and concern for the audience as people, respect for their feelings and ideas, and perhaps affection as well. Even in a formal presentation, the coactive persuader will give the impression of communicating *with*the audience rather than communicating *at*them.

Especially important to audiences are evidences of membership group similarities. The persuader may move toward the audience psychologically by emphasizing similarities in background, experience, and group affiliation and also by displaying evidences of commonality through dialect, dress, and mannerisms. These signs of commonality not only enhance the persuader’s attractiveness to the audience but also serve indirectly to express shared beliefs, values, and attitudes.

Evidences of interpersonal similarity are clearly essential, but so, too, is it important on most occasions for persuaders to appear *different*in ways that make them appear more expert, better informed, and more reliable than most members of their audience. The general point is that although interpersonal similarity almost always results in *attraction*toward the persuader as a person, it doesn’t always yield *credibility.* Attraction is generally important on issues of value and taste; dissimilar but more expert sources tend to be more effective on questions of belief.  If, for example, you were looking around for a new brand of coffee, chances are that you would be more influenced by the judgments of friends than by experts. But you would ordinarily trust experts on medical matters, or on the question of where to invest your money. The “ideal” communicator is often one who seems both similar enough and different enough to appear overall as a *super-representative*of the audience.

Coactive persuasion also builds on acceptable premises**.**A *premise*is a hook on which to hang an argument. Depending on the context of the discussion, it may be a definition, a value assumption, or a general observation. Get people to grant the premise, and they are halfway to granting the conclusion as well.

The distinctive character of coactive persuasion is nowhere more manifest than in conflict situations or where there are sharp differences of opinion between people. In the face of their disagreement, a number of options are available for settling their differences. One approach is that of the *objectivist.*Operating from what he or she perceives as greater knowledge or wisdom on the matter, A may elect to tell B what is best for him or her. Parents, and sometimes teachers as well, do that—not always with great success. Or A may attempt to “demonstrate” with cold logic why his or her way of thinking is the only way. This is the “sage on the stage” method. For the thoroughgoing objectivist, hard fact and cold logic are, and ought to be, the sole arbiters of disputes, and everyone ought to reason as the objectivist does. A second way is that of the *expressivist,*who merely asserts his or her feelings on the matter at hand, offering no reasons, no appeals, and no support for the views of any type. If B remains unconvinced of the merits of A’s views, that’s okay. If B shifts position, so much the better, but A does nothing to bring that shift about. *Expressivism* stems from a deep-seated antipathy toward persuasion. On expressivist social movements, see Chapter 4.

The *coactive persuader* lies somewhere between these two extremes. Coactive persuaders reason with their audiences. They offer arguments in support of their more controversial claims and evidence in support of their arguments. In these respects, the methods of the coactive persuader are not unlike those of the objectivist. The coactive persuader, however, is less concerned with showing that he or she is right with winning arguments than with *winning belief.* This requires arguments that begin from general premises that the audience can accept.

In building from acceptable premises, persuaders generally start from premises that they themselves accept, and they make a point of emphasizing their points of agreement. In addition to providing hooks on which to hang arguments, these *common* *ground*appeals make the persuader appear more trustworthy and more attractive. Typically, the coactive persuader moves from agreement to disagreement on highly sensitive controversial issues, or at least delays direct confrontation until agreed-on issues have been identified.

Two variants of this bridge-building process are the *yes-yes*technique and the *yes-but*technique. In both cases, little or no hint of any disagreement with the audience is expressed until after a whole string of assertions is communicated about which agreement is sure. The object is to establish a habit of assent, to get receivers nodding “Yes,” “That’s right,” and “You said it” either aloud or to themselves. Once this is done, the audience will presumably be receptive to more controversial assertions.

Using the yes-yes approach, the persuader lays the groundwork for the case by identifying a number of acceptable principles or criteria by which the case will later be supported. Thus, the vacuum cleaner sales rep might say,

If you’re like most of the people I meet, you also want a vacuum cleaner that really cleans, one that picks up the ashes and the threads and the crumbs that hide in the corners. I’d guess too that in these tough times you don’t feel like getting stuck with big bills. Well, okay, I know just what you mean. Here’s our new kind of vacuum cleaner, and it fits your specifications exactly.

Using the yes-but approach, persuaders begin by noting those arguments of the message recipient with which they can agree, and then, having shown how fair-minded they are, they offer a series of “buts” that constitute the heart of their case. Here are the beginnings of an argument on the perennial question of how much a government should tell its citizens about its more sensitive operations:

Look, I’m not one of these people who’ll tell you that our government has got to tell all, that it’s got to conduct diplomacy in a fish bowl, that it’s got to give away secrets that are vital to national security, that it’s got to make its wildest contingency plans public. These are valid reasons for keeping things under covers, *but…*

Although coactive persuasion generally builds on areas of agreement between persuader and persuade-e, it need not do so to be successful. What counts from a purely practical standpoint is that the persuade-e finds the arguments attractive, not that the persuader be enamored of them. Suppose that Rachel is an agnostic, and her friend Rashid is fervently religious. Although it might enhance Rachel’s credibility if she were able to share Rashid’s religious convictions, Rachel need not be a believer herself to convince Rashid of the disadvantages to believers of mandating prayer in schools. Rachel can make the case from the believer’s perspective, pointing out, for example, the many occasions in history when religious groups have benefited from separation of church and state.

**Appealing to Reason and Emotion**

Objectivists tend to separate fact from value, reason from emotion, and to decide that only questions of fact and logic can be addressed rationally. By contrast, *coactive persuaders* combine the appearance of reasonableness with appeals to emotion and projections of benefits from adoption of their proposals.

Audiences needa feeling for problems and not just a dry accounting of them. They also need incentives to act. In Rank’s (2007, p. 1) colloquial terms, they need to be convinced that proposals for action will help them either “get a good” (acquisition), “keep a good” (protection), “get rid of a bad” (relief), or “avoid a bad” (prevention) In providing incentives, persuaders might well tap into audience emotions. For example, a public service announcement warning viewer not to drink and drive is likely to play on the emotion of fear. But surely there is nothing irrational about fearing the consequences of drinking and driving.

Coactive persuasion at its best makes artful use of the various ways in which messages may be framed and delivered. Every utterance is the end product of a set of conscious or unconscious decisions, from among a huge array of possible choices, that constitute what Burke (1945/ 1969a) has called the *“resources of ambiguity”*in language (p. xix). Burke’s phrase is a way of suggesting that there are multiple ways to label something: categorize it; define it; illustrate it; or compare, contrast, or contextualize it. For example, at the annual company holiday party, a coworker whispers to you in anger that the boss “has been hitting on half the people in the office.” Want to *intensify*your coworker’s rage? Agree that yes, the boss is an animal. Want to *downplay*the matter? Assure your coworker that your boss is just an old goat.

Language choices may involve far more than mere labeling. Responding to another animal label, the charge that he and some of his colleagues in the House of Representatives had been behaving like “ostriches” in refusing to see the wisdom of President Ronald Reagan’s policy toward Nicaragua, Representative Barney Frank responded with an ancient rhetorical technique known as *peritrope*(a table-turning). According to Representative Frank, the member of Congress who had heaped insult on the ostrich, not to mention on his colleagues, was sadly deficient in his ornithological knowledge. The ostrich, Frank said, was a great survivor, capable when riled of delivering a lethal kick. With its large eyes and keen vision, the ostrich was ever alert. And, contrary to myth, the ostrich does not stick its head in the sand. “So, there you have it,” concluded Frank. “The ostrich is a rugged, wily, and frugal bird. Indeed, in a scrap between an ostrich and a Member of Congress, I would bet on the ostrich.” (Jamieson, 1998, p. 18)

**Questions for Thought and Discussion**

1. What genre are played out in political election campaigns?
2. From the different resources of co-active persuasion discussed in this chapter (E.g. ‘Yes-Yes’, ‘Yes-But’) identify and Illustrate arguing from the perspective of the other- concessions, identification, and highlight/downplay.

**Summary**

Chapter Two has provided conceptual and critical tools for dilemma-centered analysis of political Persuasion. Concepts have included *rhetorical genre, rules-of-thumb, core dilemmas, core strategies, retrospection, theory,* and *system,* as well as such building blocks of communication as names, definitions, comparisons and contrasts, “god” words and “devil” words. Others bear upon co-active persuasion, including types of identification (and division), “yes-yes” and “yes-but” strategies, association and dissociation. The concepts are illustrated by way of case studies, culminating in an analysis of Barack Obama’s eulogy to slain parishioners at Charleston, South Carolina’s AME Methodist Church.

By contrast with linear models of historical causation, the chapter presupposes cyclical influence processes—humans responding to challenges so urgent as to constitute structural imperatives in what sociologist Peter Berger called the “outpouring of human being into the world. They include the tool-making building blocks of language and reasoning, what Kenneth Burke called our “equipment for living.” We create thereby social organizations and civil society as well as the essential tools for functioning in society as persuasive acumen and critical acuity. Public rhetorics serve as filter and creator of situation.

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**Chapter Three**

**Dysfunctional Political Systems**

**In this chapter:**

* Introduction
* America’s Tortuous Path
* Transfixed America, Post 9/11
* Regulations in Service of the Regulated
* “War on Drugs”
* Politics of Mental Illness
* Summary
* Questions for Thought and Discussion
* Works Cited

**Introduction**

Whenever pejoratives like “crazy” or, more palatably, “dysfunctional,” are used to describe systems of any kind, it’s time to question the judgments of the labeler before buying the claim.  Dysfunctional how? By what criteria? From what perspective?

Yet reading about political problems alongside Rice and Cooper’s *Organizations and Unusual Routines*(2010) convinces me, not only that the term can often be nailed down to the satisfaction of readers of different political persuasions, and that its reach can be extended beyond the organizational confines for which it was originally intended. We may believe, for example, that repeated episodes of unchecked gun violence in America’s school systems are a symptom of political pathology.[1]Others will disagree, but the challenge of defending some of the most controversial of our judgments should prove a useful exercise.

Rice and Cooper credit sociologist Benjamin Singer (1980) with having coined “crazy system.”  But “crazy,” “mad,” “unhinged,” and “out-of-whack,” have long preceded Singer in the vernacular. “Crazy” as applied to organizational routines is a way of seeing political problems systemically (e.g., Cronen, et al, 1982; Grint, 2008; Rittell and Webber, 1973). You don’t have to be a liberal or a conservative, for example, to grieve for American soldiers who died for want of the available armored vehicles necessary to keep them alive in Iraq, or of a legislative body unable to deliberate upon, let alone pass much needed legislation, or of the practice whereby low-grade sub-prime mortgages, sold deceptively to people ill-equipped to meet payments on them, are bundled, upgraded and sold to investors by investment banks, propped up by federal government loans, which privately sell them short.

In these as in other examples to be taken up in this book, unwanted repetitive patterns, called “URPs” by Cronen and colleagues (1982) and labeled as “wicked problems” by Grint (2005), and Rittell and Webber(1973) are nested within other, larger crazy systems, as when a nation founded on Puritan beliefs in its own exceptionalism becomes a “State of Exceptions” to its own strictures against torture, renditions, and indefinite detentions of those it declares to be “enemy combatants.” (Danner, 2011)

By whatever labels, problems often become opaque, thus impervious to criticism, or they are tolerated due to habituation of a sort that leads to system blindness: the problems “hiding in plain sight.” Feedback loops and loops within loops are error-amplifying rather than error-correcting, providing further incentive to maintain the routines. Managers of dysfunctional systems often find themselves *trapped*by needing to fulfill incompatible goals. Add too that dysfunctional (i.e., “crazy” political systems) are often gamed or otherwise manipulated for self-serving purposes. For those who profit from them, they may not seem crazy at all. However, a common consequence of self-serving rationality is that it is often harmful to all in the long run. This is the “tragedy of the commons” dilemma, discussed in Chapter 1.

Needless to say, dysfunctional political systems lend themselves to critical, dilemma-centered analysis, whether by self-styled rhetoricians, investigative journalists, or others in the academy, such as Murray Edelman who are attuned to the symbolic functions of politics. But we should be under no illusions that their problems can be readily explained, let alone addressed satisfactorily. What Rittell and Webber say about “wicked problems” (as opposed to “tame” ones) is true as well about dysfunctional political systems: that every such problem is a symptom of another problem; that they are unnamable to engineering fixes or other testable and technical solutions; that they do not develop in distinct phases. These problems are “tricky” in the sense of eluding understanding because their full consequences cannot be apprehended and the problems often become apparent attendant upon each other, but not before signs of progress at addressing them. However, the progress (or lack of it) of every attempted solution has its unanticipated and often unwelcome consequences.

In dealing with wicked problems executives (i.e., managers) try out strategies in an effort to learn from their mistakes, rather than becoming indecisive by the realization that every response to a wicked issue will alter the problem and necessitate another change of strategy. Designing systems “is difficult, “said one management expert, “because there is no consensus on what the problems are, let alone how to solve them.” (Camillus, 2008).

With these criteria as guideposts I urge readers to try their hands at identifying political systems out of whack. In what follows extended examples of dysfunctional political systems are presented.

**America’s “Torturous” Path**.

In his essay on “The State of Exception,” Mark Danner recalls 9/11/01 as the day Americans began living “in a subtly different country,” one that in the name of security exempted itself from its strictures against torture, renditions and indefinite detentions while circumscribing or setting aside Americans’ accustomed rights and freedoms. In this seemingly endless “strange time,” adds Danner, in which government has operated outside its own laws, “the particular burdens of our exception seem mostly to be borne by someone else—by someone other. It is possible for most people to live their lives without taking note of these practices at all except as phrases in the news—until, every once in a while, like a blind man who lives, all unknowingly, in a very large cage, one or another of us stumbles into the bars.” (p.4)  Says Danner, the very endlessness of this state of exception—a quality emphasized even as it was imposed—and the broad acceptance of that endlessness, the state of exception’s increasing normalization, are among its distinguishing marks.” Among the systemic resources of ambiguity in the wake of 9/11 are the open-ended, ill-defined “War on Terror,” (Roberts-Miller, P 2005) Simons (2008) involving rhetorically such euphemistic stand-ins for torture as “enhanced interrogations” and for renditions as “sequestering.”

Box. 3.1 The “Black Sites”

     Said a New York Times editorial (Feb.17/2013) it has “long been known” that the Central Intelligence Agency ran “black site” prisons outside the United States for purposes of “extraordinary rendition,” involving abductions and transfers of suspected terrorists to countries reputed to torture prisoners under questioning. What had not been known, said the Times, was the extent of the practice, involving at least 136 suspects and 54 participating countries, including some, like Belgium, Finland and Denmark, with stellar human rights reputations. If the immediate aftermath of 9/11 was a “strange time” why is it that an *Open Society* report on the extent of the practices, still “shocked and surprised” the U.S. Senate Intelligence Committee? (Or so it was claimed). And why, despite its call for greater transparency, the Senate Committee failed to release useful new information to the public when it held a hearing on the suitability of its top counter-terrorism official, John Brennan, to head up the C.I.A. Moreover, said the New York Times, President Obama refused to question Bush administration officials who authorized human rights violations. Obama did order an end to former President George W. Bush’s torture policies and the closing of C.I.A. detention facilities, but he did not repudiate rendition, and continued to authorize coercive techniques, including drone strikes, using drone attacks far more frequently than under President Bush. (Simons 2008)

Box 3.1 provides a window into the paradox of “secret” information that still “shocks and surprises,” hiding in plain view of New York Times reportage. If the immediate aftermath of 9/11 was a strange time, how much more so is our own, when a president who voiced strenuous objection to the Bush-era coercive techniques, continued to authorize them, once again invoking the ill-defined “war on terror” as his justification?  Could it be that Barack Obama felt it was necessary as a Democrat to out-hawk the Republicans for political reasons? Was this his way of gaming a crazy political system? More generally, is concealment of some information the price that “open societies” must pay for their very survival? I return to questions of this sort in Chapters 11 and 12.

When, after 9/11, Justice Department attorney John Yoo was ordered by the Bush administration to find legal justification for what until then had been considered illegal under federal and international law, he and his team had the advantages of an American public in panic, a submissive Congress, a compliant judiciary, an “echoing press” (Coe, et al., 2008; Jamieson & Cappella, 1997), and an intimidated Democratic Party opposition, fearful that dissent would appear impolitic, if not unpatriotic. This same combination of passive forces leading to what Rossiter (1998) called hyperbolically constitutional dictatorship (Danner, 2012) would remain largely uncritical (and perhaps unaware) of the specious rationales used to invade Iraq in 2003. The political systems of public deliberation and checks-and-balances, watchdog journalism and public debate had gotten out of whack in the face of what I shall describe in Chapter 11 as the Bush administration’s melodramatic crisis rhetoric. These same “passive forces” help to explain the American public’s quiescence attendant upon problems identified by George Packer and others below.

More will be said about America’s “State of Exception,” but I want to emphasize here that its “ambiguous, uncertain, borderline fringe, at the intersection of the legal and the political” (Agamben, 2005) is illustrative of the spaces in which political persuaders have historically exploited what Burke (1969) called the “resources of ambiguity” in language.

  Arguably, then, the state of exceptions is not exceptional. The U.S. is by no means alone in exempting itself from the moral strictures that it expects of others. In times of war enemies are routinely debased, disfigured, disgraced—pictured in wartime comics as grotesque caricatures of humanity, the better to drop bombs on them without remorse or to exact information from them by “making them talk.” In the language of psychiatry crazy political systems of this kind might be characterized as sociopathic, its perpetrators as being in denial, or as projecting their guilt on to others by way of scapegoating. Clinical language of this kind is in itself a form of distancing, of ironic detachment from warfare.  Popular culture, as in wartime cinema or B-rated cops and robbers movies, provides clues to the ways people can be inured to torture and transfixed by the “rite of the kill.” (Appel. 2003; Burke, 1969).

**America’s Downhill Slide, Post 9/11**

In “A World Apart,” *New Yorker* columnist George Packer picks up where Mark Danner left off, but in a narrative of many themes that builds to the conclusion of an America in decline, its problems “left to rot” (Sept 11, 2012. *The New Yorker* p. 1). Packer’s essay moves freely between Fallujah in Iraq, New Orleans, and places in between but it centers upon Surry County North Carolina’s Mount Airy, a once lively town of working-class Americans idealized on the Andy Griffith Show as a “a society where every man had a job, inequalities of wealth were muted, and people were bound together in a tight community.” (p. 6)

Mount Airy symbolizes for Packer the story of American decline. But for its quaint façade, it is a shadow of its former self. Factories gone bust, streets in decay, jobs so scarce that most adults look elsewhere for work, it remains, however, a staunchly patriotic, religiously conservative enclave, proud to send its children into the military and then into war.

Into Mount Airy five years after 9/11 came Chris Berman, a former Navy SEAL and out-of-work commercial diver who’d signed on with the Blackwater private security firm in 2004. Berman would have died serving on a food escort detail for Blackwater from Kuwait to Fallujah in Iraq except that one of his Blackwater friends volunteered to substitute for him at the last minute and as a result went to his own death in a bullet-riddled car from a fiery ambush near Fallujah.

Berman (said Packer) was determined to solve the problem of insufficient armor, one of the many problems left unattended by the Department of Defense under Donald Rumsfeld. The lightly armored vehicles provided to Blackwater by the DOD were no match for the insurgent’s powerful roadside bombs. Sensing a business opportunity, he began drawing designs for improved armor, opened a highly successful small factory in Kuwait to produce them, and then began building a far larger factory near Mount Airy in Surry County to outfit not just the armor of privately owned transport vehicles but those of the military. Officials in Surry County were only too happy to make factory space available and Berman set off on his quest.

Tragically, Berman’s efforts to land a government contract were repeatedly stalled, despite the recognized high quality of his armor design and the urgent need for improved armor. In part, suggested Packer, the principal Humvee manufacturer, AM General, had sufficient political clout in Congress to head off competition by delaying the awards process, this despite concerns voiced in Congressional Committee testimony by then-Secretary of Defense Robert Gates.

In the face of these delays Berman's new company was in limbo and hemorrhaging staff and money. He was unable to offer guarantees to Surry County officials that he would land the contract and they mooted the possibility of taking back the lease on the factory space. The seeming injustice of the delay was driving Berman crazy:

 ‘Look at it from a practical point of view—forget the morality. What does it cost to support a guy who loses his limbs for life? What does it cost to care for a guy who’s paralyzed for life? What does it take to pay out a death benefit? Sometimes I want to take these guys in suits by their lapels and tell them, ‘I’m going to take you somewhere you don’t want to go and see how this Humvee does.’ We put more money on T.S.A. people at the airport who are screaming at you like it’s the Third Reich than we do protecting the people who are truly protecting us.’

     This in essence is Packer’s main story, but its greater significance emerges from his ability to place it in historical and political perspective. The larger lessons he provides, post-9/11, are of political inertia at the top, missed opportunities to restore America’s once vibrant economic base, callous disregard for the plight of the less than one percent of Americans who served in Iraq and Afghanistan, culture clash between what conservatives call the “liberal elite” and ordinary folk, and the seeming indifference by those comfortably well off to the vast army of Americans who have lost jobs or homes or both—all testifying to a general downward slide that may be irreversible in the near term as jobs are exported overseas, as America’s educational system remains  ill-equipped to prepare its graduates for the challenges of a high-tech economy, as one robot does the job of ten former employees, as deficits increase and as the political will to tax even the wealthiest one percent of Americans encounters stiff opposition by fiscal conservatives in Congress.

If we can believe Rittell and Webber(1973) these “wicked problems” are themselves symptomatic of still larger underlying problems. But rather than reaching back ad infinitum in search of some original sin or other first cause, I suggest that in accounting for persistent problems we explore possibilities for reciprocal causation such as between declines in communality and parallel increases in economic inequalities. I address this question further in Chapter 7.

**Regulations in the Service of the Regulated**

Outrageous: Hearing on Tar Sands Pipeline Run by Pipeline Company's Own Contractor

In a stunning conflict of interest, public hearings on federal approval of a proposed tar sands pipeline are being run by a contractor for the pipeline company itself. The U.S. Department of State’s public hearings along the proposed route of the TransCanada Keystone XL tar sands pipeline this week are under the purview of CardnoEntrix, a “professional environmental consulting company” that specializes in “permitting and compliance.”

Cardno is not only running the State Department hearings, but also manages the department’s Keystone XL website and drafted the department’s environmental impact statement. Comments from the public about the pipeline go not to the government, but to a cardno.com email:

The Cardno case is noteworthy but not exceptional. The “system” includes not just the obvious swindlers but the lax regulators who move in and out of the “revolving doors” between their regulatory agencies and the companies they’re supposed to regulate. It also includes payoffs by banks and other large corporations to candidates dependent on their largesse. It includes the Supreme Court, which ruled in a case brought to the Court by the Koch brothers’ Americans for Prosperity that corporations are no longer restricted from unlimited campaign donations since they’ve been reclassified as persons who enjoy free speech projections (See Chapter 6). It includes lobbied members of Congress who complain of the costs of regulating and insist, in the face of counter-evidence that companies can be counted upon in a “free market” economy to regulate themselves. And it includes presidents and cabinet officials who arrange bailouts for corporations “too big to fail” when they are needy, and quick settlements of disputes that reward them when they are flush. Consider the following:

* The U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) has allowed big banks such as Wells Fargo and Goldman Sachs to pay small fines for the fortunes they made in the low-rated mortgage market, in part by betting against the advice they’d given to their own clients.  (https://www.sec.gov/news/press/2010/2010-59.htm)
* Wells Fargo and other big mortgage lenders have signed off on low-rated mortgages to people with bad credit ratings. They’ve done so with such reckless abandon that they’ve repeatedly been unable to provide the necessary evidence of valid mortgage contracts.
* In the early public discourse of the mortgage crisis, homeowners able to keep their homes were credited with “responsible citizenship” while those who could not were branded as “mortgage delinquents,” goaded to “grow up” and exercise “fiscal discipline.” But as the mortgage crisis mounted, the metaphor of the wayward child shifted to mortgage giants Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac as “spoiled children” who needed “tough love” rather than “bailout candy.” (Happe, 2013)
* Low-rated mortgages have been converted into bundles of A-rated derivatives, and then sold off at a handsome profit; all this with the blessings of Moody’s and Standard and Poor’s which were remunerated by the banks for their higher mortgage ratings. Note: It’s little known that these are for-profit private agencies, not government agencies. (Krugman, 2013)
* Against the advice of various state attorneys general (NYT editorial, 2013), the Obama administration asked states to excuse bank conduct, granting them what a New York Times editorial called “unacceptably broad release from legal liability for the mortgage mess… “The proposed settlement reportedly would prevent the states from pursuing claims against banks relating to fraud or abuse in the origination of loans during the bubble. It would also prevent states from pursuing claims for foreclosure abuses, like improper denial of loan modifications… In effect, says the editorial, “Legal waivers being contemplated would let the banks pay up to sweep wrongdoing under the rug.” (Krugman, 2013).

The question that begs to be addressed in all of these examples is why are elites able to repeatedly game the regulatory process for enormous profits at the general public’s expense? Why, asked, J. Murray Edelman (1967:25), are initial displays of public wrath at forces seen as threatening to the general public “about as predictable as the subsequent lapse of that fervor?” Why is the professional politician’s advocacy of regulatory legislation widely popular “while actual resource allocations inconsistent with the promise of the statutes are met with quiescence?” (p. 25) Why are the provisions of regulatory legislation least significant for resource allocation…”most widely publicized and the most significant provisions least widely publicized?” (p. 26) Why do the preambles to such legislation contain strong assurances that the public interest will be served while the fine print of that legislation routinely undercuts those promises? (p. 26)

Says Edelman (1967) the most common explanation for the general public’s general inability to realize its interests through public policy is “invisibility.” But this, says Edelman, is at best a partial explanation, begging the question of why public ignorance is so persistent. Edelman adds that statutes have meaning to most citizens mostly as symbols—that “passing parade of symbols” he refers to early in his book. Where public understanding “is vague and information rare, interests in reassurance will be all the more potent and all the more susceptible to manipulation by political symbols” (p. 38). One form that this takes “is noisy attacks against trivia” (p. 39). Another “is persistent, well-publicized attention to a problem that is never solved” (p. 39).

Edelman adds: The most obvious kinds of dissemination of symbolic satisfactions are to be found in administrative dicta accompanying decisions and orders, in press releases and in annual reports. It is not uncommon to give the rhetoric to one side and the decision to the other. Nowhere does the FCC wax so emphatic in emphasizing public service responsibility, for example, as in decisions permitting greater concentrations of control in an area. (p.39)

**“Wars” on Drugs**

A relatively simple illustration of a crazy political system is the quadrennially declared “war on drugs,” a war in much the same metaphorical sense as Lyndon Johnson’s “war on poverty,” Gerald Ford’s “all-out war on inflation,” Jimmy Carter’s energy program as “the moral equivalent of war,” and George W. Bush’s “war on terror.”

     As Lakoff and Johnson (1980: 156-7) observed, the war metaphor arouses emotions, structures thought, and directs actions.  Carter’s “energy war “generated a network of entailments: There was an “enemy” (pictured by cartoonists in Arab headdress), a “threat to national security,” which required “setting targets,” “reorganizing priorities,” “establishing a new chain of command,” “plotting a new strategy,” “gathering intelligence,” “marshaling forces,” and “imposing sanctions.” Acceptance of the energy war metaphor provided grounds for certain inferences: Energy needed to be given top budgetary priority; the populace would have to make sacrifices; if we didn’t meet the threat, we would not survive.

     Successive presidents’ wars on drugs have been politically popular; never mind that they haven’t worked as envisioned. The criminalization of possession or sale of street drugs has succeeded beyond expectations at creating lucrative illicit markets for drug lords and growers and wholesalers, and shippers, down to the kids on the corner who sell the drugs and others, including in some countries law-enforcement officers and politicians, who are paid to protect them. Real wars have been fought over drugs and the sale of drugs. Protection of farmers who grow poppies or cocoa beans has enabled insurgents like the Taliban in Afghanistan and the Shining Path in Peru to fight other wars.

     After his election in 2008 President Obama authorized his administration’s “drug czar” to *reject* the war metaphor as applied to drugs, recommending instead that America’s illegal drug problems be viewed from a health perspective primarily (Tierney, March 12, 2009). But the authorization has come with political risk attached. Hence the President has wavered, as he has often done, between hewing to principle and doing what’s politically smart.

     Scratch at the drug conflict and you will find another, between a subculture of traditionally minded strict disciplinarians who typically exempt alcohol consumption from their objections to recreational drug use and a more permissive and more self-indulgent subculture which finds this distinction to be absurd. This is the cultural distinction that Lakoff (2002), describes in *Moral Politics.* How the conflict will play out is anybody’s guess.

**The Politics of Mental Illness**

The FDA is supposed to protect the American public by seeing to it that the marketing of a drug is confined to the patient populations and purposes for which the drug has been appropriately tested and approved. That seems reasonable enough except for the following:

* It is not illegal for physicians to prescribe these same “off-label” drugs and many do, especially for what they diagnose as psychiatric disorders (Angell, 2004).
* For obvious reasons, drug companies make very sure that their positive studies are published in medical journals and doctors know about them, while the negative ones often languish unseen within the FDA, which regards them as proprietary and therefore confidential. This practice greatly biases the medical literature, medical education, and treatment decisions. Compounding the problem of bias, reviews of drug tests published in medical journals are often contributed by persons from the pharmaceutical industry. (“Our Conflicted Medical Journals”, 2006)
* Criteria for “successful” clinical trials ignore chance positives and placebo effects by allowing as the standard of success two clinical trials (on a drug or procedure) out of an unlimited number of trials (Angell, 2004)
* Research reports in medical journals often highlight drug benefits while downplaying their probable side effects. Not uncommonly research findings are generalized beyond the patient populations that were studied: to women, in studies of men, for example. (Simons, 1993, p.5)
* Marcia Angell, former editor of the *New England Journal of Medicine*, has complained about the over-prescription of anti-depressants and other anti-psychotic drugs. Now, more than ever, Americans are being diagnosed as mentally ill (Angell, 2004). After 1987, when Prozac was introduced into the market, the number of people treated for depression tripled in the next ten years, and roughly 10 percent of all Americans over six years of age took anti-depressants, as of 2004. Mental illness is now the leading cause of disability among children, the result of a 35-fold increase in diagnoses over a twenty-year period, well ahead of physical disabilities such as cerebral palsy. Among adults during that same period, those allegedly disabled and unable to work from mental illness more than doubled during that same period.

Angell cites one of the books she reviews:

‘At the very least, we need to stop thinking of psychoactive drugs as the best, and often the only, treatment for mental illness or emotional distress. Both psychotherapy and exercise have been shown to be as effective as drugs for depression, and their effects are longer-lasting, but unfortunately, there is no industry to push these alternatives and Americans have come to believe that pills must be more potent. More research is needed to study alternatives to psychoactive drugs, and the results should be included in medical education.’(Angell, 2011)

**Summary**

Of the many dysfunctional political systems taken up in the book, this chapter has focused upon five for critical scrutiny but given dishonorable mention to a host of others, this in keeping with Rice and Cooper on “unusual” organizational routines (2010), Cronen et al. (1982) on “unwanted repetitive patterns” (“URPs”) . Rittell and Webber (1973) on “wicked problems.” Every such problem is a symptom of another problem, as when belief in American exceptionalism licenses exceptions to moral strictures against torture, to the point where the practice of torture is normalized and naturalized and may even become a source of “sinful” pleasure as in B-rated “gangster” films that play on culturally reinforced sadistic impulses.  Crazy political systems are not crazy to those who learn how to “game” the system but even they may suffer ultimately from system breakdowns and the resulting “tragedy of the commons.” System failure may be difficult to anticipate and harder yet to rectify as problems become ingrained and magnified. Rather than searching for first causes or ultimate causes, I have suggested looking for instances of reciprocal causation leading to vicious cycles.

Highlighted in the chapter have been failures to regulate and, worse yet, the illusory appearance of regulation in the interests of the ostensibly regulated, as in recent banking scandals.

For readers interested in bringing the concept of dysfunctional political system to bear on cases of their own choosing, I would recommend as worth pursuing:

1. *Electoral systems*, as in the U.S., where at great cost, seemingly endless campaigning for office or for the right to run for office creates dependence on fat-cat contributors and further polarizes an already divided electorate. (Chapter 6)
2. *Failed States,*such asthose run by mono-maniacal dictators, or administered in the interests of those on the take, or engaged in seemingly perpetual deadly conflict, or either unwilling or unable to attend to their peoples’ basic needs. (e.g., Nienaber on Congo 7-23-12)
3. *Failing relationships between nation-*states, as in *double games*wherepolitical leaders alternate endlessly between publicly reprimanding opponents on whom they depend and cozying up to them. (Chapter 11)
4. *Indefinite incarcerations without judicial hearings*, as in China where the Stalinist-inspired re-education through labor system, known as “laojiao” resulted in forced labor for up to four years of as many as 190,000 inmates at a time, all without trial.” But it is a measure of sanity returning to China that “laojiao” is now being widely denounced with tacit support from the Chinese Communist Party. (Jacobs, Dec. 14, 2012; Jacobs, June 11, 2013)

**Questions for Thought and Discussion**

1. Describe and illustrate the differences between functional and dysfunctional systems. Identify a system dysfunction not named or explained in this chapter.
2. Define and illustrate runaway feedback loops.
3. When if at all is torture defensible? Make the case for it.
4. How would you handle the NIMBY (Not in my back yard) problem if you faced it?
5. What can be a possible strategy to handle a wicked problem? Illustrate with an example.
6. What are the reasons that allow the continued existence of regulatory services that favor for profit organization instead of public interest? Is this a wicked problem?

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Endnote

[1] See for example op-ed columnist Gail Collins (Dec. 14, 2012) on the gun violence controversy. “Every country has a sizeable contingent of mentally ill citizens. We’re the one that gives them the technological power to playgod.” <http://w.w.w..nytimes/2012/12/15/opinion/collins-looking-for-America/html>

**Chapter 4**

**The Rhetoric of Social Movements**

**In this chapter:**

* What are Social Movements?
* Leading Social Movements: The "Requirements-Problems-Strategies" (RPS) approach
  + Requirements
  + Problems
  + Strategies
* Dilemmas of Confrontation
  + Confrontation
  + Cultural Politics
  + Protests and Media
  + Open- and Closed-Minded Movements
* The Fate of Social Movements
* Summary
* Questions for Thought and Discussion
* Works Cited

**What are Social Movements?**

Movements matter. In 2011, Time Magazine named “the protester” as its Person of the Year, this in tribute to what had come to be called the Arab Spring. *Times’* stories and videos testified to the vast scope of the Arab Spring protests, the power and energy released by their actions, the dedication and heroism of those who put their bodies on the line, their inventive use of cell phones and social media to mobilize movement support, and the role of more traditional media like *Time* in disseminating protestors’ messages to other parts of the globe.

A social movement is here defined as a sustained struggle in behalf of a cause by an non-institutionalized or partially institutionalized collectivity—this in contrast with groups like the International Red Cross and institutions like the British Parliament whose organizations, reasons for being, and modes of action are fully *legitimized* by the powers that be.[[3]](#endnote-3)In the hectic months of 2011’s Arab spring, the movements’ core organizations (called social movement organizations, or SMOs), their guiding ideologies, and their modes of action were viewed as highly illegitimate and indeed subversive by those in power.

As sustained struggles on behalf of a cause, movements strive to promote an ideology (e.g., liberalism, conservatism) and/or a program of action (e.g., regime change, democratization) and also in most cases seek recognition and acceptance-key constituents of institutionalization. Legitimacy, then, figures importantly in their evolution, but it is bestowed (or not) by key legitimizers and is not something movements can command or impose. Ironically, movements sanctified by the “powers-that-be” are likely to be viewed as illegitimate by fellow activists as having sold out to the establishment. At best, then, legitimacy is a mixed blessing.

The goals of social movements vary considerably, and so, too, is there great variation in their means for achieving them.

* ***Reformist*** movements generally seek passage of particular laws, better enforcement of particular laws, replacement of corrupt or incompetent officials, and so on. The gun control and civil rights movements are examples.
* ***Revolutionary*** movements go further by seeking to replace guiding ideologies, institutions, and sometimes entire regimes, on the basis of new governing principles. They are also associated with the threat or use of force (e.g., American Revolution), but there have been largely peaceful revolutions as well (e.g., Poland, 1989).
* ***Resistance*** movements**,** rather than advocating change, seek to hold it back and keep the status quo--for example, the anti-gun control movement and its fight to prevent further gun legislation/regulation from being implemented.
* ***Restorative*** movements seek a return to an older and supposedly better way of life. The cause of today’s Christian Identity movement echoes the rhetoric of hate toward minorities in the United States, preached in earlier days by White Citizens Councils and by the John Birch Society (Bennett, 1995; Wills, 1990/2007). Marcus Garvey’s “Back to Africa” was also a restorative movement.
* ***Expressivist*** movements, such as the Hippie movement of the late sixties and the Encounter group movement of the seventies try to change individuals, rather than directly trying to change institutions or laws. Theirs is a positive agenda, although they may be allied with protest groups (Jasper, 1997). Common to the ideologies of movements for personal transformation are the themes of personal responsibility and of possible self-improvement and enlightenment.

It is not always easy to classify movements based on this or any other typology because of internal disputes concerning goals and methods within the movement, as well as changes in goals and strategies. For example, a conference of 1960s-style Marxist activists hit on a decidedly expressivist note when they concluded that so-called “new social movements” such as feminism and environmentalism have demonstrated that large-scale social change “is accomplished in face-to-face relations, at the level of personal identity and consciousness… whether or not such change is enunciated in public policy” (Touraine, 1981; Darnovsky, Epstein, & Flacks, 1995).

The Tea Party Movement in the United States is also difficult to classify. Among its SMOs are the Patriots and the Tea Party Express as well as their loosely federated local and state chapters, such as the Massachusetts Tea Party and the Arizona Tea Party. An inclusive social movement, TPM’s well-advertised meetings are open to all comers, but it is also closely tied to the Republican Party, having been credited with the GOP’s spectacular gains in the 2010 Congressional races and disparaged in 2012 for having moved the GOP too far to the right for the American electorate. A study by Scoblic (2008)[[4]](#endnote-4) found it to include grassroots and elite components, joined together by its animus toward the “socialist” Obama administration and a desire to return America to its version of the Founding Fathers’ vision for America[[5]](#endnote-5).

**Leading Social Movements: The "Requirements-Problems-Strategies" (RPS) Approach**

The following is a review of the RPS framework for leading social movements or for analyzing their moves and speech as a critic. Its basic assumptions are that: (1) Any movement must fulfill the same functional requirements as more institutionalized collectivities. These imperatives constitute *rhetorical requirements* for the leadership of a movement. (2) Conflicts among requirements create *rhetorical problems* which in turn affect, (3) decisions *on rhetorical strategy*. The primary test of leaders, and of the strategies they employ, is their capacity to fulfill the requirements of their movement by removing or reducing rhetorical problems.

*Requirements*

As stated, the basic functional requirements of a social movement are an ability to mobilize human and material resources, to exert external influence, and to mount resistance to counter-pressures. These requirements are not unlike those facing leaders of institutionalized collectivities such as business or government.

*Problems*

Social movements are severely restricted from fulfilling these requirements by dint of their internal strategies and their positions in relation to the larger society. This is especially true of movements lacking legitimacy. By comparison to the heads of most formal organizations the leaders of these social movements can expect minimal internal control and maximal external resistance.

While business corporations may induce productivity through tangible rewards and punishments, social movements, as voluntary collectivities, must rely on ideological and social commitments. Moreover, movements often threaten and are threatened by the society's sanctions and taboos: its laws, its maxims, its customs governing manners, decorum and taste; its insignia of authority, etc. Shorn of the controls that characterize formal organizations, yet required to perform the same internal functions; harassed from without, yet required to gain outside support, the leader of a social movement must constantly balance inherently conflicting demands on her position and on the movement, she represents.

Many of these problems pose dilemmas for leaders. Among the demands on any organization are that its leaders maintain a system of accurate communication up and down the line, that they operate efficiently, and that they act in a consistent and therefore predictable manner. But in a social movement, the need to speak truthfully must be balanced against the need to inspire members and to fend off attacks on the movement by outsiders. The need for organizational efficiency must be weighed against the willingness of volunteers (few of whom can be coerced or paid) and their demands for promotion of pet projects. Finally, the need for ideological consistency must be balanced against the need for pragmatic adaptations.

Movements are as susceptible to fragmentation from within as they are to suppression from without. Within movement organizations, factional conflicts invariably develop over questions of value, strategy, tactics, or implementation. During a prolonged conflict purists and pragmatists clash over the merits of compromise. Academics and activists debate the necessity of long range planning. Others enter the campaign with personal grievances or vested interests. Preexisting groups that are known to have divergent ideological positions are nevertheless invited to join or affiliate with the campaign because of the power they can wield.

These and other differences may be reflected at the leadership level as well. Rarely can one campaign leader handle all the leadership roles and tasks of the campaign. Hence the need for a variety of leadership types: theoreticians and propagandists to launch the campaign, political or bureaucratic types to carry it forward. There may also be cleavages between those vested with positions of authority in the campaign, those charismatic figures that have personal followings, those who have special competencies, and those who have private sources of funds or influence outside the campaign.

*Strategies*

Because any strategy represents an attempt to meet incompatible requirements, none is ever fully satisfactory. Each, moreover, creates new problems in the process of resolving old ones.

Moderates and Militants

As applied to protests against institutional policies or practices, moderates are the embodiment of reason, civility, and decorum. They get angry but do not shout, issue pamphlets but never manifestos, inveigh against social mores but always in the value language of the social order. Their "devil" is a condition or a set of behaviors or an outcast group, never the persons they are seeking to influence. Those persons are assumed to be capable of "listening to reason."

If moderates assume or pretend to assume an ultimate identity of interests between the movement and its antagonists, militants act on the assumption of a fundamental clash of interests. Each can boast support from proud philosophical traditions. The moderate's commitment to friendly persuasion is rooted in the Greco-Roman democratic tradition, in Judeo-Christian conceptions of the brotherhood of man, in Emerson's faith in human educability, and in John Stuart Mill's conviction that truth will survive any open competition of ideas. Militants, by contrast, are inclined to be mistrustful of ordinary citizens or to assume that the systems they oppose are likely to be intractable. Like Karl Marx, they are apt to believe that the masses have lost sight of their "real" interests or that those in power are unlikely to surrender it willingly. Although Machiavelli wrote for princes and not for protestors, the militant is inclined to accept that writer's view of persuasion as an *adjunct to force* rather than its alternative. Likewise, the militant would probably go along with Henry James when he wrote that "Life is, in fact, a battle. Evil is insolent and strong; beauty enchanting but rare; goodness very apt to be weak, folly very apt to be defiant; wickedness to carry the day; imbeciles to be in great places, people of sense in small, and mankind generally unhappy."

This is not to say that militants offer no appeals to shared values. They do, indeed, but in ways that call into question other widely held values. In general, the militant tends to express greater degrees of dissatisfaction than the moderate. Whereas the moderate sees "inefficiencies" in existing practices, the militant sees "inequities", and the moderate might regard authority figures as "misguided" though "legitimate," while the militant would tend to regard these same figures as "willfully self-serving" and "illegitimate." The militant is also more apt to derogate human laws in the name of "higher" truths. For example, Timothy McVeigh hoped to further his cause and felt morally justified in bombing the Alfred P. Murrah Federal building, in what is commonly known as the Oklahoma City Bombing. (Timothy McVeigh's Letter to Rita Cosby, 2001)

The actions of militants are not all of a piece by any means. The practice of classic civil disobedience, for example, borders on being intermediate between militancy and moderacy. To test the constitutionality of a law, that law is violated. However, the law in question is violated openly and nonviolently, no other laws are breached in the process, the rights of innocent persons are not interfered with, and, if found guilty the law violator willingly accepts punishment.

Contrast this strategy with acts that can more clearly be labeled combative in nature: strikes, riots, political bombings and kidnappings- all the way to organized guerrilla warfare. By means of verbal polemics and direct-action techniques, combative protestors can run the gamut from cajolery to threats. Although the aim of pressure tactics may be to punish directly (strikes, boycotts), more frequently they are forms of "body rhetoric," designed to dramatize issues, enlist additional sympathizers, delegitimize the established order, and except in truly revolutionary situations force reconsideration of existing laws and practices, or pave the way for negotiated settlements.

So different are the rhetorical conceptions of moderate and militant strategists that it strains the imagination to believe both approaches may work. Yet the decisive changes wrought by militant rhetoric on the left and the right in recent years give credence to the view that friendly persuasion is not the only alternative. What, then, in general terms are the strengths and limitations of moderate and militant approaches?

1. Militant tactics confer visibility on a movement; moderate tactics gain entry into decision centers.
2. For different reasons, militants and moderates must both be ambivalent about success and failures. Militants thrive on injustice and ineptitude displayed by their targets. Should the enemy fail to implement the movement's demands, militants find themselves vindicated ideologically, yet frustrated programmatically. Should some of the demands be met, they are in the paradoxical position of having to condemn them as bromides. Moderates, by contrast, require tangible evidence that the larger structure is tractable in order to hold followers in line; yet too much success belies the movement's reason for being.
3. Militant supporters are easily energized; moderate supporters are more easily controlled. Strong identification by members with the goals of a movement, however necessary to achieve esprit de corps may foster the conviction that any means are justified and breed impatience with time-consuming tactics. The use of violence and other questionable means may be prompted further by restrictions on legitimate avenues of expression imposed by the larger society. As a result, leaders may be required to mask the movement's true objectives by publicly deploring the use of tactics they privately advocate. A vicious cycle develops in which militant tactics invite further suppression, which spurs the movement on to more extreme methods. Having aroused their following, however, the leaders of a militant movement may become victims of their own creation, unable to contain energies within prescribed limits or to guarantee their own tenure. In contrast, Leaders of moderate groups frequently complain that their supporters are apathetic, lip service adherents who cannot be depended upon for the work of the movement.
4. Militants tend to be more effective with power vulnerable; moderates with power‑invulnerable; neither is effective with both. Targets of protest may be labeled as power‑vulnerables to the degree to which (a) they have something to lose (for example, property, status, high office); (b) they cannot escape from a movement groups pressures for change (for example, commuters unable to move due to the intentional blocking of a street by protestors); (c) they cannot retaliate against a source (either because of normative or physical constraints). Such targets as university presidents, church leaders, and elected government officials are highly vulnerable, especially if they profess to be "high-minded" or "liberal."These contrast with the mass of citizens who may lack substantial possessions, be able to escape, or feel no constraints about retaliating. These latter examples are of power-invulnerables.

Intermediate Strategies

In choosing between moderate and militant strategies, the protest leader faces a series of dilemmas: neither approach is likely to meet every rhetorical requirement or resolve every rhetorical problem. Indeed, the introduction of either approach may in turn create new problems.

So it is that the leadership of a protest movement may attempt to resolve or avoid the aforementioned dilemmas by employing intermediate strategies, admittedly a catchall term for those efforts that combine militant and moderate patterns of influence. They may alternate between appeals to common ground and threats of punishment, or speaking softly in private and stridently at mass gatherings. They may form broadly based coalitions that submerge ideological differences or utilize speakers with similar values but contrasting styles. They may stand as "conservative radicals" or "radical conservatives," espousing extreme demands in the value language of the social order or militant slogans in behalf of moderate proposals. They may portray themselves as defenders of moderation, the brakemen holding back more militant followers.

Thus, intermediacy can be a dangerous game. Calculated to energize supporters, win over neutrals, pressure power vulnerables, and mollify the opposition, it may instead end up antagonizing everyone. The well-turned phrase may appear as a devilish trick, the rationale as a rationalization, and the tactful comment as an artless dodge. Strategies of intermediacy require studied ambiguity, insincerity, and even distortion. Perhaps the leaders' greatest danger is that others will find out what they really think.

Still, some strategists manage to reconcile differences between militant and moderate approaches and not simply maneuver around them. They seem able to convince the established order that bad tasting medicine is good for it and seem capable, too, of mobilizing a diverse collectivity within the movement. The key, it would appear, is the leader's capacity to embody a higher wisdom, a more profound sense of justice: to stand above inconsistencies by articulating overarching principles. Few will contest the claim that Martin Luther King, Jr., epitomized the approach. Attracting both militants and moderates to his movement, King could win respect, even from his enemies, by reconciling the seemingly irreconcilable. The heart of the case for intermediacy was succinctly stated by King himself: "What is needed," he said, "is a realization that power without love is reckless and abusive and love without power is sentimental and anemic. Power at its best is love implementing the demands of justice, and justice at its best is power correcting everything that stands against love."

Dilemmas of Confrontation

Movements select tactics from a repertoire of contentious politics available to them at any given time and place (Tilly, 1979; Tilly and Tarrow, 2007). Some tactics, such as public demonstrations, are uncommon in autocratic societies but common in democracies. Others that were once popular, such as hangings in effigy in the UK and the U.S., go out of style. Some movements rely on verbal appeals, others on a combination of exhortations and demonstrations; still others add the threat and use of force.

To advance their cause, movements have characteristically relied on *confrontational tactics,* still the method of choice for street protests. But movements seeking both ideological change and resistance to ideological change are increasingly turning to *cultural politics*.

*Confrontation*

Consider the demonstrators at Tiananmen Square, some of them on hunger strikes, none of them knowing at what point the government would strike back. When it comes to making a statement, there is nothing quite like putting one’s body on the line. Schelling, in this connection, made a distinction between speech and “moves”:

Talk is not a substitute for moves. Moves can in some way alter the game, by incurring manifest costs, risks, or a reduced range of subsequent choice; they have an information content, or evidence content, of a different character from that of speech. Talk can be cheap when moves are not. (Schelling, 1960)

The moves made by the protesters at Tiananmen were forms of confrontation. They were reminiscent of campus sit-ins and demonstrations across the U.S.in the late 1960s and have been emulated since around the globe. Some of the campus confrontations were mild, others quite disruptive, but all of them sought to perform attention-getting, radicalizing, and delegitimizing functions through actions that combined verbal exhortations and pressure tactics. The confronters joined in a deliberate violation of the institution’s written and unwritten codes of conduct, fastening on those taboos that symbolized what the protesters took to be the institution’s false ideals and inequitable practices.

Representatives of these institutions were thus presented with a king-sized dilemma. Suppression of the confrontation would belie the institution’s appearance of liberality and feed the flames of protest. Yet permitting violations of the code would, in effect, sanction other violations and undermine the offices of authority and discipline in the institution. And so, after promising a fair hearing and pleading in vain for a return to more moderate tactics, the institution acts to check or suppress the violations and punish the violators, frequently breaking its own rules in the process. In this way, its representatives were able, temporarily, to contain the confrontation, but, in doing so, they “complete” the rhetorical act by revealing their own “ugliness” (Scott & Smith, 1969; see also Tilly and Tarrow, 2007).

*Cultural Politics*

Brief attention was given in Chapter 1 to the role of schools and of the mass media in shaping ideologies. These, together with other “culture industries” such as the arts and organized religion, have always been sources of cultural influence, but groups seeking liberalization of social values (the “cultural left”) and others resisting what they see as moral decay (“social conservatives”) have in recent decades been engaged in what some journalists ballyhooed as the “culture wars” (e.g., Gitlin, 1995; Graff, 1992). Multiculturalists, Afro centrists, feminists, and others on the cultural left have sought to influence educational curricula. Social conservatives have formed counter-movements of their own, pressing in some cases for textbook censorship and in others for cutbacks in federal funding of the humanities. Some social conservatives have sought to restore America to what they allege was its former greatness, before school prayer was outlawed, for example, and before abortion was legalized by the Supreme Court (Bennett, 1995). In recent years, they have pressed hard for greater ideological diversity in the university (Horowitz, 2009; Neal, 2007).

These ideological battles are fought out less in the streets than in behind-the-scenes meetings of museum boards, federal funding agencies, university administrators, mental health professionals, network news managers and, more openly, in classrooms, movie theaters, churches, the courts, and via television and the internet. In some women’s studies classrooms, a concerted attempts made to “liberate” students from the intellectual and cultural domination of patriarchal (i.e., male-oriented) ideologies. Across the hall, a socially conservative professor of philosophy declaims against postmodernism, deconstruction, cultural relativism, and other intellectual challenges to Western culture’s traditional faith in logic, objectivity, meaning, and scientific method. An Afrocentric college professor counsels high school educators on how they can increase the self-esteem of innercity youth by instilling pride in their African roots. These are but skirmishes in today’s cultural wars, but they illustrate within an academic setting what is meant by cultural politics. It is an attempt by all sides to influence ideological thought via institutions such as the schools that are not often thought of as vehicles for propagandizing. The methods include not just active proselytizing but control over what gets put before students in the way of textbooks, television viewers in the way of programming, and museum goers in the way of art exhibits.

, the activists overcame potential splits in their ranks by substituting “We need to be organized” for “Do whatever you can do.”

*Protests and Media*

Although cultural politics is highly dependent on media entertainment and schools to get its message across, the more traditional confrontational politics of socialmovements relies principally on news and opinion coverage, and especially on the capabilities of television and the internet to reach a wide audience with dramatic, attention-getting footage (Gitlin, 2003).Media attention may inspire new adherents to join a movement and prompt sympathizers to provide increased resources and support. The larger the movement and the bigger and more spectacular its demonstrations, the more media coverage it’s likely to get, thus engendering further movement support. In this respect, at least, media attention provides benefits to social movements.

Moreover, the mass media may confer their blessings on a movement. In the United States, movement activity is in itself considered a “good” by the media; it confirms the impression that the U.S. is a pluralist society, brimming with political vitality. But the mass media are selective in their attention to movements and movement concerns. They are especially likely to play up exposures of corruption and scandal and to bestow sympathetic attention on proposals for modest reform. In that same spirit, the media may even furnish their own supporting evidence of social problems requiring remediation. This is of no small consequence because as Gitlin (2003) argues, the media specialize in “orchestrating everyday consciousness.” Bystatement and omission, in pictures and in words, in entertainment and news andadvertisements, the media produce managed, manufactured, but nevertheless eminently credible versions of reality that by dint of their capacity to “naturalize”the news, become for their viewers reality itself (Dumsky, 2008).

But this same power and pervasiveness can also become a central problem for contemporary movements, especially for those seeking more than modest reforms. Reformist and revolutionary movements, says Gitlin (2003), must either play by the media’s rules or risk rejection or inattention. These rules are also in many respects those of the dominant culture. They ordain protection of the core interests of political elites and adherence to the prevailing rules of governance. Thus, however much the government is implicated in the media’s exposure of evils, the government must still be looked to for the remediation of those evils.

The media tend to divide movements into “legitimate main acts that play by the rules and illegitimate side shows” (Gitlin, 2003). They tend also to give short shrift to movements on the quiet side- those, for example, that prefer private, one-on-one persuasion over more visual public demonstrations. Much as they celebrate civility and decorum, they also thrive on noisy drama and display. “Mass media define the public significance of movement events, or, by blanking them out, actively deprive them of larger significance” (Gitlin, 2003).

Said Harmony Tasker, a graduate student at Temple University, “This picking and choosing has led many of my generation to distrust the media and instead seek out non-traditional sources for information. With social media, we can talk to and get info from people on site. When the Gaza strip was being bombed tweets form people hiding in their homes were widely shared both on twitter and other social media sites and blogs”

In Gitlin’s dour view, contemporary social movements must either adjust their goals and behavior and even their identities to media expectations or risk oblivion. He is careful to caution against viewing these influences as automatic or determined; he recognizes that movements are not without their own resources, and he acknowledges, too, that the media may magnify and hasten manageable forms of political change (Gitlin, 2003). Nevertheless, says Gitlin, movements typically succumb to media treatments of them. Leaders are transformed into celebrities, or they are replaced by those who are telegenic or perhaps more willing to submit to the implicit rules of media news making. Not only does the mediated image of the movement, then, influence the movement’s self-image, it also tends to “become” the movement for wider publics and institutions, including policymakers.

This, in bare essence, is Gitlin’s characterization of the interplay of influence between media and movements. Written primarily from the experience of a 1960smovement in the United States, its truths and assertions are only exacerbated in today’s internet world of YouTube and Twitter. And, it remains applicable in a number of interesting respects to the events in Beijing during the spring of 1989.In China; television coverage of the demonstrations swelled the size and support given to the movement organizations that sponsored them. It helped, of course, that Tiananmen Square was the perfect stage, its occupants and attackers the perfect heroes and villains, and democracy and freedom the perfect rallying cries. No playwright could have written a more engaging drama or adopted suchwell-wrought scenes as the demonstrations in support of former leader Hu Yaobang, the visit to China of the Soviet Union’s Premier Gorbachev, the hunger strikes in Tiananmen Square, the defiance of martial law, the erection of the Goddess of Democracy statue and the final Beijing massacre.

Major protest movements of the 1960s all seemed to require combinations of militant and moderate approaches. In the sixties, militants were counted on to dramatize the Vietnam issue, moderates to plead forcefully within inner circles. Threats of confrontation prompted city and state governments to finance the building of new schools in low-income areas, but it took reasonableness and civility to get experienced teachers to volunteer for work in those facilities. Demands by revolutionary student groups for transformations of university structures helped impel administrators to heed quasi-militant demands for a redistribution of university power. Support for the cause by moderate groups helped confer respectability on the movement. Thus, however much they might have warred among themselves, militants and moderates each performed important functions.

*Open and Closed-Minded Movements*

This chapter has focused mainly upon groups with whom most readers could readily identify, such as the demonstrators at Tiananmen Square. Yet some social movements are downright ugly and more than a bit scary. Cambodia’s Pol Pot led a social movement; so did Germany’s Adolf Hitler.

Protest leaders, even those of whom we approve, tend to appear most closed-minded at mass demonstrations. Still, there is a vast difference between spewers of hate, such as Adolf Hitler, and those such as the Reverend Martin Luther King Jr., who preached a doctrine of love. Moreover, King exhibited an openness to counterarguments in his writings and in interviews with journalists- not so Adolf Hitler.

Religious cults are social movement organizations; so are right-wing militias.

On the extreme right alone, one can find isolationist movements; hate groups that spew venom against blacks, Hispanics, Jews, Catholics, and immigrants of

All types; and groups dedicated to bringing down government (Bennett, 1995; Domke and Coe, 2007, Wills, 1990/2007).

Depending on the examples one picks, then, it is easy enough to glorify socialmovements or to condemn them roundly. One’s political sympathies will inevitably play a role in that as well. Still, if there is one yardstick around which rhetoricians can unite in their judgment of social movements, it is open versus closed-mindedness. Closed-minded movement organizations exhibit absolutistic, totalistic, and dogmatic thinking (Roberts-Miller, 2008; Hart, 1984). Their ideological claims are offered as revealed truths and are thus presented impersonally and authoritatively. Rather than questioning these “truths, “members are expected to swallow them whole and to compensate for gaps in their leaders’ logic by supplying missing premises. Groups such as these are insular, xenophobic, and frequently paranoid. The world external to the movement is seen as sinister and threatening. Members, too, are seen as sinners or as prone to ideological backsliding, but there is the promise for members of redemption and salvation through acts of contrition and purification. Clearly, not all movement groups exhibit these characteristics, not even those that one might be tempted to regard as radical or extreme. Whenever one is tempted to condemn all radicals or extremists, it is well to remember who made the American Revolution. Moderates, they were not.

In sharp contrast to closed-minded movements is Occupy Wall Street. If anything its degree of openness—to new ideas and new ways of organizing around them--has been something of a liability. Beyond its highly influential contrast between the wealthiest one percent and the rest of us, it is not at all clear what OWS stands for or how it can achieve its objectives (however vaguely formulated) given its renunciation of hierarchical controls and its refusal to join with more experienced, better established movement groups on a prolonged basis out of fear of being co-opted.

**The Fate of Social Movements**

The fate of social movement organizations varies considerably. Some ultimately achieve legitimacy in society; the once militant labor union movement in the United States is now the highly institutionalized AFL-CIO. Some movements are successful at promoting their causes; the more moderate the goal (better enforcement of traffic laws), the better the chances of success. Some movements achieve legitimacy *and* desired gains; some achieve neither. (Gamson, 1990)

Militant movements have mixed effects when they engage in political activism. Typically, they shore up a mainstream political party’s base, but in the process they can also frighten and alienate the larger public. This happened in 1972 when congress of movement organizations—antiwar, civil rights, student protest and others—coalesced to become “The Movement,” secured the Democratic Party nomination for their candidate, George McGovern, and then, in effect, handed an electoral landslide to the Republicans led by Richard Nixon (Simons, Chesebroand Orr, 1973). A similar fate befell the Republicans in 1964 when Republican presidential candidate Barry Goldwater lost by a landslide after mobilizing his conservative base around a slogan proclaiming that “Extremism in defense of liberty is no vice . . .”Senator John McCain’s loss to Barack Obama in 2008 is attributable in part to his inability to distance himself from the more extreme elements in the Republican Party.

Since the 2008 election, those exerting far-right influence such as Fox News’ Sean Hannity and radio icon Rush Limbaugh have rallied the faithful, drawn organizational support from old hands on the religious right, and managed to frighten the faint-hearted as they have worked to rebuild the Republican Party along strict ideological lines (Stan, 2009). As recent polling demonstrates, the effect has been to virtually deny a place within the Grand Old Party for moderate Republicans, and this has sent their approval ratings plummeting. In 2011, only 20%ofAmericans believe the Republicans in Congress are more likely to make the correct decisions and Congressional Republicans received the lowest approval rating in25 years, with only 31% of respondents giving them favorable reviews.

But, among the apparent movement failures, there are often long-term positive effects for the movement. New connections are *brokered* between previously unconnected sites of protest. Ideas, issues, and innovative forms of contention are diffused from one protest site to another and imitated at the new site or adapted to it. New senses of togetherness or communality are formed between protesters at different sites.

(Tilly and Tarrow, 2007, p. 95) Other effects include: Undeveloped ideas become crystallized; new movement leaders learn from past leaders’ mistakes; coalitions of kindred organizations find ways to pool their resources; publics grow accustomed to and come to accept once outlandish practices; technology makes possible solutions to problems that once seemed insurmountable; the time becomes ripe for the acceptance of previously objectionable ideas.

Often ignored are the effects, both symbolic and material, of one movement group on another. Militant groups help legitimize more moderate groups; Malcolm

X’s Nation of Islam did that for Martin Luther King Jr.’s Southern Christian Leadership Council. Then, the King-led civil rights movement went on to lend legitimacy to other “rights” struggles.

In other circumstances, distant movements serve as important role models. We only need to remember Martin Luther King’s debts to Gandhi and Thoreau. Apparently, the students in Beijing were much influenced by revolutionary developments in Eastern Europe and by the freeing of the press in the Soviet Union. The events in turning back Soviet-style communism in turn provided a model for students in China, and the actions of the Chinese students went on to provide a model for activists elsewhere in the world.

Great movements of the past also live on in legends and myths that are invented anew by successive generations and in institutions and forms of action that are adapted to changed circumstances (McGee, 1977). One of the most tantalizing hypotheses in recent years is Timothy Garton Ash’s (1999) conjecture that the peaceful revolutions of 1989 in countries formerly dominated by the Soviet Union have provided a formula of sorts for peaceful revolution. Says Ash, the 1989 model combines an absolute insistence on non-violence with the active, highly inventive use of mass civil disobedience, skillful appeals to Western media, public opinion, and governments, and a readiness to negotiate and compromise with the power-holders, while refusing to be co-opted by them.

He adds that, although this model has not been initiated in its entirety in other countries, it has had an enormous impact on the peaceful transition in South Africa, the tactics of Burmese opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi, and the negotiations leading to peace in Northern Ireland. Historically, opposition movements to police states, as in North Korea, take generations to succeed, and then only with outside pressure and with chinks in the armor of the state, as was the case in Nepal. The fate of social movements depends as much or more on the forces of social control within a society as on the movements that seek to change it. Social control includes governments working to quell unrest by using mechanisms of socialization that persuade people to accept their situations in life; the goal is to find ways to give individuals the feeling that their lives have meaning and render them quiescent. Such socialization includes coercion and material inducements as well.

**Summary**

Part 2 of this book, on social movements (chapter 4), campaign planning, (chapter 5,) electoral campaigns (chapter 6), and deliberation (chapter 7) invites consideration of rationality and irrationality, as played out in high stakes political controversies and conflicts.

This chapter has examined the rhetoric of social movements, such as the movement for democratization of China centered on Tiananmen Square in 1989. Social movements were defined as sustained struggles in behalf of a cause by non-institutionalized or partially institutionalized collectivities. Any given movement is likely to be coordinated by one or more social movement organizations (SMOs) and to include non-members as well of SMOs who identify with the cause and share a“we-consciousness.”

Movements have been classified in myriad ways. For purposes of this chapter it distinguished among revolutionary, reformist, resistance, restorative, and expressivist movements, but noted that these distinctions are muddied in practice by a movement’s multiple strands and possible factionalization.

Examined here have been two main tactics of social movements: cultural politics and confrontation, the former fought out in “culture wars,” the latter historically fought out in the streets and in the press (and these days, on the internet).

What Jasper (1997) calls the “art of moral protest” is much in evidence today, particularly in its images presented via the media. Television, social media and the internet are the major vehicles for bringing attention to a movement’s cause, with other media influencing how the movement will be perceived in the public’s consciousness. The internet enables movements to bypass these traditional media filters and exert considerable influence.

Featured in this chapter has been my RPS framework for leading social movements or for analyzing its words and symbolic actions. Movements are required to perform the same essential functions as institutionalized collectivities, but are severely impeded from accomplishing them. Moreover, the strategies they employ generally create problems in the process of resolving others. What is said and written about movements often reflects the politics of the movement analyst. Liberal and left-oriented intellectuals tend to view the movements they identify with as rational and the conservative and right-oriented movements they oppose as irrational forms of collective behavior. Conservative and right-oriented intellectuals do the reverse. Yet, in the West at least, intellectuals of all political colorations tend to prefer open-minded movements to closed-minded movements.

The fate of social movements can take many forms. The ideal outcome for their struggles is that the movement gains public support for their cause and acceptance for itself, leading to institutionalization. But movements don’t control their own fates and seldom achieve all that they have sought, at least not in one lifetime. Still, even “failed” movements can inspire others or provide much-needed lessons in how not to mobilize, or how not to attempt external influence, or how not to resist counter-influences.

**Questions for Thought and Discussion**

1. What are the respective dilemmas for moderates, militants and intermediates?
2. In general, do social movements benefit or harm societies?
3. What social movement organizations do you admire the most? Why?
4. Search the internet for the web sites of prominent movement groups such as Black Lives Matter, Tea Party, Occupy and Amnesty International. Can you name other current social movement organizations? Where do they fit on the continuum from informal, grassroots to highly professionalized?
5. Distinguish between grassroots and astro-turf movements and provide examples.
6. Distinguish between power-vulnerables and power-invulnerables.

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**Chapter 5**

**Persuasive Campaign Planning and Analysis**

**In this chapter:**

* Campaign Stages and Components
* Setting Campaign Goals
* Institutional Change Campaigns: Cases and Commentaries
  + Case 5.1 Ending Clitoral Mutilations in Senegal, Africa
  + Case 5.2Salina, Kansas Renewable Energy Campaign
  + Case.5.3Vegans’ Dilemma
  + Case 5.4Pro-choice vs. Anti-abortion
  + Case 5.5 Open Access
  + Case 5.6 Black Loves Matter (BLM)
* Summary
* Works Cited

**Campaign Stages and Components**

A campaign is an organized and sustained effort at influencing others, this primarily by way of persuasion (Perloff, 2010; Simons and Jones, 2011). Campaigns proceed through stages, each stage building on the last yet exhibiting a life of its own (Figure 5.1). All of them need to be anticipated in the initial planning, but plans also need to be modified from time to time as new information is received. The following list of factors 3to consider in the planning process is intended to be quite general so as to encompass a wide variety of campaign types.

Figure 5.1 about here

**Setting Campaign Goals**

Campaigns arise from a sense that interests (e.g., a corporation’s profits) or values (e.g., a people’s safety or survival) held dear by an organization must be protected or advanced (Salmon, 1989). But to succeed, a campaign must have specific goals. The goal might be to elicit specific behaviors: enough votes to win election as student council president, enough raffle sales to enable the college orchestra to make an overseas trip, or enough support from local townspeople to get city council approval for a bicycle-only lane on Main Street. Other campaigns are less concerned with specific behavioral payoffs than with influencing beliefs and values. They vary from public relations campaigns that aim at fostering more favorable images of a group or organization, such as a fraternity or sorority, or church or synagogue, to indoctrination campaigns that seek to socialize or re-socialize individuals with the aim of getting them to endorse entire ideologies and lifestyles. Religious cults stage indoctrination campaigns of this sort, but although far-out worship groups might be accused of brainwashing or thought control, mainstream organizations such as the military and the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service often get by using similar persuasive tactics under far more acceptable labels such as “re-education” and “perception management.” (Pratkanis& Aronson, 1991). Varying degrees of legitimacy are also conferred on reform-oriented social movements (as discussed in Chapter 4). Their efforts at institutional change might target personnel (e.g., hiring more black police officers and firing the police chief), practices (e.g., stricter enforcement of housing codes), policies (e.g., university policies of “publish or perish”), or institutional values and priorities (rewarding research by faculty over quality of teaching).

Audience and situation also should be taken into account in formulating subsidiary goals. For example, a fund-raising campaign on behalf of a college orchestra should not be so aggressive that it garners the orchestra an overseas trip at the price of reduced attendance at home events. Other secondary goals in situations primarily designed to elicit specific behaviors (e.g., lottery sales) might revolve around issues of personal identity. Will those who volunteer for this fund-raising effort feel good about themselves when it’s been completed? Will they have made friends rather than lost them, honored their consciences rather than betrayed them? Can people commit to the cause without feeling utterly consumed by it? (Dillard, 1988)

Situations are seldom ideal for the fulfillment of campaign goals. Thus, it is a good idea to formulate primary goals flexibly and at several levels: (a) what the campaign would ideally like to achieve, (b) what it expects to achieve, and (c) the bare minimum that would still make the campaign worthwhile. Often, the large-scale information campaign is of questionable value when measured against the time, effort, and money expended to conduct the campaign. For example, it has proved far more effective—and cheaper—to mandate installation of air bags in automobiles than to educate and convince consumers that air bags are an option they should purchase.

What management experts refer to as the R&D function of business organizations has its counterpart in persuasive campaigns. It involves the gathering of arguments and evidence to be used in building persuasive messages, as well as the development of know-how for implementation. The failure to take these necessary steps is common among amateur campaigners. One well-intentioned student attempted to launch a campaign to require bicycle safety education in the public schools. Intuitively, he decided that the best way to get action was to testify at a meeting of the city school board. Unfortunately, he had not yet come up with a plan for such a program, discovered how and where decisions of this type are made in the school system, sought to determine whether any groups might have been interested in aiding his campaign, or even developed a well evidenced case fort the existence of a problem.

Although campaign strategies must frequently be revised in light of new developments, it is nevertheless possible at the outset to formulate global strategies, such as the coactive rule that to get what you want; you should help those you’re trying to influence get what they want. Needed are evidence-based theories about what will turn audiences on. Advertisers for Eastman Kodak ran a camera-purchasing campaign aimed at families with expectant mothers; they did so on the basis of evidence that these families were least likely to own cameras and most likely to want them when the baby arrived. A Midas Muffler campaign zeroed in on the inadequacies of ordinary repair shops; it did so on the basis of evidence that these shops were their stiffest competition and were vulnerable to attack. The National Communication Association targeted alumni of graduate programs in communication for a major fund-raising effort. The campaign’s organizers strategized that these alums would want to give generously if invited to contribute in the name of a valued graduate school mentor.

Some campaigns persuade indirectly. Safe sex and prosocial sexual attitudes have been promoted indirectly in a late-night radio talk show beamed at teenagers that mixes nine parts entertainment with one part serious instruction. (Rothenberg, 1988). Use of a designated driver after parties has been promoted via planted dialogue in television sitcoms. Products are promoted in entertainment programming, as are corporate images—all this for a price. Some corporate public relations efforts proceed by way of low-visibility campaigns—a news report favorable to the company planted in one news outlet, an editorial planted in another.

Basic strategizing often involves selecting an appropriate frame. Affirmative Action, for example, sells poorly as “preference” but sells well under the rubric of “fairness.” Some health maintenance campaigns do well stressing the benefits associated with performing healthy behaviors; others do well stressing the costs associated with not doing so (Rothman &Salovey, 1997).

**Institutional Change Campaigns: Cases and Commentaries**

Case Study 5.1 Ending Clitoral Mutilations in Senegal, Africa

For as long as the villagers of Diabougou, Senegal, could remember, it had been custom for the young girls of the community to submit to the extremely painful and often dangerous process of female circumcision. Each year during the rainy season, the ritual circumciser of Diabougou would perform an unsterile and painful operation to remove the clitoris, and sometimes the inner and outer vaginal lips~~,~~ of 200 children. The process was not unique to Senegal; indeed, according to Vivienne Walt (1998), about 130 million African women in 28 countries are circumcised, and thousands die as a result. Thus, it is all the more remarkable that one educational campaign was able to turn public opinion around in much of Senegal. The appeal was led by Molly Melching, a former Peace Corps volunteer. By July 1997, 29 Senegalese communities had declared an end to female circumcision and begun pressing other villages to join them, this by way of predisposing rather than imposing: suggesting to all concerned that it was time to move to the beat of a different drummer.

Melching remained in Africa and has since founded Tostan, an NGO whose mission is to empower African communities in respect to human rights. Tostan gained international notice for its work with partner communities to encourage the abandonment of [female genital cutting](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Female_genital_cutting) and child/forced marriage in [Senegal](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Senegal), [Guinea](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Guinea) and [Burkina Faso](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Burkina_Faso). Under Tostan's Community Empowerment Program, a community may elect to participate in three-year, non-formal, education and community organizing training. As of October 2015, Tostan contributed to ending female genital cutting in over 1,000 Sengalese communities. They had decided, after participating in Tostan's Program, to abandon FGC through a public declaration. (See, [Communities in Senegal disavow female genital mutilation.www.unfpa.org/public/home/news/pid/9935](http://www.unfpa.org/public/home/news/pid/9935).)

Insert figure here

Case Study 5.2 Salina, Kansas Renewable Energy Campaign

‘How do you get Kansans to act in their own best interests?’ This was the question Frank asked in his book, *What’s the Matter with Kansas* (2004)? To answer the question an environmental quality group named MARC arranged for some focus group research to be done on Salina, Kansas citizens. Now, if you go to their website you will discover just how far Salina and the nearby prairie towns have progressed on renewable energy.

It turns out that leading environmentalist Al Gore was a pariah in Salina. In God-loving, competition-loving Salina Bill Clinton wasn’t much thought of either. But Salinans love their high school basketball competitions on Friday nights, and it was this motivational appeal - to pit town against town in energy renewal competitions that got their juices flowing. And now the prairie area is ahead of the pack on energy renewal. Farmers who were most skeptical about global warming were now noticing that their farms had been turning brown much earlier than in previous years. And energy renewal turned out to be highly profitable.

Case Study 5.3 Vegans’ Dilemma

Correctives to animal cruelty in the livestock industry have generally met staunch opposition. Early attempts by animal rights organizations to subvert the use of animals in testing the safety of new drugs or in crash tests of new vehicles ran counter to peoples’ concerns for their own safety.

The Humane Society of the United States, normally as tame as the pets its donors look after, took the first big step toward abolishing the worst of the meat-farming practices. Its new leader, Wayne Pacelle, hit upon a strategy, a referendum on meat farming in the bellwether state of California. “Prop 2”, as it was called, mandated improvements in the conditions in which farm animals were kept. Pacelle had the support of Vegan organizations. Ironically, however, meat eaters took comfort in the improved animal-raising conditions and thus felt less guilty about eating meat. This undermined the main goal of the vegan movement, of eliminating most animal consumption by humans. This was the Vegan’s dilemma.

Case Study 5.4 Pro-Choice versus Anti-Abortion

Abortion can be framed as murder or as a woman’s choice. But advocates of legalized abortion have found it increasingly difficult to frame their arguments for choice as threats to the mother’s life. The days of illegal and dangerous back-alley abortions have faded from public memory; abortion has been legal since 1973 (Hitt, 1998). Nation Magazine’s Katha Pollitt identified obstacles that abortion providers routinely confront.

“There are two reasons abortion rights activists have been boxed in. One is that we’ve been reactive rather than proactive. To deflect immediate attacks, we fall in with messaging that unconsciously encodes the vision of the other side. Abortion opponents say women in haste and confusion. Pro-choicers reply: Abortion is the most difficult decision a woman makes. Opponents say: Women have abortions because they have irresponsible sex. We need to say that women have sex, have abortions, are at peace with the decision and move on with their lives. We need to say that is their right, and, moreover, it is good for everyone that they have that right.” (Pollitt, NYT, Aug. 5, 2015)

In response to conservative Republicans’ criticisms of Planned Parenthood, some pro-choice advocates have sought to de-stigmatize abortion, urging pro-choice advocates to join in an on-line, social media campaign to “shout for abortion” sources? (NYTimes, Aug. 5, 2015)

Case 5.5 “Open Access” Campaign

Proponents of open access have been engaged in a longstanding struggle to mobilize support for their campaign, this by way of arguments that will make sense to lay audiences. Understood as free and unrestricted access to the scientific literature, “Open Access” is clear but not terribly sexy. It covers health care information, scientific reports, financial and commercial records, and the records of public officials, and public airways and *action frames.* Their opponents have had to put forward even more complex counterarguments about the quality and sustainability of access.

The social action frames highlight injustice, agency, and identity, ascribing causation and reasons for moral indignation to specific actors who are identified as responsible for the harm and suffering. Agency concerns what can be done to address the problems collectively and identity is the construction of “us” versus “them” based on communication systems,

Says Philip Davis (2009) the counter-frames lack the simplicity and narrative structure of the proponents’ case. He adds that we humans are hard-wired for narratives, especially those which can make sense of news events in terms we already know and can understand. For its advocates “free access” is a moral struggle: individuals acting together can take back what is rightly theirs.

Reform-minded groups often combine persuasion with coercion (e.g., threats) and material inducements (e.g., promises of benefits) in campaigning for social change. Campaigns for environmental protection, tobacco regulation, consumer protection, and auto safety requirements have combined agitation with litigation. Even when change advocates have lost in the courts, the publicity given their court challenges has succeeded in whipping up public fervor, especially when children were shown to be among the primary victims. The gun control lobby has had some success with a “divide and conquer” strategy, splitting off gun manufacturers from the more entrenched National Rifle Association by way of incentives to the manufacturers to okay mandatory safety locks on guns (Boyer, 1999).

Insert figure here

Some reformers believe that it may be possible to effect sweeping changes in social norms, for example, making it uncool for teenagers to use drugs, keep guns, practice unsafe sex, and smoke tobacco. A privately sponsored ad campaign targeted to African Americans showed a skeleton dressed as the Marlboro man lighting a cigarette for a black child. The ad read, “They used to make us pick it. Now they want us to smoke it.” The implications of this ad are (a) “Smoking Kills” and (b) “We blacks shouldn’t allow ourselves to be victimized once more by the white establishment” (Rosen, 1997, p. 176).

In devising basic strategies, as in formulating campaign goals, planners need to be alert to the possibilities of unintended, undesired effects (Pollay, 1989; Warwick &Kelman, 1973). A well-intentioned campaign to reduce infant mortality and disease may succeed only too well in an impoverished country, depleting the system’s meager resources and causing unemployment, poverty, and civil disorder (Salmon, 1989)

A health education program encouraging weight control may exacerbate problems of anorexia and bulimia (Pollay, 1989). Public service advertisements such as the one depicting black smokers as victims of the white establishment may, by their use of “us versus them” appeals, further polarize the races.

Social activists need also to balance what they perceive to be the good of the community against threats to the assumed beneficiary’s autonomy. What could be better, asks the social engineer, than to substantially reduce self-destructive teenage practices by way of normative pressure from peer groups to conform to prosocial norms or face rejection? Certainly, this is preferable to incarceration on the one hand or no influence on the other. Yet libertarians have long echoed John Stuart Mill’s (1859) conclusion that normative control represents “a social tyranny more formidable than many kinds of political oppression, since, though not usually upheld by such extreme penalties, it leaves fewer means of escape, penetrating more deeply into the details of life, and enslaving the soul itself” (p. 220).

The strategies identified in this section can be ordered on a continuum from most controlling to least controlling. Zaltman and Duncan (1977) identify *power* strategies as the most controlling. Examples include legal mandates and control over financial resources. These fall under what are labeled in this book as coercion and material inducements. Next comes *persuasion,* as in commercial advertising and campaign speeches. These strategies, so necessary in motivating individuals and in overcoming their resistance, are nevertheless considered manipulative by Zaltman and Duncan, and more repressive than their third category, which they call *normative-reeducative.* Campaigns described as “public information” fall solidly within this category, especially when the issue in question is how best to solve an acknowledged problem (e.g., drunk driving) and the presentation is relatively unbiased.

Yet as illustrated in Chapters 1 and 2, messages presented as informational or nonpartisan can deceptively and powerfully persuade in the guise of objectivity. For example, informational campaigns about how to get help for drug addictions seldom mention addictions to legal drugs such as Valium; thus, by their omissions, they implicitly legitimate some drug habits. Finally, Zaltman and Duncan list *facilitation,* a strategy by which foundations and government agencies seek to promote the arts or aid communities by providing them with additional resources, “no strings attached.” This strategy assumes that the beneficiary is capable of rationally committing those resources to useful ends.

Case 5.6 “Black Lives Matter” (BLM)

Chapter 2 took up the problem of racially motivated violence directed at blacks, as in the murders of black parishioners at Charleston, South Carolina’s Emanuel African Episcopal Methodist Church by a white racist. The violence, which Barack Obama addressed in his stirring eulogy to the slain victims led South Carolinians to remove confederate flags from state buildings, occasioned questioning of race-related problems in city after city, and prompted creation of a movement-sponsored campaign, known as BLM (“Black Lives Matter”) whose organizers urged Americans to connect the dots of race hatred, victimization of blacks, and inept policing. Candidates for their Party’s presidential nominations were held to account publicly for the violence, their responses varying from abject apologies (e.g., unsuccessful Democratic candidate Martin O’Malley) to “stuff happens” (Jeb Bush). Virginia’s State Police removed screaming BLM and Latino activists from a pro-Trump rally in Richmond (the designation, “Black-Latino”, testimony to how complicated race in America has become, with Obama both black and bi-racial (Taylor, Oct. 14, 2015; thegatewaypundit.com). BLM has enjoyed television time but not always has it come out ahead in the questioning of presidential candidates. Hillary Clinton joined with her BLM questioners in agreeing on the need for progress in addressing race matters but said that slogans are not enough’. Needed, she said, were concrete plans and sound policies.

The editorial board of the New York Times weighed in with a defense of BLM. “The Republican Policy and its acolytes in the news media are trying to demonize the protest movement that has sprung up in response to the all-too-common police killings of unarmed African-Americans around the country. The intent of the [GOP] campaign…is to cast the phrase “Black Lives Matter,” as an inflammatory or even hateful anti-white expression that has no place in a civil rights campaign…The “Black Lives Matter” movement focuses on the fact that black citizens have been far more likely than whites to die at the hands of the police, and it is of a piece with history. Demonstrators who chant the phrase are making the same declaration that voting rights and civil rights activists made a half-century ago. They are not asserting that black lives are more precious than white lives. They are underlining an inescapable fact—that the lives of black citizens in this country historically have not mattered, and have been discounted and devalued.” (Sep. 3, 2015)

*Commentary*

A BLM leader advised readers who hear the phrase to realize that it “isn’t a personal attack or accusation of being racist.” “People who are working in the BLM movement are making a statement about the value and worth of black people in the face of countless acts of racism. These responses … derail the conversation.” By way of analogy, says comedian Matt McGorry, “Black Lives Matter doesn’t mean other lives don’t. Like people who say Save the rainforests aren’t saying “F\*\*k all Other Types of Forests.” (https://www.upworthy.com/4-things-you-should-do-when-youre-told-black-lives-matter)

Thus instructed and having listened, really listened, I’m left with the conviction that “BLM” doesn’t really want an equal opportunity conversation but instead is playing a power game in which it reserves for itself the right to ask the questions and then, like a first-grade teacher, decide whether to give the lowly pupil’s answer a passing grade. “\*\*\*\* all other answers.” Conservative political analyst Shelby Steele (2006) is among those who’ve taught Obama, Oprah Winfrey and other politically influential black leaders that playing on white guilt has limited benefits.

To be sure, black people as a group have been victimized, but it is strategically unwise to engage in competitions over whose lives matter most and who has been most oppressed, for it divide the losers of these competitions from those who may, with good reason, also feel aggrieved. Better to concede what one can: for example, that black males in the U.S are, proportionately, both the leading victims of violent crimes and the leading perpetrators of violent crimes, including black-on-black violence. (Schmidt &Apuzzo, Oct.23, 2015) Needed is a more inclusive politics.

**Summary**

Persuasive campaigns are organized, sustained efforts at influencing others. Normally we think of them as recent occurrences, but economic systems, forms of government, ideological commitments, religious beliefs, and even our most basic reality posits (e.g., “Seeing is believing”) can be traced to persuasive campaigns (and movements) in centuries past. There is scarcely a cultural truism that was not at one time or other the subject of considerable controversy. What is considered true today is certain to be questioned in the future as new efforts at persuasion take the place of the old.

Campaigns take many forms. Some are multimillion-dollar efforts by *Fortune 500* companies. Others are grassroots undertakings that rely exclusively on volunteers. By use of advertising, a well-heeled product manufacturer or political candidate can control the content, placement, and timing of a message, in this way enhancing the likelihood of reaching the intended target with the intended message. Well-respected groups such as the United Way and Doctors Without Borders can also count on generous dollops of free publicity. Health education campaigns typically have the weight of public opinion behind them. But groups out of the mainstream are likely to be denied media attention or given negative attention by the news media and rarely have sufficient resources for paid advertising. Moreover, to successfully advance a program markedly at odds with prevailing norms is far more difficult than, say, encouraging allegiance to the flag, even when a “deviant” group has ample resources and equal media access. Campaigns for institutional change typically lack legitimacy.

To successfully advance a program markedly at odds with prevailing norms is far more difficult than, say, encouraging allegiance to the flag, even when a “deviant” group has ample resources and equal media access. Campaigns for institutional change typically lack legitimacy. Conversely, public schools have so much legitimacy that their efforts at indoctrinating young children aren’t usually thought of as persuasive campaigns at all. The socialization of young children has historically involved the passing on of a tradition, uncontested and unopposed. Campaigns not labeled as such typically enjoy uncontested control over communication channels of every sort—from the family to the mass media—and tend therefore to be powerful indeed. Convincing people to embrace a new doctrine, or ideology, or lifestyle (i.e., indoctrination) is different from selling a product or promoting a candidate or corporate image or repairing a sullied reputation. Consider, for example, the differences between product advertising campaigns and political campaigns. Both are generally well-organized, carefully planned activities, extending through long periods. In political advertising, you are not interested in small market shares. Political advertisers can’t be satisfied until they have 51% of the market. Conversely, public schools have so much legitimacy that their efforts at indoctrinating young children aren’t usually thought of as persuasive campaigns at all. The socialization of young children has historically involved the passing on of a tradition, uncontested and unopposed. Campaigns not labeled as such typically enjoy uncontested control over communication channels of every sort—from the family to the mass media—and tend therefore to be powerful indeed. Convincing people to embrace a new doctrine, or ideology, or lifestyle (i.e., indoctrination) is different from selling a product or promoting a candidate or corporate image or repairing a sullied reputation.

Convincing people to embrace a new doctrine, or ideology, or lifestyle (i.e. indoctrination) is different from selling a product or promoting a candidate or corporate image or repairing a sullied reputation. Product advertising campaigns and political campaigns are generally well-organized, carefully planned activities, extending through long periods of time.

**Question for Thought and Discussion**

1. What are the benefits and costs of coercion and persuasion?
2. What are the costs and benefits of aggressively campaigning?
3. Design a campaign around a theory of what works (and what doesn’t) in achieving the campaign’s objectives. Identify campaign stages and components.
4. Go to the following YouTube link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3LYeXG7i1sM>. Evaluate this campaign slogan and the clip that goes with it.

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**Chapter 6**

**Presidential Campaign Politics**

**In this Chapter:**

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* The “Good Government” model – Four stages of Presidential Campaigning
* *Pre-Primary Period (Surfacing)*
  + Pre-Primary Period (Surfacing)
  + Primary Period (Winnowing)
  + Convention Period (Legitimating)
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* Machiavellianism in Political Campaigns: A Guide to Getting Elected At All Cost
  + General Strategies
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* Questions for Thought and Discussion

**Introduction**

This chapter provides an introduction to political campaigning in the U.S. of the “good government” variety, as typically found in textbooks on the subject. Its focus is on the 2016 campaigns, and it offers as a special case Donald Trump’s quest for the Republican Presidential nomination and eventual victory in the presidential election. Nothing in recent memory compares with the attention his campaign and subsequent role as president have received.

Because the American campaign model has been emulated globally (Esser&Pfetsch, 2004) it takes on added significance. The model is then juxtaposed against the reality of an America divided, its polarized and **polarizing** news media driving Americans further apart, its ever more sophisticated spinmeisters awash in campaign funding, much of it coming from anonymous, unaccountable donors; all this occurring in a climate of incivility where the demagogic politics of fear and hate trumps the politics of compassion and the intimidating power of that politics leads otherwise courageous politicians into silence. Congressional paralysis is the risk some leaders and special interests have been willing to take to prevent passage of much needed legislation and the replacement of a deceased Supreme Court Justice. These, I shall argue, are signs of system dysfunction (as discussed in Chapter 3), but the GOP’s electoral process for selecting Donald Trump as its presidential nominee is yet another sign.

As counterpoint to the “good government” model of American campaign politics the chapter provides a tongue-in-cheek, Machiavellian guide to winning at all costs.

The “Good Government” model- Four Stages of Presidential Campaigning

*Pre-Primary Period (Surfacing)*

To become president, the candidate must first wrest a party nomination, then expand his or her base of support. The prospect of having to solicit enormous sums of money deters some potential candidates. Those who do run tend to be fabulously rich, like Donald Trump or well connected. To be taken seriously, they will need organization, endorsements and name recognition.

“Serious” contenders, those with a real chance at their party’s nomination, must first get party members, the news organizations, and a critical mass of citizens to think of them as contenders. Then they must be positioned for the journey ahead. Experienced organizers will be needed in every state to get the candidate’s name on the ballot and to build a campaign infrastructure. The news outlets must quote the candidates and label them as someone to watch before the general public sees them as such. Enough citizens must come to believe in them that they get a significant percentage of positive responses on polls asking the question, “If the presidential election were held today, for whom would you vote?”

Early money, and plenty of it, plays a crucial role in winning press attention, earning the respect of party regulars, getting relatively inexpensive ad buys, and garnering additional funding from organizations and individuals that literally invest in politicians, hoping to get access and influence. Charles Lewis and the Center for Public Integrity (1996)—The Buying of the President) reported that in every presidential election from 1976 to 1996, the candidate who had amassed the largest campaign bankroll at the end of the year preceding the election became his party’s nominee in that election. This held true in Campaign 2012 as well, and it raises important questions about the role of money in today’s political campaigns. If candidates are preselected by wealthy campaign contributors, is the electoral process truly democratic?

*Primary Period (Winnowing)*

To win their party’s nomination, candidates need a majority of the convention delegates behind them. These days, that convention vote is nearly always a formality, but in rare cases, conventions are brokered: selected by delegates no longer pledged to support the winner of their state’s presidential primary and strongly urged by their political party to vote for its recommended candidate (See Cohen, 2003). Because most delegates are elected in state presidential primaries and a number of primaries have been moved up, by April 1 of the election year nearly all convention delegates have been selected and pledged to one or another of the candidates. In the pivotal month of March, competitors for their party’s nomination must wage battles in several states simultaneously. Little wonder that some drop out at this point for want of money, press interest, energy, or significant public support.

The voting populations in primaries are different from those in general elections. Relatively few people exercise their options to vote in primaries, and they tend to be party loyalists. Sometimes, a candidate runs unopposed or enjoys an early lock on the party’s nomination. But challengers to incumbents are not so fortunate. Instead, they must court the ideological extremes of their party; in the process striking chords that might prove to be sources of embarrassment when and if they make it to the general election.

Competitors for their party’s nomination must also adapt to state and regional interests and expectations. New York City dwellers tend to go for a confrontational style of politics that is anathema in Minnesota. New Hampshire voters expect candidates to address them face-to-face and to campaign in New Hampshire early and often. California requires an altogether different style of politics, built around heavy television advertising in the state’s costly media markets. Local experience is increasingly necessary to know how to run these mini-campaigns simultaneously in the different states.

*Convention Period (Legitimating)*

The official role of political party conventions is to formalize the party’s presidential ticket and its platform—the positions it expects the candidates to run on. With presidential primaries stealing all the suspense as to whom the eventual nominee will be, the major television networks no longer provide gavel-to-gavel coverage, as in the good old days, when party conventions provided much more drama and excitement.

Still, the conventions have important functions to perform. Millions of voters watch who might not otherwise have paid much attention to the candidates. They do so, moreover, under conditions close to ideal for displaying adulation by the faithful, celebrity endorsements, a closing of ranks among party factions, and most important, the presidential candidate presenting a nomination acceptance speech that has been carefully crafted and market tested for maximum impact on the undecided voter. The convention experience is designed to energize the party faithful and prepare them for the upcoming struggle, but the audience that matters most is outside the arena.

The centerpiece of the convention is the nomination ritual. It typically begins with a film about the candidate, reviewing his or her life and accomplishments. This personalizes the candidate, at the same time demonstrating the candidate’s extraordinary leadership qualities. During this film, the candidate becomes someone larger-than-life, so that when the acceptance speech is given, it seems as if the delegates are applauding not just the person who won the primaries but a full-fledged political visionary. The speech then is broken by applause to create as much of a sense of political interaction-candidate statement-positive public endorsement- as is possible. Plenty of one-liners are offered so that the speech can later be chopped up into 10, 20 and 30 second ads for broadcast in the fall. Then, the unity demonstrations follow, as friend and foe alike gather to congratulate the candidate before the candidate goes off to do head-to-head battle with the opponent from the other party.

*General Election Period (Contesting)*

The general election campaign used to begin on Labor Day of the election year, but today serious campaigning is already well under way by August or before. Voters decide on a candidate for a number of reasons. Party identification (i.e., voting the party rather than the candidate) used to be highly determinative of election outcomes and remains important but is less a factor today. The principle of social proof is operative with other Americans; they tend to vote for candidates who are ahead in the polls, which the news media may play a role in deciding. Jamieson’s (1992) study of network coverage revealed a disturbing pattern: The candidate ahead in the polls tended to be taken at face value in reports on day-to-day campaigning; the candidate(s) behind in the polls was more likely to be second-guessed as having said or done something for effect, not from sincere belief. The mainstream news media strive to remain evenhanded and, in recent years, have engaged in greater public self-scrutiny but the issues and events they choose to cover and the way they cover them remain influential (Cappella & Jamieson, 1997)

What, then, is the influence exerted by the candidates themselves? Do they have “minimal effects,” as some have argued? Is their influence minimal but sufficient to turn the tide or to mobilize the active support of those already inclined in their direction? Are they highly influential, able to win converts from among substantial percentages of the electorate? This controversy continues to engage researchers on political campaigns (Edwards, 2003; Klein, 2012; Cappella & Jamieson, 1997; Perloff, 2003)

There seems little question that campaigning can be decisive in close races and can contribute to the large margin of victory in landslide elections. But for all the money and expertise brought to bear on campaigns, voters remain unpredictable. Campaigns are better able to shape and reinforce responses than to change them outright, but this seems to be true of persuasion generally.

Three types of campaign-related factors weigh on voter decisions: candidates’ positions on issues, their perceived “habits of mind” (Jamieson, 1992), and personal attractiveness. (Kenski, Hardy and Jamieson, 2010)

1. Positions on Issues*:* Candidates provide reasons why voters should elect them and not their opponents. On hot-button issues such as gun control, capital punishment, abortion, and social security, these reasons alone may be sufficient to secure commitments from some voting blocs—for example religious conservatives, blue-collar workers, and senior citizens. In any given election year, some issues are on virtually everyone’s radar screen.
2. Habits of Mind: Voters form general perceptions of candidates’ trustworthiness and competence as well of more specific habits of mind, such as whether this candidate is genuinely a good listener, that one able to make tough decisions, this one disorganized, that one poorly informed. These perceptions are less the result of what candidates say about themselves than of what they exhibit under fire, as in debates and press conferences. Of course, advertising plays a role as well—the candidate’s and that of the opponent. Opposition research provides the basis for many an attack or comparison ad that contrasts one candidate’s shining qualities to the other’s objectionable ones.

Habits of mind are important—as important as candidate’s positions on issues. The winning candidate may not live up to campaign promises once in office, but it is unlikely that the habits of mind will change.

1. Attractiveness: Candidates who appear likeable and who seem physically attractive have a decided edge over their less attractive counterparts. Taller candidates tend also to be favored over their shorter rivals. (Cialdini, 2009). Are these factors the most relevant to a president’s capacity to govern? Probably not, but they weigh heavily on many voters’ decisions. Recent research suggests that “fleeting and uninformed impressions of *competence,”* as manifested, for example, in certain facial expressions, correlated strongly with election results. (Mlodinow, 2012; see also https://www.nytimes.com/2012/04/22/opinion/sunday/a-facial-theory-of-politics.html)

Candidates work hard during the contesting phase to generate favorable media coverage. Issue speeches are given at strategically selected spots- perhaps a labor and jobs speech in Detroit, a farm program speech in Des Moines, a Social Security speech in Miami or Phoenix, and an urban recovery program speech in Los Angeles or New York. The background serves as much of an incentive to believe the candidate as do the words. Additionally, the carefully selected site will give the news media a “good shoot,” which means the speech will more likely get TV and internet coverage. Press conferences are regularly called, whether or not, the candidates are present; releases can be offered even if they’re not around. In all this, each candidate’s staff is trying to get them positive “free” (unpaid) coverage that’s in sync with their paid coverage.

Joint appearances in televised debates are among the most dramatic events of the general election. Having the candidates go head-to-head can pull in more than 100 million viewers to their TV sets, making such debates mega-events by American broadcasting standards. Candidates work doubly hard on these occasions to avoid mistakes and to look “presidential,” with facts at their fingertips and compelling visions.

Candidates for their Party’s presidential nomination who win the requisite number of delegate votes are normally rubber-stamped as its nominee, but they may have to pass through a vetting process by the Party’s leadership in what is sometimes called the “invisible” primary. Much as the Party may prefer a different candidate, it risks censure if it blocks a legitimately selected nomination. But it risks ridicule if it allows a dangerously unqualified nominee to pass through. (Douthat, March 13, 2016) The presidential nominee must work to achieve legitimacy in his or her Party through the obligatory closing of ranks and healing of wounds. To become President the nominee must win the requisite number of votes in the Electoral College. Achieving the presidency does wonders for a Party.

**Machiavellianism in Political Campaigns: A Guide to Getting Elected At All Cos**t

If two opposing candidates each follow the Machiavellian rules for getting elected to high office, why is it that one wins and the other loses? Political analysts have identified a number of determinants of electoral success or failure besides campaign acumen. Sometimes, a first-term president is lucky enough to have inherited a strong economy from the previous president and to ride its waves for four more years. Sometimes, party identification is so strong that it compensates for a candidate’s weak campaign.

Still, campaign strategizing *can* make an enormous difference (Jamieson, 2000) or the best laid plans can be counterproductive. Some voters are easily led, others resistant to well-reasoned argument. Like the politicians who lead us we incline toward what Ezra Klein (June 25, 2012) calls *motivated reasoning*, designed to conform to a valued group, or win an argument, or advance a cause- often this at the expense of accuracy. (See also Billig, 1996; Westen, 2008)

The term *Machiavellianism* derives from Nicola Machiavelli (1469-1527), author of *The Prince,* a renowned guide to political strategy and power, first published in 1513. (Machiavelli, 1513/1977). Today, the term refers to strategies that appear to be serving target audiences but are designed to maximize the gains of the person using them. They are the tools of persons who believe that winning is all. They are embedded in the advertisement slogans of campaign media experts and consultants: “You can’t govern if you don’t win,” “When you win, nothing hurts. But you don’t have to suffer to win,” and “Do you want to win this election? If you answered YES, the next few sentences can make the difference between an election night acceptance speech and one of concession” (ads in *Campaigns & Elections,* April 1996 issue)

As you read these rules, be aware that the strategies identified here are not necessarily those that political communication scholars (e.g., Jamieson, 2000; Perloff, 2003) personally endorse. The rules typically serve candidates, but the degree to which they serve society is another matter. Think about the ethics of persuasion as you read through the following suggestions for making it in American politics.

*General Strategies*

1. Whenever you face a political decision, at election time or not, ask yourself, “Will this help or harm my reelection campaign?”
2. Reflect voters’ opinions back to them in what you say and propose. Use focus groups to try out themes and one-liners.
3. Romance the voters. Celebrate what they already believe, and never try to change them too much. Eat tacos with Mexican Americans, spaghetti with Italian Americans, and a little goulash in the Hungarian part of town.
4. Appear as a super-representative of the people you are seeking to influence. Seem as much like your constituents as you can, but give the impression of greater competence, empathy, and trustworthiness.
5. Subordinate issues to imagistic considerations. Use talk about issues to position yourself strategically in relationship to your opponents. Consider where you stand relative to how that stand will contribute to the public’s perception of your competence, your character, your good intentions, and your personal attractiveness. Remember that the ultimate campaign issue is who should be elected?

*Fundraising*

1. Raise as much money as you can, however you can, as early as you can. Use money to raise money, for example, by buying mailing lists.
2. Let it be known that you will listen to funding sources for a stiff price, but only on certain matters and in discreet ways. First, work from sources consistent with your values and issue positions. Avoid obviously tainted money. Try to avoid reliance on large donations given late in the campaign because they almost always come with strings attached.
3. Get around the limitations on contributions by organizing political action committees, accepting nonmonetary gifts and low-interest loans, and by arranging for so-called soft money contributions to your party. These unlimited contributions can legally be used in only limited ways, for example, in voter registration drives. Increasingly, however, campaign managers have been discovering loopholes in the law permitting “creative diversions” to a candidate’s campaign, such as issue advertising (also see Case 6.4)
4. Deplore the reliance of contemporary election campaigns on fat-cat contributions even as you seek them out.

*Physical Appearance*

1. Look the part by appearing physically attractive, healthy, and athletic-looking. Males: cut the beards, trim the eyebrows, and go for some hair replacement when needed.
2. Dress the part. Men should spend most of their days in conservative suits and sportswear, long-sleeved shirts, and dark shoes. Women somehow have to avoid looking either soft and demure or tough and aggressive. But they can take comfort in knowing that many women before them have moved beyond this “double bind” (Jamieson, 1995).
3. Work on your photographic poses. Look serious but friendly; tilt your head for dynamic angles; avoid looking straight into the camera. Wear a winning smile, and be photographed in gracious conversation with both beloved old politicians and eager voters from various demographic groups).

*Choosing Arguments and Appeals*

1. Pick a memorable slogan
2. Stand for patriotism, family values, destruction of the drug cartel, and other noncontroversial positions. Don’t forget to attack government waste.
3. Always appear upbeat about the future. Even the gloomiest statistics can be pitched as “the darkness before the dawn.”
4. Be ready to “go negative.” Do polling and opposition research to learn your opponent’s weaknesses? Particularly if you get behind in the opinion polls, take your best shots. Keep using negative ads until you’ve drawn even or until you seem to be losing ground again. Unless you’re woefully behind, you should withdraw them before the last 2 weeks of the campaign so that you can finish on the “high ground.” Then you can also attack your opponent’s attack advertising.
5. Take courageous stands on controversial issues as long as the majority or plurality of the voters take the same stand or can be convinced to take the same stand. You may have to be careful about gun control, given the money that the National Rifle Association has distributed to campaigns, and waffling on the abortion issue is wise if you’re pro-choice, given that the antiabortion supporters seem more likely to vote on the sole basis of this issue than their pro-choice counterparts. But otherwise, take to heart the political adage, “Follow me; I’m right behind you.”

*Video and Internet Politic*

1. Adapt your campaign to voters who say that they get their political news exclusively from television or the internet, both offering opportunities to cultivate a visually compelling persona and an accompanying narrative of your life--your core values, your aspirations, and the obstacles you’ve had to overcome. You’d better have experienced media consultants on your team.
2. Plan on new ways of getting media exposure nearly every day. Television and radio news cater to the here and now, the ever present today, so you’ll need something new or different—an issue position, an attack, an announcement about your campaign; available daily, preferably in the morning so that it can be in the noon, 6:00 p.m., and late evening news slots. You can also use Twitter and Face book to bypass the traditional media, creating in effect your own direct connection to preselected groups of voters.[[6]](#endnote-6)
3. Work on strategies for controlling the news about you. Provide short sound bites, cuing your supporters to cheer loudly, so that the broadcast piece will show off both you and your adoring masses.
4. Control your television and internet exposure as much as possible. The one-on-one interview program, with ground rules, is preferable to an open press conference, unless you’re trying to appear as someone who doesn’t have to give programmed answers.
5. Lay out your day to maximize media exposure. The morning and afternoons are times for airport hopping, the fly-around, getting out of the plane only long enough for a photo op and a brief statement. Reserve the evenings for longer interviews, mealtime conversations with constituents (with press access), and preparation for the next day’s hops and for the new “ad libs” you’ll be rehearsing.
6. Practice, practice, practice. All but memorize answers to questions about the news of the day, your main issues, your opponent’s policies and pronouncements, and the state of politics in America.
7. Embed *packages of propositional claims in illustrative narratives* which include facts, motivational appeals and well phrased judgments about them. Together these packages should *name any given claim, explain it, support it and conclude it (NESC)*.

*Advertising*

1. Americans now get more political information from candidate-controlled sources than from media-controlled sources. Needed are striking ads so interesting as to be considered news. Many print, radio, and television outlets do weekly analyses of ads, commentaries, “truth boxes,” and the like; so, make sure your ads are pre-released for free broadcast.
2. Pictures can be worth a thousand words. Visual depictions can work to set ideas or propositions in people’s minds. Want to attack your opponent’s ethnic background? Don’t say it—show it. Find pictures that make your opponent look silly and yourself looking grand. (Messaris, 1997; Stengel, 1998)
3. Always be technically accurate even if your implications are misleading. Condemn your opponent for missing the House’s final vote on the Railroad Retirement Act renewal. Never mind that the bill was unopposed in its second reading, so of course it would pass unanimously on its third and final reading, with or without any particular Congress member’s vote.
4. Timing is everything. Begin with image (voter identification) ads. Move into some easy issue ads; go negative if you’re behind, or stay on the high road as long as you’re not losing ground. Better still, do comparative advertising: contrasting your upright stand on an issue with your opponent’s bad judgment (Jamieson, 1992) Be prepared to respond quickly once you’re attacked. Finish with high-ground ads and patriotic music.
5. If you know you’re going to be hit on an issue, do *inoculation ads.* These are ads that attempt to undermine anticipated attacks before they happen, perhaps by way of forewarnings of the opponent’s scurrilous plans. Knowing he would be attacked for his lack of military experience, Bill Clinton did strong pro-defense ads and delivered a speech to the national convention of the American Legion. George Bush (the elder) put out ads on his social reform measures before he was attacked for his veto of a major day care bill.

*Endorsements*

1. Know that low-involvement voters will judge you on such peripheral factors as the company you keep. Be pictured with veteran leaders, media personalities, and musical icons.
2. Construct endorsement teams. Get some economists to say your tax reform proposals are solid, some retired generals to comment on your ideas on first-strike needs; and some environmentalist groups to endorse your “Save the Chickadee” campaign.
3. Travel across the demographic map. Be photographed with teenagers, health club members, social activists, African Americans, Latinos, Asian Americans, new immigrants and retired persons.

*Speech Making*

1. Polish a set speech. You need at least one such speech with your principal vision for America and your slogans in its outline, yet one flexible enough that you can substitute in various points depending on where you’re speaking.
2. Practice your oratorical skills for the stump and conversational skills for radio and television. Old-fashioned political oratory—us-them contrasts, appeals to patriotism, three-part lists (“life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness”), and quotations from Abraham Lincoln—plays well at rallies. Intimate talk, with emotion-laden stories. Plays well on television. Partisanship is better in the open air than under the lights (Atkinson, 1984).
3. Make the audience part of your message. A good speech gets enthusiastic response, and that enthusiastic response is important to reporters and to audiences witnessing it.

*Campaign Debates*

1. Never refuse outright an invitation to debate. If you’re the incumbent or far ahead in the polls, however, you may want to stall and avoid, complaining about timing, the format, your opponent’s unwillingness to negotiate, the lack of neutral sponsors, and disagreements about the number and location of debates.
2. Treat debates like a press conference. Concentrate on points that you want to make, rather than on any serious give-and-take on issues.
3. Hold to your strengths; cover up your weaknesses. If you run into a difficult question on foreign policy, don’t tackle it with inaccurate information. Retreat to your statement of general principles, perhaps with “Now I’m not going to turn this into a foreign policy seminar. Let me instead set out the principles that I believe should govern all our relations with foreign countries.”
4. As a rule, treat questioners warmly, but not if you can convince viewers that their questions were unfair, over the top, beneath your dignity, and hence deserving of criticism. Even then, take the high road. Provide your questioners opportunities for conversational repair.
5. Choreograph the end of the debate. Memorize your final statement. Make sure that you’re gracious to your opponent. Have your family rush the stage to hug you. Have your spin doctors—members of your staff or supporters who are good at positively interpreting what you said and negatively interpreting your opponent’s remarks—ready to go backstage.

Frank Luntz (Luntz, 2007), a Republican campaign consultant, is reported as saying that black-and-white photos are used to resemble police mug shots. Small, fuzzy photos of the opponent are selected to force the television viewer’s attention.

**Insert figure here**



**Repeated photo belo**w

*Text Box 6.1*

By August 2015 10 Republicans had declared as would-be nominees for president, the number fluctuating with each passing day. Only Donald Trump was a constant, he a provocateur, able to survive attacks by both his competitors for the Republican nomination and well-regarded news media personalities. The prospects of the other GOP contenders rose or fell with their performances on stage, making 2015 a good year for political theater. On the Democratic side, Hillary Clinton remained a formidable contender, despite decreased favorability ratings. Vermont Senator Bernie Sanders nipped at her heels, presenting himself as far more liberal than Hillary, and by some lights “too liberal.” Sanders’ refusal to disown the label “socialist” endeared him to those who regard economic inequality as the primary problem in the still affluent United States.

**Case 6.1 “Donald Trump for President”? (Part 1)**

“The Republican Party is broken,” declared influential news columnist Ezra Klein. (Feb. 24, 2016). It had a chance to stop Donald Trump but didn’t act quickly enough. Now it may be too late. Or, rather the GOP did try; it just failed, Klein corrected himself. The assault on Trump just failed, i.e. The Party didn’t really decide on a single champion. Klein’s reference is to Trump barreling past his competitors in primary contests for the Party’s presidential nomination. Says Florida Senator Marco Rubio, “The only way to beat Trump is to fight like him:

rough, dirty, and mean”. A recent rage survey of Americans bears him out: Americans are angry. Says a NY Times headline (Peters & Parker, Feb. 28, 2016: “A surreal presidential campaign lurches into the gutter with taunts over perspiration, urination, and self-tanner.” You heard the word “scary” used a lot this week, that and much more.

Not from the usual scolds. Or Democrats. The loudest alarms came from desperate, panicked Republicans, warning of the man who is destroying the Party of Lincoln before our eyes. “The man is evil,” says Stuart Stevens, who was a chief strategist for GOP Republican candidate Mitt Romney in 2012.

**[E. Drew here]**

But as much as these “too little, too late” wake-up calls are appreciated, says opinion columnist Timothy Egan (October 16, 2015, NYT), “it’s time to place the blame for the elevation of a tyrant as the presumptive Republican presidential nominee where it belongs — with the people. Yes, you.” (Is Egan being provocatively offensive?) Donald Trump’s supporters know exactly what he stands for: hatred of immigrants, racial superiority, a sneering disregard of the basic civility that binds a society. Educated and poorly educated alike, men and women — they know what they’re getting from him. Hillary Clinton later risked these voters’ ire by calling them “the deplorables,” then walked back her depiction, saying it was “too generalistic,” (Egan, October 16,2015, NYTimes)

Egan again: “Trump’s voters were not surprised at his hesitancy to disavow the hearty approval of a former grand wizard of the Ku Klux Klan. They certainly weren’t shocked when neo-Nazis hailed Trump a savior months ago, so a little added backing from hooded haters was not going to throw them.

The Trump candidacy raises all manner of questions: about American values, the norms of the news media, the electoral process. The New York “Daily News” weighed in with a front-page blast at Trump’s lukewarm opposition to gun violence (1/27/2016).A sixty second attack ad faulted Trump as an “Habitual liar,” running a “massive scam, and “operating a phony university. Mr. Trump belongs in 3 AM infomercials, the ad concludes, showing a photo of the White House opposite unflattering photos of Trump front page, NY Times Editorial cited an open letter from 95 Republican national security experts, united in their opposition to a Donald Trump presidency which complained that “He swings from isolationism to military adventurism within the space of one sentence. Some were Bush administration officials “who supported some of the worst foreign policy disasters” in U.S. history. Also listed in the Times indictment of Trump: the “bullying,” the “greed, the “misogyny,” the “absurd, third-grade theatrics.”

The Times/ Nicholas Kristof also cited European sources which claimed that a Trump presidency would make us less safe. Asked about Syria Trump said that he would unleash ISIS to destroy the Syrian government.” (See Chapter 12 ISIS.). [That ISIS, a declared enemy, could be enlisted to serve America interests is taken to be self-evidently ridiculous.] “As a blowhard who gains headlines around the world, he reinforces caricatures of the United States and tarnishes our global reputation.” But Left unstated by the NY Times is that the U.S. military on occasion entered into collaborations with past enemies to serve its interests in Afghanistan and Iraq. Ironically, much of what Trump presents as his own thinking on needed U.S. foreign policy mirrors that of the U.S. foreign policy establishment which signed on to a statement calling Trump “dangerous.” (Egan, October 16, 2015, NYTimes). The Trump Foundation was forced to close down, with questions raised about his payment of taxes.

In 2016 the evidence pointed incontrovertibly to Russian interference in the U.S. presidential election. Paul Manafort, Trump’s former campaign manager, was convicted of sharing secrets with Russian spies.

By 2017 and again in 2018, Trump and his team became the object of 43 inquiries, not just by the Mueller investigators but also prosecutors from New York’s Southern District . Another of his aides, Cohen, was found to have provided the payments for sex with two strippers. The White House itself was in disarray, with leaders of State and Defense removed without replacements and a long-time press secretary now revealing the disarray.

In campaign rallies held as race issues occupied center stage (in Charlotte,

Charlottesville, Parkland Florida (elsewhere), Trump tilted right.defending, for example, State rights for keeping confederate icons. all the while claiming in campaign speeches that he was not a racist. In Phoenix Arizona and again in Ohio, he voiced politically correct platitudes while railing against major news media for witchhunts, fake news, staffing of journalistic posts by Democrats. In Ohio, Trump likened himself to Lincoln.

In 2008 with an ascendant Democratic wave, Trump returned to an old standby. the rapists and terrorists who, as would-be immigrants, threatened our safety and way of life, therefore justifying for Frank the building of more walls to keep them out. (For this there was no evidence.)

All this might have frightened Republicans, prompting them to demand that he soften his pitch for a wall in a compromise with leading Democrats on re-opening the government. Arguably, Trump was now a liability, tarring the GOP with his brush.

Trump’s base remained loyal (at least temporarily. But for defections (e.g., by George Will, WSJ, Weekly Standard, the GOP had nowhere else to turn. V-P, Pence had found a way to continue making Trump palatable, if not attractive to his Evangelicals. Others in the GOP continued to believe that Trump had made “America great again.

The fates of the GOP, Trump, and the Democrats is taken up in this book’s Appendix

This having been said, the fact remains that Trump won a plurality of electoral votes in 2016;. A TV showman, he can truly be said to have done things his way. On his first major foreign policy test as President, his condemnation and subsequent handling of a chemical weapons attack, blamed by the U.S. on the Syrian government of Bashar Assad, (Willis, April 6,2016) Cox Media group) Trump drew high praise for what political pundits concluded was a heartfelt, judicious response to a crisis.

The case studies that follow illustrate the art and science and not uncommon failures of political campaigning. As with so much else that has been discussed in this chapter, they also raise questions of ethics.

**Case 6.2 Demagoguery and the “Furlough” Ad [use screen screen grab ]**

Background

Demagoguery involves appealing fallaciously to a demo or public. Trish Roberts-Miller has identified 21 common characteristics of demagoguery, some of greater electoral consequence but all of them applicable. Here is a sampling of them:

1. Anti-Intellectualism
2. Polarization
3. Ingroup/Outgroup Thinking, A Rhetoric of Hate
4. Slipperiness on crucial terms; God and Devil terms
5. Demonizing, dehumanizing, and/or scapegoating the out-group, especially on racial, ethnic, or religious bases
6. Simple solutions
7. Entitlement, double-standard, rejection of the notion of reciprocally binding rules or principles
8. Martyrdom of Rhetoric, personalizing of criticisms,
9. An ethos of sincerity
10. Tendency toward conspiracy theories

Roberts-Miller describes anti-intellectualism: “Because demagoguery is based in over-simplifying the situation, polarizing the community, and promoting hatred of out-groups, people who advocate careful consideration of the evidence and who can notice and draw attention to the demagogue's fallacies are actively dangerous for the demagogue's project.” (Roberts-Miller, 2008)

In 1988, Republican presidential candidate George Bush trailed his opponent, Democratic Michael Dukakis, by 17 points after that summer’s party conventions. Not a charismatic leader, Dukakis came out of Massachusetts with a reputation as a competent, compassionate governor. Vice President Bush had been tarnished by the Iran-Contra scandal in President Ronald Reagan’s second term of office, and Bush seemed wooden in comparison with Reagan. Still, Bush had inherited a brain trust of some of Reagan’s slickest political operatives, and in late summer they put their expertise to work in the form of negative ads, picturing Dukakis as soft on defense and hypocritical about environmental protection. But their biggest attack weapon was revealing that Dukakis had been governor when Willie Horton, a black convicted murderer, had been released from prison under the terms of a state furlough program. After his release, Horton had kidnapped a white couple, stabbing the man and raping the woman. Worse yet, Dukakis had failed to apologize to the couple for the tragic events that had occurred under his watch.

**[get Horton photo in B&W]**

The Willie Horton case presented the Bush campaign with opportunities but also a dilemma. Linking Dukakis with Horton could play well to supporters of capital punishment (Dukakis was opposed to it) and especially to whites who associated violent crime with young blacks such as Willie Horton. But a direct attack on Dukakis for furloughing Willie Horton might seem too blatantly racist. Besides, the Massachusetts furlough law had been signed by Dukakis’s predecessor, a Republican.

Fortunately for the Bush camp, an ad directly linking Dukakis and Horton had been prepared by an officially independent political action committee. It remained for Bush’s operatives to tar Dukakis with a broader brush, linking him with furloughs for convicted murderers and, even more generally, with being soft on crime.

Decision: The Furlough Ad

The furlough ad (Picture 6.4) is considered by many to be a masterpiece of attack advertising. The ad works through the visual and auditory associations that viewers make: stark and shadowy, black-and-white depictions of the prison and revolving gate, and the menacing sounds and sights of prisoners being permitted to leave those gates to potentially kidnap, mutilate, and rape. In addition, the ad offers startling statistics. As the narrator intones, “The Dukakis furlough program gave weekend furloughs to first-degree murderers,” subtitles announce that “268 escaped” and “many are still at large.”

**Insert figure here**

By all accounts, the furlough ad worked well for Bush in 1988: It was a major contributor to his subsequent 30-point turnaround in the polls. Yet questions persist about the ethics of the advertisement. Because the narration and the subtitles appeared together, viewers may have inferred that the 268 who “escaped” were all murderers. In reality, only four were murderers, and all were eventually caught and returned. Moreover, Dukakis himself did not decide who got furloughs, and prisoners who overstayed their furloughs by only 4 hours were counted as “escapees.” A discerning viewer, operating by way of Petty and Cacioppo’s (1981/1996) central route to persuasion, might have asked, “How unusual is the Massachusetts furlough program? Do other states have similar programs? What is the success rate of such programs? How many prisoners were furloughed in Massachusetts without serious incident?” But most viewers did not have the motivation or the wherewithal to view the ad critically. Moreover, the Dukakis camp was extremely slow in responding to the ad, and the news media focused on strategy rather than content in their reporting of the 1988 contest—on the furlough ad’s impact, rather than on its accuracy (Jamieson, 1992).

Before he died of cancer in 1991 Lee Atwater, the principal architect of the Furlough ad, expressed regret, saying that it had been unfair to Dukakis and racist in tone. ([http://www.nytimes.com/1991/01/13/us/gravely-ill-atwater-offers-apology.html – Mar 3,2012](http://www.nytimes.com/1991/01/13/us/gravely-ill-atwater-offers-apology.html%20–%20Mar%203,2012))

**Case 6.3 McCain vs. Obama: Two well evidenced gaffes that mattered in 2008**

Electoral campaigns more often strengthen (and perhaps activate) existing beliefs than win over undecided voters or convert disbelievers. But in nearly every presidential contest there are viral moments when the news cycle is interrupted and You Tube lights up. As often as not, candidates’ gaffes get that kind of media attention rather than an opponent’s stellar presentation.

In the period from September 10th to October 14th the freefall of the American economy dominated the news. The Obama narrative held that the Bush administration was responsible for allowing the situation to deteriorate and it was widely believed. So, anxiety-producing was the daily bad news about the economy that most Americans stopped attending to the daily campaign discourse. (Kenski, Hardy and Jamieson, 2010)

On Sept 15, a day when the Dow plummeted by over 500 points, McCain was asked to comment on the economy at a press conference. The long version of his response is complicated. It contains various hedges, qualifiers and campaign promises. But the most memorable part of his response on this of all days was that “the fundamentals of our economy are strong.” The Democrats seized upon McCain’s distilled remark and their ridicule of it played well to voters who in poll after poll voiced the conviction that the economy was both the nation’s overriding problem and that the country was on the wrong track. (Kenski, Hardy and Jamieson, 2010, p. 177). By this point in the campaign McCain was virtually helpless to override the narrative of an economy gone sour and of McCain as loyal supporter of the economy’s undoer in the person of President George W. Bush. Said McCain pollster, Bill Mcinturf, “We stopped having a campaign. The daily press wasn’t reporting. It was instead, “today America’s economy is falling apart. Here’s how awful everything is, Here’s the candidate’s reaction to it (Kenski et al, p. 179).

**Obama Meets Joe the Plumber Insert figure**

Senator Obama’s comeuppance came in a miscommunication with an Ohio blue collar worker cast by Senator McCain as “Joe the Plumber” who wasn’t a licensed plumber, whose first name was really Sam, and whose self-declared interest in buying a business worth $250,000 was well beyond his economic reach . No matter! In the fictive world of American style campaigning “Joe the Plumber” became a stand-in” for all the hard-working voters who risked having their taxes raised substantially under a plan designed to tax the highest five percent, those with annual incomes above $250,000.

Never mind the fact that most voters would have gained, not lost under the Obama plan. With the help of cable news and even the mainstream press, Obama was placed on the defensive. Said McCain in their third and final debate:

And I will not have—I will not stand for a tax increase on small business income. Fifty percent of small business incomes are paid by small businesses. That’s sixteen million jobs in America. And what you want to do to Joe the plumber and millions more like him is to have their taxes increased and not be able to realize the American dream of owning their own business.

Barack Obama’s gaffe consisted in taking Sam the unlicensed plumber at his word, lecturing him in traditional liberal fashion on the virtues of progressive taxation and in the process evoking stereotypes of liberals as closet socialists bent on using middle class tax hikes to provide welfare to the poor. Joe the Plumber led the charge but the McCain campaign was not far behind.

**Case 6.4Obama vs. Romney, 2012**

Philadelphia Inquirer columnist Dick Polman (2012) described as a perversely brilliant strategy the Republicans’ “One-Two Punch: Sabotaging President Obama’s job-creation efforts, then blaming him for the wreckage.”

The Republicans” Congressional made no secret of its determination to unseat Obama and judging by poll results in 2010, they had made considerable progress. They cashed in on their close association with the Tea Party movement, aligned themselves with dominant news media, and benefited enormously from the financial largesse of the Koch Brothers’ Americans for Prosperity.” (Mayer, Aug. 30, 2010) and other such Super-Pacs. Obama’s “Yes We Can” had been replaced by the GOP’s “No You Can’t.” Moreover, the GOP’s base had been far more committed in 2010 than that of the Democrats and their leadership more unified, more confident, less risk-averse. A Times/CBS poll found in October 2010 that Republicans had overcome the advantage held by Democrats in recent elections among women, Roman Catholics, less affluent Americans and independents. (Rutenberg and Thee-Brenan, Oct. 27, 2010). The poll was predictive of November 2010 voting results. Particularly vexing to Democratic strategists was the shift into Republican ranks of non-college working class whites, once a reliable Democratic constituency. (Edsall, Nov. 27, 2011). Their vote had been a reliable barometer of voting outcomes.

What explains the Democrats return in 2012 from the gains made by the Republicans in 2010? The motivated reasoning hypothesis suggests that it couldn’t have been done. Once having switched allegiances to the Republican Party, former Democrats should have voted in keeping with their new political identities or not voted at all. What then turned the tide? Here in brief are seven partial explanations:

1. A competent and seasoned President: Barack Obama was by 2012 a highly competent president and a seasoned competitor. Mitt Romney was neither. Said NYT columnist Maureen Dowd,

“Although Stuart Stevens, the Romney strategist, now claims that Mitt “captured the imagination of millions” and ran “with a natural grace,” there was very little chance that the awkward Romney was ever going to be president. Yet Republicans were shaken by their loss, grasping at straws like [Hurricane] Sandy as an excuse.

Who would ever have thought blacks would get out and support the first black president? Who would ever have thought women would shy away from the party of transvaginal probes? Who would ever have thought gays would work against a party that treated them as immoral and subhuman? Or that young people would desert a party that ignored science and hectored on social issues? Or that Latinos would scorn a party that expected them to finish up their chores and self-deport? (Dowd, Dec 9, 2012)

1. Advantages of Incumbency: As president, Obama chose policies that would also help his electoral chances in 2012. The once ridiculed stimulus program helped restore jobs and bring America out of recession. Especially notable was the bailout of the auto industry (and with it the auto parts companies and their workers in the industrial Midwest) which played well in the swing states of Michigan, Ohio, and Wisconsin.
2. Continuities and Discontinuities: Obama pollster and strategist Joel Benenson[[7]](#endnote-7) made equally good arguments that nothing much had changed since 2008 and yet everything had changed. Then as in 2008, voters understood that the reasons for America’s economic malaise largely preceded the Obama administration. The Bush tax cuts and the billions spent on unpopular wars in Iraq and Afghanistan had been principal factors. The 2012 campaign drove home the argument. Beyond offering facts and statistics and compelling narratives it offered instruction in how to contextualize.
3. Ad Buys: The Democrats came in early, spent less, and benefited more from their frontloaded campaign, especially from negative advertising that framed Mitt Romney as out of touch.
4. Emphasis on the “middle class”: The Obama campaign can be faulted for failing to address explicitly the problems of entrenched joblessness and dire poverty in the United States, preferring to focus upon the needs of the (vaguely defined) “middle class,” but it was politically advantageous to do so, lest the campaign be vulnerable to charges previously leveled at the Democrats as principally concerned with the interests of the indolent. Fortuitously for the Obama campaign, Governor Romney was taped saying that at least “forty-seven percent” of Americans would never vote for him. (Corn, March 4, 2013) *.*Without referring explicitly to the problems of the poor and the long-term unemployed, Obama launched economic and educational programs designed to help them. He also made oblique reference to the “tragedy of the commons” by lamenting the long term adverse effects of economic inequality on Americans generally. (See also Thomas B. Edsall, Aug. 3, 2012 on Stiglitz)[[8]](#endnote-8).
5. Republican Gaffes: Democratic strategist David Axelrod suggested at the Annenberg de-briefing that the Romney campaign was disadvantaged in its efforts to win over socially liberal women by Romney’s vows during the Republican primaries to de-fund public television and Planned Parenthood. By contrast, said Axelrod, the Obama campaign was not “tugged to the left.” Fortuitously, it also found ways to appeal to Hispanic voters. In Florida, even the once conservative Cuban-American vote went to Obama.
6. Obama’s “Luck”: Hurricanes rarely benefit anyone other than incumbent political candidates and weather channels, but Obama was “lucky” in being able to de-rail the Romney campaign in October 2012, by shifting attention to his efforts in behalf of victims of Hurricane Sandy.” Which could also be contrasted with his Republican predecessor’s handling of Hurricane Katrina. He was “fortunate” too in going up against a weak Republican candidate. It was at least partly serendipitous for the Democrats that the CIA was able to find and then kill Obama bin Laden. And at about the same time when the Romney campaign was railing against +8 per cent unemployment, the official numbers dipped down below 8 percent.

**Case 6.5 Bernie Sanders’ Campaign for a Political Revolution (November 2015)**

By October 2015, it became clear that Hillary Clinton had sewn up the Democratic Party’s Presidential nomination. Sanders had in fact come to Hillary’s defense during a campaign debate by dismissing her use of personal e-mails during the “Benghazi” crisis as trivial.

Rather than folding his campaign, Sanders, a Democratic Socialist, decided to rededicate his efforts to a populist revolt, what he called a political revolution. In Iowa and New Hampshire, he railed against the big banks and the super-PACs on whom most candidates depended. Said sociologist Amitai Etzioni, populism usually refers to the conviction that elites and other big money “special interests” wield too much power. But there is little support for policies that look like wealth transfers, taking from the rich and giving it to the poor, or sacrificing for the common good. Populism becomes far less popular when leftist themes join the mix. (Etzioni, Jan 8, 2015, Atlantic.com)

It remains to be seen how Sanders (and kindred spirits such as Elizabeth Warren) will fare in this high stake struggle. One thing seems clear: that socialism, and especially democratic socialism (as practiced in Scandinavia and in much of Western Europe is far more acceptable in the U.S. now than before Sanders arrived on the national scene.

Still, Bernie Sanders and Elizabeth Warren, among others, have been unrelenting in calling for a redistribution of the wealth, pulling Hilary Clinton and the Democratic Party with them on what Hilary calls their “progressive” views. At a Jefferson/Jackson dinner in Iowa he embraced the views of activists seeking to find a way into the political process. What this campaign is about, he said is not just electing a president, it is transforming America. Recalling abolitionist William Lloyd Garrison whose crusade to end slavery was launched a full thirty years before it was ended, he said that he will be “as harsh as truth and as uncompromising as justice.” “On this subject,” said Garrison, “I do not wish to think or to speak, or write with moderation”.

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Party nominations as well as presidential victories depend on the blessings of Wall Street and other major “industries.” (Drutman, 2012; Lewis, 2006). The U.S. has been characterized as a plutocracy (Solomon, N. War Made Easy. Wiley, 2006), an oligarchy (Stiglitz, 2012), a “constitutional dictatorship.” (Rossiter, 1948) The “good government” model of campaigning, discussed at the outset of the chapter, is a façade.

This much seems clear: that the once moderating influences of network news (Williams and Delli-Carpini, 2011) and bi-partisan commitments to a unifying set of core values (Edsall, Dec. 5, 2011; Age of Austerity, 2012) have been replaced by media polarization, political polarization and the opportunity for interested citizens to find support for their worst prejudices. Electoral politics, says Lee (2009) has become a no-holds barred zero-sum game. Ezra Klein puts it more simply: “the President’s party can’t win unless the other party loses. And both parties know it. This, Lee decided, is the true nature of our political system.”

Klein adds (March 19, 2012): “We don’t have a system of government set up for Presidents to drive legislation through Congress. Rather, we have a system that was designed to encourage division between the branches. Add in minority protections like the filibuster, and you have a system in which the job of the President is to persuade an opposition party that has both the incentive and the power to resist him. “Or, to paraphrase Upton Sinclair, it’s difficult to get a man to support something if his reelection depends on his not supporting it.”

**Summary**

Following upon an introduction to the “good government” model of political campaigning this chapter has presented a Machiavellian guide to the electoral politics of an America divided, its campaigning for Party nominations nearly as fractious as the presidential contests themselves, but fortified by the myth that voters, not party bosses or financiers or power brokers, will decide whom their next president will be. Today’s politics is characterized by seemingly endless campaigning, increasingly more sophisticated messaging, and virtually unrestricted campaign funds, this at a time when voter demographics have changed dramatically, the Republican Party increasingly white, Christian, Southern, and ethnically homogeneous, the Democrats more of a hodgepodge ethnographically and decidedly more liberal, this as a continuation of trends begun in the nineteen sixties.

**Questions for Thought and Discussion**

1. Do Americans have reason to be proud of their systems for electing presidents and other elected officials?
2. Is the system too vulnerable to Machiavellian manipulation?
3. How has the internet changed the way political leaders are elected?
4. What is hacking?
5. What is cyberwarfare?
6. Is the American electoral system being too vulnerable to outside influence, as with hacking and cyberwarfare?
7. How over time has the Republican Party achieved gubernatorial and Congressional dominance?
8. What has been the role of money in determining electoral outcomes? Is the better financed candidate the predictable winner?
9. In the final analysis is the more persuasive candidate the more predictable winner?
10. Has Donald Trump been more successful in the U.S than his opponents?

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**Chapter Seven**

**Deliberation and Governance**

**In this Chapter:**

* Introduction
* Power and Political Persuasion
* Dilemmas of Political Deliberation
* The Rationality Debate
  + Jonathan Haidt on Liberals and Conservatives
  + Two Grand Narratives of Liberals and Conservatives
* Edsall and Edsall’s Chain Reaction
* Forms and Functions of Deliberation
  + Debate and Discussion of Policy Issues
  + The Persuasion Dialogue
  + Assisted Dialogue
  + Strategies of Negotiation
  + Limits of Presidential Persuasion
  + Power without Persuasion
* Summary
  + The “Wealth Gap Controversy
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**Introduction**

This chapter picks up where Chapter 6 left off, shifting its focus from political campaigns to deliberation and democratic governance. Deliberation is aimed at rationally weighing options; this ideally by way of skilled disagreement. (D. Ellis, 2006) Governance and electoral politics are inextricably linked. Legislative success communicates presidential power; presidential power drives legislative success. Successful policy enactments boost a president’s chances of being re-elected and enhanced presidential approval ratings make additional legislative victories more likely. As suggested in the Preface competing political views are *packaged to persuade by way of arguments and evidence plus,* the packages including self-presentations, framings and reframings and overarching narratives, as in the competing stories (below), said by Haidt to typify liberal and conservative thought. The “lib-con” divide, as it has evolved from the sixties to the present, is featured in Chapter 7’s Commentary. How rational, it asks, are political office holders and ordinary citizens in weighing their options? That question raises others about what rationality can possibly mean in political contexts.

The chapter aims at helping readers understand the dilemma-laden sources and consequences of irrationality in politics, resulting in flips and flops. It aims as well at providing instruction in how to deliberate on political matters, with attention to stock issues for policy matters and modes of deliberation. These modes include public debate and discussion, the persuasion dialogue and the art of negotiations. It assesses the quality of that discourse as played out over time on issues of income inequality, with instruction in how to deliberate on stock issues for propositions of policy.

As argued here the “lib-con” divide accounts for important differences over time within and between political parties, from the sixties to the present. Several leading scholars—e.g., Thomas Edsall, Jonathan Haidt, Naomi Klein, Thomas Picketty, and Joseph Stieglitz make their appearance in the chapter. Presented here too are sources of rationality and irrationality, and instruction in various forms of deliberation Chapter 7concludes with commentary on the limits of political persuasion. `

**Power and Political Persuasion**

Recall from Chapter 1 that power is the potential for influence—i.e., for securing preferred outcomes at minimal cost. Persuasion is:

1. an instrument of power—as in making threats and promises seem credible by way of warnings;
2. an accompaniment to power as when propaganda is used to make lethal force appear reluctant, regrettable, but unavoidable; and
3. A consequence of power, predisposing rather than merely imposing and thus leading not just to accepted outcomes but to embraced outcomes.

But power, and especially coercive power,(as opposed to material inducements) is more likely to have unwelcome, unintended, *blowback* effects (Johnson, 2004), rather than intended, positive effects, as we also saw in Chapter Four with the use of threats and violence by militant social movement organizations.

This is the nub of the persuasion versus power dilemma. Here there are opportunities for *negotiation,* including tacit negotiations. Much of this chapter is devoted to forms of group and intergroup deliberations.

**Dilemmas of Political Deliberation**

Rather than coming down on one ideological side or the other of the rationality debate this chapter points to the dilemmatic character of political decision-making. The prevalence of ambivalence and inconsistency by office-holders and ordinary citizens alike can help us appreciate why deciding what’s rational in various political contexts is no easy matter. Political leaders (and ordinary citizens) are often torn between such competing values as pursuing their own narrow self-interest versus sacrificing for the greater good. Controversial policies left undefended allow the opposition free reign to seize control of the debate but silence is often preferable to a weak defense, especially a defense likely to antagonize one’s allies.

Political leaders also must appeal to *multiple constituencies*. Recall from Chapter 1 that *triangulation* gets its name from sailing, where the way to buck a nasty headwind is to tack left, then right until you’ve reached your destination. As exemplified by President Bill Clinton, it used a centrist strategy of *triangulation* so as to please both progressive liberals in the Democratic Party, then appeal to more conservative swing voters. President Reagan sought ways of adapting to fiscal conservatives, social conservatives, and libertarians within the Republican Party, claiming that his brand of conservatism transcended their differences.

Aggressively pursuing tax reform has constituted something of a dilemma for Democrats. Barack Obama backed away from his previous aggressive pursuit of it, lest voters label his policy recommendations “too extreme” for their tastes, or lest big money donors desert his re-election campaign. For Republican leaders the risk is that they will feed already widespread suspicions that theirs is the “party-of-the-rich.

In 2012 voters were torn between Obama’s “Entitlement Society” and Mitt Romney’s “Opportunity Society.” Democrats claimed that “Opportunity Society” was just another name for power and naked self-interest trumping consideration for the common good. Republicans claimed that self-regarding acts ultimately contribute to the common good by favoring those best able to compete. How were the voters to decide?

**The Rationality Debate**

Reason dictates that we treat the rationality debate with some degree of humility. *Just as we tend to justify morally questionable actions by “our side” that we would condemn were they undertaken by “their side,” so we reason self-servingly about rationality.*

Box 7.1- Modes of Irrationality

A recent article in the *Atlantic*.com shows why economics is “dead wrong” about how we make our choices. It illustrates the extreme ambivalence of political conservatives who deplore federal entitlements on ideological grounds even as they and their families depend upon them for their survival. (Applebaum&Gebeloff, Feb 2, 2012)

Derek Thompson cites Daniel McFadden, an economist, on what psychology, neurology, anthropology and biology can teach us about why we make irrational decisions. Much as we relish choice, we find decision making physically exhausting and so opt for easy ways out, like choosing what’s readily available or what we recall as our peak experiences, like the thrill of riding on a roller coaster. We tend also to let friends, family and tribe do our thinking for us, without properly evaluating the prospect of rewards.

The theory seeks to explain why many groups—nappers, procrastinators, Congress, ordinary citizens take rewards now and pain later, repeatedly. A recent article in the *Atlantic*.com shows why economics is “dead wrong” about how we make our choices.(see Box 7.1) It illustrates the extreme ambivalence of political conservatives who deplore federal entitlements on ideological grounds even as they and their families depend upon them for their survival. (Applebaum&Gebeloff, Feb 2, 2012)

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The theory seeks to explain why many groups—nappers, procrastinators, Congress, ordinary citizens –take rewards now and pain later, repeatedly.

The arguments for today’s irrational citizen are many, and they usually begin with evidence of how ignorant most people are about politics and how inclined they are to treat it as a spectator sport.

The case for irrationality has grown more sophisticated with research on motivated reasoning (discussed in Chapter 6), especially by those who’ve formed strong group affiliations—as liberal Democrats or as Tea Party Republicans, for example. Functional MRI research has documented differences in neural pathways of those inclined toward agreement or disagreement with a political leader. (Westen, 2007

Consider as well the evidence of our inclination to base decisions, including important decisions, on cognitive shorthands (Cialdini, 2009) and heuristics (e.g., Thaler and Sunstein, 2008). In the face of message overload, investors, home-buyers, and, yes, sophisticated political decision-makers are apt to function as cognitive misers, reliant on such seemingly irrelevant factors as the perceived physical attractiveness of the communicator, trappings of authority, our liking for them and their apparent liking for us, and stereotypes of the sort that lead to favorable or unfavorable first impressions. In one Canadian study, for example, the taller of two political candidates was the predictable winner. (Cialdini, 2009).

It has long been known that we humans engage in selective processing of information, beginning with selective exposure and attention, continuing with selective perception and comprehension and concluding with selective remembering and utilization of information, all these processes influencing beliefs and attitudes and influenced in turn by our prior inclinations or prejudices. (McGuire, 1968; Perloff, 2008)

Politicians *prime* favorable impressions by use of subtle cues, such as dress and body language. In one priming study the presence of a vase of flowers on a table prompted cooperativeness while an attaché case on that table prompted competitiveness. (Bargh, 2006)In other studies cues flashed subliminally (i.e., below the level of awareness) prompted nationalist sentiments in Israel and moderated the political views of hawks and doves. (Hassin, et al., 2007).

To this long list we could add the 3rd person effect, otherwise known as the “not-me” phenomenon: other people are easily persuaded, but not me. Other people exaggerate their influence over others; not I. (Levine, 2003; Thaler and Sunstein, 2008)

Yet there is a point at which we humans are inclined to put aside evidence of irrationality, that especially when it comes to ourselves and our right-thinking compatriots. Here the distinction between reasons and rationalizations is blurred.

Conservative Republicans:

1. Am I being selfish in wanting to cut food stamp payments for the poor during these troubled times? No, I simply want to increase initiative and wean people from their dependence on government handouts. Increases in charitable donations can also see to it that no one goes hungry.
2. I’m not opposed to health care for all but would personally prefer to pay the costs for the quality of care I currently receive than to pay less for inferior care, like having to wait months for the tests and treatments my family needs.
3. What the Democrats call Republican or conservative obstructionism doesn’t prevent passage of needed legislation; it simply delays the process, giving Americans more time to consider the issues and decide whether they really want it.

Liberal Democrats:

1. I’m opposed in principle to drone strikes that result in killings of innocent civilians in Afghanistan but I think that our President has no choice in the matter in bringing peace to that country.
2. On issues like immigration reform Republicans “have substituted partisanship for patriotism, placing party loyalty above loyalty to America.” (Reich, June 23, 2012 RSN). I value compassion for the poor, not condemnation. When religious right Republicans talk about values, they include everything under the sun except relieving poverty. That’s un-Christian.
3. Liberals point to shrinking governmental revenues as the source of a problem, conservatives to increasing government expenditures. Liberals tend to blame predatory lenders for mortgage foreclosures; conservatives are more apt to blame the borrowers for unwise decisions. Liberals view economic inequality as a serious problem and would levy increased taxes on the top five percent to ameliorate it. Conservatives maintain that this diminishes work incentives. Less controversial are structural unemployment and the steep drop in accumulated middle class wealth, but opinions differ as to what to do about these problems.

Jonathan Haidt on Liberals and Conservatives

In The Righteous Mind Jonathan Haidt, (2012) draws upon evolutionary psychology, brain science, and recent interview research to differentiate what he calls the “moral foundations” of liberal and conservative thought. These longstanding ideological ways of thinking, he says, are influenced by our emotions - by our “primitive” brains. Also longstanding is our need for herds; we are hard-wired to function well in groups (and presumably in conflicts with other groups). We form group affiliations even around our shopping preferences. For that reason diversity can be divisive.

By upbringing and inclination a liberal, Haidtis now convinced that conservatives have as good or better claim on morality, at least as indicated by the breadth of their foundational thinking and their greater ability to understand if not empathize with those who don’t think as they do. Paraphrasing Kenneth Burke, liberals’ preoccupation with fairness and compassion is rotten with perfection. They may be well-meaning but they are unrealistic. Their eagerness to help inner-city blacks, for example, led to welfare programs in the 1960s “that reduced the value of marriage, increased out-of-wedlock births, and weakened African-American families” (p. 309). Trying to help aggrieved groups has interfered in the workings of the market in ways that do more harm than good. A well-functioning market combines competition with innovation to lower prices and increase quality.

Conservatives understand that; liberals don’t, says Haidt. Conservatives also value fairness and compassion (but to a lesser degree than liberals) while also championing values of loyalty, sanctity, and authority. “Their broader moral matrix allows them to detect threats to moral capitol (i.e., the resources that sustain a moral community), that liberals cannot perceive. They do not oppose change of all kinds (such as the Internet) but they fight back ferociously when they believe that change will damage the institutions and traditions that provide our moral exoskeletons (such as the family). Preserving those institutions and traditions is their most sacred value.” (Haidt, 2012) Without the latter, he says, there can be no cohesion.

Hence Haidt urges liberals and conservatives to recognize their “Yin-Yang’ complementarities and try to get along. For the most part, however, he treats our ideological predispositions as hard-wired over the course of our evolutionary history and says that they “bind-and-blind.” What can trying possibly mean to hard-wired bound and blind hominids?

Two Grand Narratives of Liberals and Conservatives

Haidt (p. 284) offers up a rather wooden liberal “grand narrative” that he says captures well the dominant ideology of the academic left in the U.S. (Smith, see Haidt, p. 283) and a far more vivid conservative narrative, constructed by neuro-psychologist Drew Westen (2007) from a distillation of Ronald Reagan’s speeches.

Liberal Narrative:

Once upon a time, the vast majority of people suffered in societies that were unjust, unhealthy, repressive and oppressive. These traditional societies were reprehensible because of their deep-rooted inequality, exploitation and irrational traditionalism. But the noble human aspiration for autonomy, equality and prosperity struggled mightily against the forces of misery and oppression and eventually succeeded in establishing modern, liberal, democratic, capitalist, welfare societies. While modern world conditions hold the potential to maximize the individual pleasure and freedom of all, there is much work to be done to dismantle the powerful vestiges of inequality, exploitation, and repression. This struggle for the good society in which individuals are equal and free to pursue their self-defined happiness is the mission truly worth dedicating one’s life to achieving. (Smith, 2003.)

**Insert photo of Reagan about here**

Conservative Narrative:

Once upon a time America was a shining beacon. Then liberals came along and erected an enormous federal bureaucracy that handcuffed the invisible hand of the free market. They subverted our traditional American values and opposed God and faith at every step along the way…Instead of requiring that people work for a living, they siphoned money from hardworking Americans and gave it to Cadillac-driving drug addicts and welfare queens. Instead of punishing criminals they tried to “understand” them. Instead of worrying about the victims of crime, they worried about the rights of criminals. Instead of adhering to traditional American values of family, fidelity, and personal responsibility, they preached promiscuity, pre-marital sex, and the gay lifestyle….and they encouraged a feminist agenda that undermined traditional family roles. Instead of projecting strength to those who would do evil around the world, they cut military budgets, disrespected our soldiers in uniform, burned our flag, and chose negotiation and multilateralism….Then America decided to take our country back from those who sought to undermine it. (Haidt, 2012, p. 285)

Commentary:

I recognize the stilted, sermonic, self-satisfied rhetoric of the victimized “us” and the oppressive “them” that animated many a liberal-left conclave of the sixties and early seventies. I used some of it myself until it began to sour to the tongue. Far more gripping was Bob Dylan’s “Times They Are A-Changing,” which they were, as the acidic prose of the Technoculture (GE’s “Progress is our most important product”; DuPont’s “Better living through chemistry”) and the “far-out” poetry of the Counterculture were merging to produce what I believed would be a more humane but still productive “Future culture.” (Simons, 1976)

I also well remember the animated conservative diatribes of Ronald Reagan, still moving, even to this liberal, as speechwriter Peggy Noonan’s nostalgic images of a golden past were set against those of an America gone to wrack and ruin, the work of handcuffing federal bureaucrats and preachers of promiscuity, Cadillac-driving drug addicts and welfare queens, flag burners and assorted other folderol.

What do these images have to do with human hard-wiring? Elsewhere in his book Haidt allows for the possibility that the major political party realignments over the past fifty years were culturally determined (and presumably not hard-wired), a product of the backlash against the perceived excesses of the sixties and seventies liberal-left movements that continues to this day. (Haidt, 2012) I find this view more congenial and will return to it, but a few points are in order before I proceed.

First, as is argued in Chapter 8 classic liberalism (as opposed to progressive liberalism) is conservative! It seeks to preserve and protect such traditional values as freedom of speech and religion, rights of assembly, the rule of law, democratic deliberation and free and fair elections—values passed on by the ancient Greeks and Romans, fought for over the centuries with uneven outcomes in attempts to overthrow tyrannies, and theorized by such conservative liberals as Adam Smith, John Locke and Edmund Burke. Classic liberalism isn’t Democratic or Republican: it’s both. When Congressional deliberation functions well it is classic liberalism that makes it possible.

Second, the excesses of the sixties and seventies were by no means confined to the liberal left in America. As counter-cultureless celebrated “sex, drugs and rock ‘n roll,” free market conservatives were devising new ways of adding to their bankrolls, no less narcissistically than the Woodstock generation. The general point, made by Kurt Anderson (July 3, 2012), is that “For hippies and bohemians as for businesspeople and investors, extreme individualism has been triumphant. Selfishness won.”

Anderson has a penchant for alleging equivalencies. “’Do your own thing’ is not so different than ’every man for himself.’ If it feels good, do it, whether that means smoking weed and watching porn and never wearing a necktie, retiring at 50 with a six-figure public pension and refusing modest gun regulation, or moving your factories overseas and letting commercial banks become financial speculators. The self-absorbed ‘Me’ Decade, having expanded during the ’80s and ’90s from personal life to encompass the political economy, will soon be the ‘Me’ Half-Century.”

But women’s rights, gay rights, and ecology, among others, are far from being undeserved, though it may appear so to misogynists, homophobes and polluters. Anderson discredits the liberal pursuit of these rights by placing them alongside watching porn and moving your factories overseas. I do not contest his general point that the U.S. is once again as a nation experiencing “a tension between radical individualism and the demands of the commonwealth” but I believe that the case can be better made. Ronald Reagan’s laments about America’s alleged decline makes a much stronger case, capturing as it does the feeling-tones of fear and anger that feed conservatives’ (and many liberals) sense of betrayal by progressive liberalism.

Discussed at length in Chapter 8 is the distinction between classic liberalism and progressive liberalism. Suffice it to suggest here that progressive liberalism (also called progressivism) adds welfare state capitalism to its commitments to classic liberalism. It tends also to be dovish on matters of foreign policy and national security. Progressive liberalism’s Achilles heel as a political doctrine is that it enjoins us to put the needs of others above our own, and particularly those who cannot help themselves. Seldom is that injunction a vote-getter. Seldom especially does it win support from those who see the fulfillment of their needs threatened by the help extended to others. Typically it succeeds at the polls only when the liberal Democrat (seldom a Republican) who runs on it finds ways to “out-hawk” his or her Republican opponent (yet another example of triangulation).

The political fallout from progressive liberalism’s penchant for doing what’s right at the expense of doing what’s smart is a recurring theme in Thomas and Mary Edsall’s Chain Reaction (1991) and in Thomas Edsall’s opinion columns in the New York Times more recently.

Edsall and Edsall’s Chain Reaction

There have been many attempts to explain (or explain away) defections from the ranks of once reliable Democrats due to disaffection with its once dominant core ideology of progressive liberalism. Geoffrey Nunberg’s Talking Right (2006) explains how it is that just about everyone--Democrats included--came to speak (and think?) the language of conservatism, referring for example to liberalism as a life style and excluding relief from poverty as a value.

George Lakoff has used his brand of cognitive psychology to good effect, particularly in illustrating the differences that a frame makes. His Moral Politics (1997), with its core distinction between Democrats as nurturing parent-types and Republicans as strict father-types maps fittingly with Haidt on the moral foundations of liberals and conservatives. So too does Drew Westen’s (2007) research on The Political Brain. Their own ideological differences notwithstanding, Michael Tomasky (1996), a Democrat, and Frank Luntz (1988), a Republican, have offered similar analyses of strategic miscalculations by Democrats, both with respect to their tendency to select insufficiently emotive, overly cerebral presidential candidates (Clinton and Obama being the lone exceptions) and to their failure to exploit Republican vulnerabilities.

But Thomas and Mary Edsall’s *Chain Reaction (1991)* is especially helpful for its prescient account of progressive liberalism’s dilemmas of deliberation and governance and its well documented evidence of fallout by disaffected Democrats.

Chain Reaction is the Edsalls’ name for an evolutionary process culminating in the ongoing backlash against progressive liberalism that began with passage of the 1964 Voting Rights Act and other legislation in support of President Lyndon Johnson’s War on Poverty. Its twin pillars are race and taxes which, by themselves drove millions of once loyal Democrats out of the fold by fueling the already simmering resentments of law-abiding, taxpaying, whites who saw themselves as subsidizing jobless and often lawless black beneficiaries of welfare programs and compensatory hiring preferences.

As if this were not enough, race and taxes collided explosively with two “rights” movements propelled by progressive liberals that were predictably bound to further alienate swing voter groups on whom the Democrats had previously depended. Confronted with the classic dilemma pitting ethics against expediency, progressives felt duty-bound to do what seemed morally right at the expense of doing what was politically smart. Particularly to ethnic whites of European extraction in the North and lower income southern white populists, the Democratic Party had gone haywire: hell-bent on providing protections to every “minority” under the sun—among them criminal defendants, “Negroes,” the handicapped, students, women, homosexuals, the mentally ill and prisoners—while taking benefits away from “us normal folk.” (Edsall and Edsall, 1991)

As though to confirm these white swing voters’ concerns about blacks, rioting broke out in the sixties in dozens of predominantly African-American communities in the North, prompting white flight to the suburbs. Crimes of violence by blacks more than doubled during the sixties with the gap between white and black arrest rates steadily increasing in that same period. Births to unmarried black women escalated as well and at a far greater extent than for white women. Black nationalists and “Black Power” advocates largely supplanted the more moderate leadership of Martin Luther King, Jr. and his followers in the South. Cities already financially strapped by declining tax revenues were pressured by anti-poverty and welfare rights organizations to provide ever increasing benefits and protections to the black underclass, and whites who had been sympathetic to the cause of desegregation found themselves receptive to the calls for “law ‘n’ order” and States Rights by former governor of Alabama, George Wallace. Progressive liberals were caught between facing up to the reality of their own failed social policies and continuing to attribute any and all problems in black communities to slavery and continuing white racism. Still less were progressives predisposed to place blame on blacks for that would have fueled the criticisms made by political conservatives and alienated their base. But by their silence they in effect ceded the argument to their critics.

The Clinton election in 1992 moved America’s dominant ideology to an ameliorative, pragmatic middle, leading to the flips and flops in liberal and conservative politics, referred to chapter 6. Journalists make much of the liberal-conservative divide but it is an indication of just how convoluted both liberal and conservative thinking is that each side in that divide has flipped positions on key issues, displaying a penchant for motivated thinking on policy initiatives.

In a “Pop Quiz,” New York Times columnist Nicholas Kristof asked readers if they could tell which policy statements were Obama’s and which were Mitt Romney’s. Several of the statements seemed like they had come from Obama, but all were by Romney, including his support for gay rights and for the 2009 economic stimulus plan, and his belief that the world is getting hotter. The following statement on health care could have been penned by Obama:

It’s critical to insure more people in this country. It doesn’t make sense to have 45 million people without insurance. It’s not good for them because they don’t get good preventative care—but it’s not good for the rest of the citizens either, because if people are not insured they go to the emergency room for care when they are very sick. That’s expensive. They don’t have any insurance to cover it. So guess who pays? Everybody else. (Kristof, Dec 6, 2012)

Romney’s support for health care legislation should not surprise anyone since ‘ObamaCare’ was modeled after Romney’s highly successful policy enacted for Massachusetts. Neither should we be surprised that Romney pledged if elected in 2012 to do away with ‘ObamaCare’. That’s politics.

Democrats too have flipped on policy issues. The economic stimulus package was at one time a Republican initiative. “Cap and Trade” was initially proposed by the Republicans and Prescription Drug Care was pushed through Congress by George W. Bush. A Republican, Richard Nixon, signed on to legislation creating the Environmental Protection Agency and OSHA, the Occupational Safety and Health Agency. On indefinite detentions and targeted assassinations Obama has been more of a hawk than Bush.

A mix of political self-interest and well-intentioned policy thinking seems to be at work for Democrats and Republicans, helping to account for principled positions and for opportunistic flips and flops. Uncertainty figures prominently as well about policy outcomes and political repercussions. In the few minutes they have to comment on enormously complex issues pundits on both sides of the aisle dramatize, simplify, romanticize, pontificate, often casting the problems confronting political actors as dilemmas and then assessing this or that rhetorical strategy used in coping with the dilemmas.

The post-World War movements and counter-movements that divided the world (including the U.S, Western Europe, Latin America and much of Asia)have opened wide the floodgates to ideological currents of thought, and their negations, that would have been unthinkable in nations recovering from the war. Conservatism in the U.S. has taken a libertarian turn while opening divides on economic and foreign policy issues, making possible neo-con support for military adventurism (as in the invasions of Iraq and Afghanistan), and the popularity of xenophobic, anti-immigrant candidates for the 2016 Republican presidential nomination.

The democratic mainstream remains committed to American exceptionalism and a reluctance to tamper with neo-liberal capitalism, but on social issues such as gay marriage, legalization of marijuana, and abortion on demand, it has clearly moved to the libertarian left. Senator Bernie Sanders has helped make socialism respectable in the Democratic Party but not among Working Class Democrats and Southern Democrats who tend to be more conservative politically and traditional in their values.

Many liberals of late have joined with socialists, environmentalists and religious activists (such as Pope Francis and Mohammed Mesbahi) in a world-wide movement to ameliorate economic inequalities, achieve climate control, bring an end to world hunger, and, more generally, share the world’s resources (STWR) on the basis of justice and equity, all this under the rubric of “A Marshall Plan for the Earth.” Needed, says Naomi Klein (2014) is a “movement of movements” that reinvigorates democracy from the ground up.

The remainder of this chapter is devoted to forms and functions of deliberation, including dialogue, public discussion, debate, and negotiations. It concludes with a brief commentary on the limits of presidential persuasion.

**Forms and Functions of Deliberation**

Debate and Discussion of Policy Issues

Public Debate:

A debate, said Robert Branham (1991), is a process of advancing, supporting, disputing, and defending opinions, ideally conducted by different parties who are committed to their respective positions. A public debate is one held before an audience. The great advantage of public debate is the opportunity it affords to educate its audiences. The introduction of arguments by each side, together with their respective efforts at clash (initial refutations) and extension (rebuttals of refutations), enables audiences to get a reasonably complete picture of the controversy.

Much has been written about the value of debate in a democratic society. Said playwright George Bernard Shaw, “The way to get at the merits of a case is not to listen to the fool who imagines himself impartial, but to get it argued with reckless bias for and against” (quoted in Jamieson &Birdsell, 1988, p. 13). Said economist John Stuart Mill (1859/1949), “Complete liberty of contradicting and disproving our opinion, is the very condition which justifies us in assuming its truth for purposes of action; and on no other terms can a being with human faculties have any rational assurance of being right. (Quoted in Jamieson &Birdsell, 1988, p. 19).

Stock Issues for Policy Issues:

On health care as on other policy matters, experts “guestimate” risks and rewards, costs and benefits of policy alternatives. The policy sciences are inexact but generally provide for error correction based on experience. Five “stock issues” bear on all policy matters:

1. Is there a need for a change? Subsets of this issue include the breadth of the alleged problem, its seriousness or degree of harm, and its causes.
2. Is the proposed solution workable (i.e., suitable) Based on projections, will the proposed plan meet the alleged need for change?
3. Is the proposed plan practical, feasible, do-able? Are there means, power and facilities available to implement it?
4. Is the plan free from greater evils? Will its expected benefits exceed its projected costs or harms?
5. Of the contemplated solutions is the proposed solution best?

Some questions are empirical and hence open to observation and experimentation; others are amenable to the development of algorithms for anticipating policy outcomes. Past practice has taught economists how to curb inflation in the UK, stimulate growth in India, and enable the U.S. to climb out of a recession. These, in H.A. Simon’s (1967) terms are among the technical, “well-formed” questions on which political actors look to experts for advice. They are technical in the sense of being amenable to rational deliberation in its more traditional senses, whether about means and ends or facts and logic.

Recall from Chapter Five the sorts of argument and evidence used to justify renewable energy start-ups in Salina Kansas and more humane treatment of farmed animals in California. All involved considerations of argument and evidence as they bore on the stock issues for matters of policy.

Group deliberations:

Group deliberations come in a variety of forms, from the televised public “seminar” on health care that Barack Obama used in 2009 to rescue his party’s legislative proposal from near-certain defeat to secret negotiations that effect compromise legislation on previously intractable issues. Some scholarly treatments extol “genuine” dialogue as ideal deliberation (Czubaroff, 2007) while other treatments exclude dialogue altogether. (Gastil, 2008).

I agree with Czubaroff that there is a place in political discourse for dialogic persuasion, wherein each interactant strives to win the other’s adherence to a truth claim but strives thereby to bridge differences rather than exacerbate them. (Simons et al, 2001) However, any realistic consideration of public deliberation must find places for conflict, power and self-interest in politics and that is why dialogue has limited applicability. Of greater utility in politics are negotiations which take power and interests into account.

The Persuasion Dialogue

In Plato’s Phaedrus (360 B.C.E.), his mentor, Socrates, invited fellow Athenians to consider what an ideal rhetoric might be like, as opposed to the manipulative, exploitative discourse that too often substituted for thoughtful discussion in Greek society. Some have viewed Plato’s Dialogues themselves as models of rhetoric, but as Craig R. Smith (2003) has observed, these conversations were stacked by Plato in favor of his mentor and were hardly free of rhetorical sleight of hand.

What, then, are the characteristics of the ideal rhetoric? Through the centuries, that question has beguiled philosophers. Many have agreed that the ideal is dialogic, not monologic, placing the conversants on an equal footing. But what is the nature of that rhetorical conversation? Pulling together the writings of recent philosophers, I present my own version of what Walton (1992) calls the persuasion dialogue.

Two (or more) persons get together to puzzle out an issue. They may have strong opinions on the matter, which they are free to express. Indeed, the fact of difference is expected and welcomed. Falsely minimizing differences or pretending to evenhanded objectivity is disingenuous and will not do.

The conversants see matters differently, but their object really isn’t to win anything at the expense of the other. This is key. Perhaps you have been in conversations in which the demands of the subject matter literally took over. One sign of that is a willingness to consider matters afresh, without clinging to previously entrenched positions. “Well, Jim, I know I usually complain when America plays the role of global police officer, but the ethnic cleansing of Kurds in Syria really got to me. I don’t think our country could have stood by any longer and let that continue.” “Funny that you say that, Wilma, because I usually favor military intervention where American interests are at stake, but as former Secretary of State Baker put it, I don’t think we had a dog in that fight.”

Persuasion dialogues may have many goals, not least of which are the pleasures of mutual exploration of a topic and possible edification. Consensus is not a required outcome of such dialogues. Occasionally, they bring closure to an issue, but more often, they advance its consideration by raising as many questions as they answer. What are America’s interests? Who defines them, and how? What humanitarian principles justify military intervention in some cases but not in others? Often, as in this conversation, the talk spins out to related issues, without loss, it is hoped, of the initial thread.

In persuasion dialogues, positions are presented skillfully but not manipulatively. As one person speaks, the others listen carefully, trying at once to see things from the speaker’s perspective while at the same time resisting the temptation to take everything that’s been said at face value. Managing to combine empathic listening with critical listening isn’t easy; it’s part of the art of the persuasion dialogue. Competent conversationalists learn to retrieve in memory what’s been said at a substantive level while also attending to what’s been metacommunicated (i.e.their talk-about their talk) perhaps unintentionally. Wilma might restate Jim’s argument, and then ask whether she’s understood him. But she might follow with an objection to his likening of the conflict between the Syrians and Kurds to a dog fight. “Isn’t that choice of metaphor itself a problem, Jim? I find it emotionally distancing.”

Still, the persuasion dialogue remains a cooperative exchange. Perhaps the conversational partners ask questions of clarification, perhaps they raise objections, but no one seeks to dominate or to put the others down. Indeed, the opposite may happen. I put forward my case, you try to improve it, perhaps even to perfect it; I do the same for you if I can. “You know, Wilma, I can really see your point. Maybe we can’t be global police officers, but it sure is in America’s interests to promote international human rights. So, by that standard, maybe we do have military obligations in Syria.”

Assisted Dialogue

The next example is of a highly structured dialogue, mediated by psychologists on the polarized topic of abortion (Chasin, R et al., 1996; Roth & Becker, 1992). Here the give-and-take of the persuasion dialogue is replaced initially with strategic questioning by the facilitators, designed to get pro-choice and pro-life activists to dig deeply into their psyches for possible sources of personal ambivalence and interpersonal common ground. Pro-life and pro-choice activists are questioned over dinner about their sources of discomfort with their own positions. Was their room for convergence of positions or for compromise?

The techniques of coactive persuasion described in Chapter Two and elaborated on in subsequent chapters are not unlike those recommended by conflict theorists Frost and Wilmot (1978) to reduce defensiveness. These include (a) neutral descriptions of the situation, without an implied need for anyone to change; (b) a problem orientation—expressing a desire to work on a mutual problem without predetermined opinions; (c) empathy for the feelings and attitudes of the other; and (d) minimization of differences in skill, position, or intelligence.

When two or more persons get past their initial suspicions and begin to approach a conflict as their problem, noted Deutsch (1969), their talk is often lively, intense, and impassioned but at the same time creative, engaging, satisfying, and even entertaining. In productive conflicts, he observes, positions are stated directly, and there is allowance for expressions of anger as something normal and expected, even helpful. There are likely to be expressions of warm feelings as well, but care is taken to avoid premature agreement, because this only masks the underlying problem. Often, it helps to divide the conflict into parts and begin discussion of the more easily resolvable issues. Success in solving these problems breeds success with others. It also serves as a reminder of positive qualities in the other party and of common bonds. It may also lead to the realization that there is room for compromise. In breaking the conflict into parts, the two parties may even discover that their different values make trade-offs possible, each party “giving” on one issue so as to “get” on another.

Strategies of Negotiation

This section features the advice given by Kathleen (“Doc”) Reardon on negotiations. Reardon’s The Skilled Negotiator (2004) offers few formulas but a great many principles, illustrated with examples of “how to” and “how not to.” Here is a digest of Reardon on (1) Versatility, (2) “Intelligence-Gathering,” (3) Asking Questions, (4) Negotiation Styles, (5) Framing Options, (6) Power, and (7) Negotiation Ethics.

On versatility:

Don’t be too giving or too selfish. Reardon offers a “yes-but” to our preference for mutually satisfactory outcomes. “Win-win” solutions foster good feelings and long-term good will, but sometimes you may want to gain at the other’s expense (“win-lose”) or at least prevent the other from winning at your expense.

“Don’t get stuck in scripts.” Although it’s generally a good thing to take charge of the negotiations by setting the agenda, framing options, and leading with strength, sometimes it makes sense to bide your time, dance around the issues, and make concessions, taking a beating on X to get to Y.

Set goals flexibly. Decide what matters to you most in any given situation, but avoid telegraphing it before you have heard where the other side stands and be ready to change even primary goals as new opportunities arise.

For every issue to be negotiated prepare a BATNA: a “Best Alternative to a Negotiated Agreement.” (pp. 63-4). The best BATNAs, she says, are carefully chosen in advance. That way you’re not at a loss as to what to propose should your optimal goal prove unattainable. And that way you won’t be implicitly communicating a sense of frustration or failure.

Whatever your goals, don’t be too eager for closure and don’t give your cards away. In one of her blogs Reardon comments on mistakes made by the Obama administration in treading too softly with the Republican opposition in Congress, letting it be known, for example, that Obama was committed to bi-partisan solutions to health care problems. Her point was not that Obama should have opposed bi-partisan solutions, but rather that he gave away too much bargaining ground by committing himself to them prematurely.

Prepare a repertoire of possible responses to the moves the other party is liable to make. Think ahead several moves, as expert chess players are wont to do. By contrast, says Reardon, amateur chess players [and negotiators] are easily led. “They react to the moves of their opponents without sufficient forethought and so are easily lured by expert communicators into abandoning their goals.” (p. 33)

On “Intelligence-Gathering”:

Says Reardon, “long-term endeavors”…require a learning process perspective on negotiation – attention to the short-term in service of the long term.” (p. 19) Reardon provides the example of Nelson Mandela who, even during his eighteen years as a prisoner of South Africa’s apartheid regime, was “sizing up all sides to a question and getting to know the enemy.”(p. 19).

Become increasingly self-aware. Learn how others see you and how they see you seeing them. Do you appear confident or insecure, for example? Do you smile too quickly in negotiations, thus signaling a willingness to settle prematurely?

Find out about the other’s goals, expectations, attitudes, and perceptions. To do so, ask lots of questions.

On Asking Questions:

Open-ended questions such as “How do you feel about X?” or “What are you hoping to achieve today?” should be asked in the early stages.

Conditional questions become more useful as the negotiation proceeds. This involves probing for specific information about proposals. Questions like “What would happen if we were to…? And “If we proceed as you suggest, what will that mean for …?” are useful. Conditional questions don’t pin either side down. They focus on hypothetical conditions. “If we develop a three-year contract, what would be the advantages and disadvantages for you? (Reardon, TSN, 2004, 13).

Leading questions can prompt the other to self-persuade. For example, “What would you do if you were in our shoes”? “Were you as impressed as I was with the tactics used by the X company?” “Is there a lesson here for us?” (Reardon, 2004, 14). Self-disclosures may also be used to encourage reciprocal disclosures.

In general, says Reardon, questions can unearth hidden assumptions, ensure that what was said is what was heard, and prompt the other negotiating party to make your points.

On Framing Options:

The same options can be contextualized in positive, gain-oriented terms or in negative, loss-prevention terms. It’s usually best, says Reardon, to accent the positive, although people tend to be so loss-averse that they will miss out on net gains to protect what they have.

Early-stage framing sets the tone for negotiations, for example, by describing the negotiation as “an opportunity for us to discover the common ground that we know exists despite surface difficulties.” (Reardon, 109) Similarly, the negotiator might propose beginning with issue X because, as we both know, “it is the foundation on which all the other issues rest. We could postpone the issue, and pretend that it does not exist, but that would be tantamount to mutual deception.” (Reardon, 109).

Aim at what Erving Goffman (1967) called focused interactions, wherein people join together to maintain a shared focus of concern. Says Reardon, when people share a common focus of concern, “certain types of action become required, others prohibited, and still others irrelevant.” (p. 109) Suggesting the focus for interaction goes hand in hand with framing what’s most centrally at issue and how it can most usefully be approached. “Disadvantage accrues,” maintains Reardon, to those who leave frames to chance, who leave them to the other side to manage, or who simply assume that the other side assumes their frame.” (Reardon, p. 110)

Reframing has an important place in negotiations as well. Reardon provides the example of an optimistic reframe, used to counter a skeptic’s pessimistic frame. The issue was whether to go in on a joint venture. The skeptic had sketched on a white board the image of a large tree hanging precariously over a cliff. Rather than erasing that image, the venture proponent went outside the box, expanding the original sketch to include deep roots. Here is yet another example of metaphors as frames.

On Power:

Power, as Reardon characterizes it, is surprisingly malleable. Sure it’s true that executives in the highest echelons of a company have more power than their underlings. But, says Reardon, respect counts for more in the long run than formal authority. A senior executive agreed: I’ve seen supervisors with authoritative power get only what they asked for….Supervisors with respect find that people offer to do more and take on more responsibility, which in turn lightens the management load.” (p. 151).

Skilled negotiators, says Reardon, make use of power but not exclusively. They make people feel good about being with them. They opt not to exert available power so as to crush the other party or severely limit their sense of decisional freedom. Ironically, when they withhold the use of power they often give the impression that they possess a great deal of power—more than they actually possess.

Suppose, then, that Reardon were in delicate negotiations over something seemingly unrelated to “The American Dream”: whether, for example, pay increases for workers at the Beta Corporation should be adjusted to changes in the cost of living. The negotiations are going well until, out of the blue, her counterpart waxes eloquent about “The American Dream” and looks to her for support of the premise. Would this prompt her to risk “win-lose”? Probably not. (The coolheaded Reardon counsels that negotiators should be less concerned with who’s right than with what people believe.) But if it did you can be sure that she’d respond tactfully, authoritatively, with good evidence, and not before she’d asked her counterpart a dozen questions, in a manner that was not ego-threatening.

On Ethics:

Reardon describes ethics in negotiations as a “sticky wicket.” Define it too rigidly and few negotiators can be found who comply with all of its rules of conduct. Says Reardon, negotiators exaggerate. They pretend not to be in a hurry. They ask for more than they expect to get. They seldom reveal their bottom lines. Proscribe these customary practices and ethics itself becomes irrelevant, of use only to those who stand to benefit by violating its “thou shalt nots” to the other side’s detriments. On ethics in negotiations, Reardon is not a Platonist; not an ethical absolutist of any kind. (Reardon, pp. 61-62)

But Reardon believes it is possible for opposing parties to settle up front on contextual rules of ethical engagement for their negotiations. To a long-term negotiating counterpart you might say, “Let’s try today to continue to treat each other with the respect and regard that has made our relationship so strong.” To a new negotiating party, you might say (in language and in a presentational style with which you feel comfortable), “Let’s agree right now to treat each other with dignity; to reject pressures to manipulate, bully, or in any way demonstrate the kind of disrespect that can only damage our short- and long-term goals.” Then, assuming at least a nod of agreement, you can issue a gentle reminder should the negotiations veer off the agreed upon track, taking care of course to stay on track yourself.

In general, says Reardon persuasion is ethically preferable to manipulation or coercion. “Persuasion is not something an individual does to another person. It is done with another person. It is not always pure, but it relies more on strong evidence and skillful communication than on trickery and force.” (Reardon, p. 90)

Limits of Presidential Persuasion

On health care as on other “safety net” issues, interviews of ordinary Americans reveal considerable ambivalence, suggesting that presidential rhetoric could make converts of opponents. But other data attests to the limits of presidential persuasion at shifts of this kind. Presidential rhetoric is far more effective at intensifying the views of those already convinced.

Among presidents, John F. Kennedy displayed extraordinary skill at his press conferences, Ronald Reagan at political theater, Barack Obama when his back was up against the wall.

For all that’s been said in this book about the power of persuasion we need also to recognize its limitations. Seldom does presidential persuasion win converts from one moment to the next. That usually takes time and even then is likely to be met with resistance. As against Richard Neustadt’s claim that “The power of the presidency is the power to persuade” (Klein, March 19, 2012), Texas A& M’s George Edwards has analyzed the persuasive effectiveness of several reputedly spellbinding American presidents and has found unchanged approval ratings and policy rhetoric that backfired. (Edwards, 2012) His list of under-achievers includes Franklin Delano Roosevelt, Bill Clinton, George W. Bush and Barack Obama, all of whom believed in the power of presidential rhetoric to win the day. Ronald Reagan won a landslide re-election victory in 1984, but public support for the legislation he opposed increased during his tenure in office. According to Edwards, Reagan’s real accomplishment was in exploiting a conservative tide in the late nineteen-seventies that preceded him. (Edwards, 2012)

Says Ezra Klein, “Being President isn’t the same as running for President.” When you’re running for President, giving a good speech helps you achieve your goals. When you are President, giving a good speech may intensify the already favorable views of your supporters but also boomerang on the opposing party, making it harder to govern in abi-partisan manner. (p?) When presidents succeed it is often despite their rhetoric rather than because of it. Nothing succeeds as well as an improved economy. (Edwards, 2012)

Edwards’s work suggests that Presidential persuasion isn’t effective with the public. Lee’s work suggests that Presidential persuasion might actually have an anti-persuasive effect on the opposing party in Congress. And, because our system of government usually requires at least some members of the opposition to work with the President if anything is to get done, that suggests that the President’s attempts at persuasion might have the perverse effect of making it harder for him to govern. “Presidents win victories because ordinary Americans feel that their lives are going well, and we call those Presidents great communicators, because their public persona is the part of them we know.” (Klein, 2012)

But there are limits to these limits on Presidential persuasion. John F. Kennedy inspired a generation of young Americans to volunteer for government service in the Peace Corps. Lyndon Johnson convinced Congress to pass civil rights legislation. Richard Nixon helped engineer America’s opening to China. In going to war against little Granada, Ronald Reagan deflected attention from the loss of U.S. Marines in Lebanon. More significantly his saber-rattling diplomacy helped bring an end to the Cold War. Barack Obama’s televised public seminar on health insurance was a singular achievement in rescuing the Affordable Health care act from defeat

Power without Persuasion

Political leaders may fail at persuasion and still succeed by utilizing their other tools of influence. Stymied in their efforts to get judicial and administrative appointees approved by the Senate, presidents may make recess appointments. New bureaus may be created by Executive Order and once in operation, can create a fait accompli effect. Military actions may likewise be ordered and once in place gain grudging acceptance. Signing statements accompanying signatures on new legislation may gain the force of law as interpretations by a President of his legislative intent. And presidents can negotiate deals in place of persuasive appeals or issue threats to get their way. A sound rule-of-thumb: act first, justify afterwards. (Howell, 2003; Klein, 2012).

**Summary**

In its shift of focus from political campaigns to democratic governance this chapter has asked what rational deliberation can possibly mean in our dilemma-laden political climate. How rational—or at least reasonable—are office-holders and ordinary citizens at weighing their options. From evidence of elected officials’ flips and flops on policy matters, it appears that they bend opportunistically to necessity, seldom daring to innovate, and given to motivated reasoning based on cognitive shorthands. Other evidence, of selective perception, cognitive shorthands and priming effects suggests that they—(and we)—are rationalizing animals rather than rational animals.

Much of this chapter identified dilemmas of deliberation in political contexts, as doing what’s right versus doing what’s smart (i.e.) expedient.

Ordinary citizens tend to be risk averse, so much so that they cannot be expected to act on their own best interests. We saw examples of this on health-related issues (e.g. KiGulbranson). On these issues there is evidence that attests to the limits of presidential persuasion at converting opponents. But, in the presidencies of Ronald Reagan, Bill Clinton and Barack Obama (for example) we saw evidence that there are limits to these limits. Moreover political leaders may fail at persuasion and still succeed at realizing their ambitions.

The “Wealth Gap Controversy

The post-World War movements and counter-movements that divided the world (including the U.S, Western Europe, Latin America and much of Asia) have opened wide the floodgates to ideological currents of thought, and their negations, that would have been unthinkable in nations recovering from the war. Conservatism in the U.S. has taken a libertarian turn while opening divides on economic and foreign policy issues, making possible neo-con support for military adventurism (as in the invasions of Iraq and Afghanistan), and the popularity of xenophobic, anti-immigrant candidates for the Republican presidential nomination.

The democratic mainstream remains committed to American exceptionalism and a reluctance to tamper with “free market” capitalism, but on social issues such as gay marriage, legalization of marijuana, and abortion on demand, it has clearly moved to the left, as has the U.S. Supreme Court in its decisions. Senator Bernie Sanders has helped make socialism respectable in the Democratic Party.

Many liberals of late have joined with socialists, environmentalists and religious activists (such as Pope Francis and Mohammed Mesbahi) in a world-wide movement to ameliorate economic inequalities, achieve climate control, bring an end to world hunger, and, more, generally, to share the world’s resources (STWR) on the basis of justice and equity, all this under the rubric of “A Marshall Plan for the Earth.” Needed, says Naomi Klein (2014) is a “movement of movements” that reinvigorates democracy from the ground up.

A pressing question for today’s policy makers is how, if at all, to deal with economic inequality? Is it the price advanced economies must pay for continued economic growth and technological innovation?

Some figures on economic inequality—sometimes called the “wealth gap”—help place the issue in vivid perspective, The average American believes that slightly less than 60% of the wealth is owned by the wealthiest fifth of Americans, but the top 20% of U.S. households own over 84% of the wealth while the bottom 40% combine for just .03% and the Walton family which founded Wal-Mart is richer than the bottom 42%.

Economic historian Thomas Picketty (2015) offers northern European “cuddly” capitalism as a preferable alternative to the “cut-throat” capitalism of more competitive nations, such as the United States, and he proposes increased taxation of the wealthy (such as the top one per cent) as his solution. Their welfare state capitalism, he argues, makes life enjoyable for a greater number of people and encourages altruism, a value on which the good life depends. Yet most Americans tend to see themselves as middle class and are taught to believe that they can climb the economic ladder. The values of getting ahead and competitiveness are enshrined in Americans’ dominant ideology.

New York Times columnists David Brooks (Jan. 16, 2014) and Thomas Friedman (Feb. 17, 2016) argue cogently that inequality is the price that must be paid for American inventiveness and competitiveness.

For Brooks the “real” issue is immobility: “There is a growing class of people stuck on the margins, with high drop-out rates, fewer low-skill jobs a breakdown in family structures. Increasing the minimum wage has no effect for people “stuck on the margins, generation after generation,” and therefore unable to cope.

Friedman celebrates America’s “culture of entrepreneurship. “America didn’t become the richest country in the world by practicing socialism.”

But shouldn’t the largest share of the burden fall on those best able to pay for it? This is Thomas Picketty’s argument, and he calls for a global tax on the richest five percent, those best able to afford it.

Nobel Prize economist Joseph Stieglitz offers Singapore as an exemplar of “cuddly” capitalism’s economic growth potential. Its paternalist leadership has seen to it that Singaporeans live comfortably and are well educated. (2013).On quality of life measures he says, the U.S. fairs poorly, not much better than Chile.

[note: I’d like to add the rhetoric of Sarah Brady (Jim’s wife) on gun control as she took on the NRA.]

**Questions for thought and discussion**

1. How should world leaders deal with problems of world-wide economic inequality? What would convince wealthy leaders to support a reduction of the wealth gap? What arguments would you use?
2. Is there a dominant ideology in the U.S. or are there many competing ideologies?
3. You are a PR expert, hired by the Republican brain trust to engage in damage control every time Donald Trump puts his foot in his mouth, letting loose with a statement he later regrets. Provide 1 such example with an imagined case of your own choosing.
4. Using the stock issues for propositions of policy, outline the arguments for and against increased gun control.

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**Chapter 8**

**Race, Liberalism, and Barbiegate Discourse**

**(essay adapted from my chapter in The Prettier Doll: Rhetoric, Discourse, and Ordinary Democracy, ed by Karen Tracy, James P. McDaniel, and Bruce E. Gronbeck. Tuscaloosa, AL: U Alabama Press.)**

In this chapter:

* Introduction
* A Dilemma-Centered Analysis of Barbiegate Rhetoric
* Propositional Claims
  + Proposition I
  + Proposition II
  + Proposition III
  + Proposition IV
* Summary and Conclusions

**Introduction**

Heading north from Denver on a suburban highway offering splendid views of the Rockies to the west, one soon comes upon Boulder, Colorado and to the nearby communities that together constitute the Boulder Valley School District (BVSD). Home to the University of Colorado’s flagship campus, Boulder is in many ways an idyllic city; affluent, cosmopolitan, blessed by climate and geography, a center for learning and research.

A ring of open space surrounds the city and a creek bringing water from on high runs through it. Leading out from Boulder toward the Rockies are bikeways and hiking trails, along which the habituated local traveler moves easily through the thin mountain air while the visitor huffs and puffs.[[9]](#endnote-9)Proximity to the Rockies has brought tourism to Boulder, which, together with high tech start-ups and other University-related sources of purchasing power, insures an ample supply of good eateries, watering holes, and cultural amenities. The fast-growing suburban enclaves that border the city partake of its benefits, and they, like Boulder, are generous in support of their public institutions.

Not incidentally, Boulder is also a liberal Mecca. It combines classical with progressive liberalism, of a kind that has lost favor in much of the United States, but is nevertheless a source of civic pride. Colorado, like the rest of America, is *classically* liberal in the sense of commitments to such well-established liberal values as democratic decision-making, good government, the rule of law, public education, respect for the individual, freedom of speech and of the press, and a modicum of compassion for the less fortunate.[[10]](#endnote-10) These accoutrements of a centuries old ideological tradition in Western Europe and America are so well entrenched as to be honored even by social and political conservatives.[[11]](#endnote-11)They are among the values of our Founding Fathers and of the British parliamentary tradition, from Locke through Bentham and Mill, and they have found their way into the workings of local communities and local institutions.

But Boulder is also progressively liberal,[[12]](#endnote-12) and thus is seen in some parts of Colorado as “ultra-liberal” and even as “crazy” liberal. People of a progressively liberal bent migrate to the Boulder area, and they in turn help sustain its liberal ethos. As characterized by more conservative Coloradoans, Boulder sends “tax-and-spend” liberals to Congress and to the state legislature. Its morality, if you can call it that, is a throwback to the freewheeling, overly permissive values of the sixties. Its Open Space regulations are hypocritical, defended in the name of environmental preservation, but providing a bonanza to homeowners in the form of skyrocketing real estate prices. In fact, Boulderites tolerate, and indeed celebrate, lifestyle diversity to a far greater degree than in such conservative enclaves as Colorado Springs.[[13]](#endnote-13) They place a far higher premium on social and economic equality, as illustrated by the emphasis placed at the 2/27/01 Boulder Valley School District (BVSD) meeting on closing the educational achievement gap. And, as was also manifested at the 2/27 BVSD meeting, they are especially sensitive to issues of race.

**Insert picture here**

Into this progressively liberal environment came news that a committee of teachers at BVSD’s Mesa Elementary School, overseeing a Science Fair, had first permitted but then “pulled” a third grader’s “Barbie” experiment, one that reportedly provided scientific evidence of a preference by fifth graders for a white Barbie over a black Barbie, whatever the color of the Barbie’s dress. They did so moreover, in the name of sensitivity to the minority students in Mesa Elementary, albeit at the risk of appearing insensitive to the girl who did the study and of seeming all too eager to cover over what may have been the fifth graders’ learned prejudices. The decision also called into question their commitment to other liberal values, including freedom of speech and of scientific inquiry. Thus, *l’affaire Barbie-gate*, including news of the experiment and of its removal from the Science Fair competition, exposed fissures in the community’s liberal ideology; made all the more embarrassing by the attention Barbiegate received well beyond the BVSD’s boundaries.

The ‘Barbie-gate’ saga is of interest to rhetoricians like me for many of the same reasons that it garnered press attention nationwide. Here on a human scale was a drama of great forensic complexity, a comedy in Burke’s sense of the term,[[14]](#endnote-14) featuring well-meaning citizens at loggerheads over what it meant to “do the right thing.” At one level, the drama was geographically confined, but other communities could identify with Barbie-gate because in a broader sense, its problems were their own.

And, indeed, the Barbie-gaters seemed caught up in conflicts that were not entirely of their own making. The questions of justice and policy that circulated through the proceedings and press commentaries were given a distinctive cast by affluent Boulder’s distinctive mix of classical and progressive liberalism. Barbie-gate was also symptomatic of larger conflicts between liberals and conservatives, and within liberalism since the early successes of the civil rights movement.[[15]](#endnote-15) Race figured prominently in Barbie-gate discourse, and in much else that was raised at the 2/27 School Board meeting. Even as they differed over Barbie-gate, those who addressed its racial implications bespoke commitments to one or another variant of liberal ideology.

Ideologies are widely shared systems of belief that arise out of peoples’ needs to make sense of the world. They are the glue that binds ideas together, including ideas so seemingly disparate as capital punishment and right-to-life; love thy enemy and just war. In this sense, they are strategically adapted to our need for a unifying “common sense.” But because ideologies must square so many circles, serve so many masters, be adapted to so many situations, they require a degree of flexibility—of meaning, of purpose, of logic—that may strain credulity and even appear contradictory. Thus, the same ideology that draws us together may also divide us from each other and even from ourselves and hence the need to address these problems rhetorically.

**A Dilemma-Centered Analysis of Barbiegate Rhetoric**

This essay offers an analysis of Barbiegate discourse, taken as a whole. It also ventures separate rhetorical assessments of textual fragments by some of Barbiegate’s principal actors: among them the complainant, David Thielen, the “defendants” and their supporters, and various school board members, including Board Vice-President Bill De la Cruz.

It does so with a view toward gleaning larger lessons from Barbiegate, all the while as it underscores the distinctive, local, situated character of the discourse itself. It likewise brings a theoretical and historical framework to bear upon the textual fragments being examined, rather than treating them *atomistically*, or at a purely local level, as some discourse analysts are wont to do.

Throughout this book, the approach that I take to rhetorical analysis is dilemma-centered.[[16]](#endnote-16)I look for evidence of rhetorical dilemmas in the discourse being examined and in the larger currents of ideological opinion that swirl through Boulder and beyond. I look too for more mundane tensions. The “Barbiegaters” are enacting roles, representing agencies and institutions, speaking for constituencies, and in so doing confronting the usual run of rhetorical problems for people in their positions. How to appeal to multiple and diverse audiences, balance ethics against expediency, weigh the long term against the short? How to contest while appearing cooperative, preserve one’s options while appearing wedded to principle, wield power while appearing to cede it to others, serve one’s individual or group interests while also (perhaps) seeking to promote the greater good?

Finding evidence of rhetorical dilemmas in the tape and transcripts made available to the book’s contributors was not difficult. On opposing sides of various divides, the leading Barbiegaters trafficked in ambiguities, hid behind platitudes, dodged ultra-sensitive issues, smoothed over other tough issues that could not be ignored, and came dangerously close in some cases to contradicting themselves. But these apparent defects of character or logic can be understood and perhaps even admired given the rhetorical predicaments the Barbiegaters confronted. One value of dilemma-centered analysis is that it renders talk explicable which might otherwise seem anomalous or immoral. Recurrent patterns of such talk also provide indicators of larger societal problems. And, as was repeatedly illustrated in Billig et al’s *Ideological Dilemmas* (1989), talk of this kind is rhetorically interesting from artistic and theoretical perspectives.[[17]](#endnote-17)Skilled practitioners of the art often find ways to extricate themselves from dilemmas or to practice effective damage control. But even the best practitioners may compound their rhetorical problems in their efforts to manage them.[[18]](#endnote-18)Dilemma-centered analysis also reveals limitations in prescribed *forms* of talk. I find evidence of that in the inability of the school officials to mount their strongest case.

Much that I have to offer in this chapter in the way of conclusions from the evidence will be impressionistic. This is due in part to questions left unanswerable in the record made available to the book’s contributors. How, for example, did the Barbiegate story get press attention, and why did it take two weeks for it to break in the press? Who else within the community did Thielen talk to, besides ACLU representatives, and with what effect? What behind-the-scenes conversations took place between Thielen and BVSD officials in the period between the “pulling” of his daughter’s science project and the first BVSD meeting (2/13/01) at which he registered his complaint? Who were the various school and BVSD officials, what did they say to each other, and who carried the most weight? What strategies, if any, did they develop for responding to press reports? How did the story play on local radio and TV, or in CU Boulder’s widely read daily newspaper? When did it become national and even international news, and how were those accounts read by the Boulder Valley community?[[19]](#endnote-19)

I had related questions. Because Barbiegate took place in Boulder proper, did that lead residents of BVSD who lived outside the hub city to distance themselves from it—as a Boulder problem but not a Boulder Valley problem? Was Boulder liberalism such as to produce tinges of liberal guilt over the way its fifth graders had voted? Was this yet another sign that Boulder’s children lacked the liberal zeal of their parents, and might even go over to the other side? Had anyone talked with the children who participated in the experiment or who learned about it second hand?

Then, too, one could raise legitimate questions about the competence and freedom from bias of this message analyst. Despite these limitations, I remain reasonably confident about the epistemological stance taken in the paper and about the impressions here recorded. Early on, in preparation for this article, I decided against posing as a disinterested spectator while at the same time not claiming to bracket issues of truth or falsity, wisdom or folly--for example, by adopting the stance of the methodological or programmatic relativist.[[20]](#endnote-20) Neither stance seemed appropriate for a crisis of this sort, one that fairly cried out for truth-claims that could not, however, be vouchsafed by appeal to some foundational court of last resort. I would be operating then in the contingent realm of judgment rather than certainty, required to own up to my own liberalism, while also making clear that I was not blinded to its problems.

Would I also be obliged therefore to acknowledge that my own relativism rendered me incapable of choosing between competing logics—those, for example, of Thielen and of the teachers who decided to remove his daughter’s Science Fair project? I don’t believe so. Not always is a choice necessary, and even when one is called for, the choice can be defended on non-foundationalist, contingent grounds, as Barbara Herrnstein Smith has argued.[[21]](#endnote-21)In his introduction to *Ideological Dilemmas*, Billig and his colleagues make precisely this point as regards the conventional wisdom of a dominant cultural ideology like classical liberalism. True, he says, it will contain a *logoi* and a *Dissoi-logoi*, as reflected in seemingly contradictory aphorisms. Do many hands make light work? They do, in some circumstances. But it may also be the case on occasion that too many cooks spoil the broth. To the person who is excessively cautious, it may be appropriate to say, “Nothing ventured, nothing gained.” To the excessively venturesome, a word of caution may be called for: “Look before you leap.” Smith and Billig make clear that one can argue relativistically and yet persuasively.

What, then, will we be able to say about the reliability of this visitor’s Barbiegate analysis? Will the story I tell account for the discourse of Barbiegate, “capture” its essence, resolve its mysteries, and vindicate my theoretical framework? Or will this (inadvertently? ultimately?) be a story of my liberalism, my affluence, my liberal guilt, my misimpressions of Boulder culture, my chutzpah in presuming to know what caused what, my rhetorical problems in attempting both to appear credible as a message analyst and at the same time both opinionated and modestly self-effacing? I may be the last to know.

**Propositional Claims**

The following observations and judgments about Barbiegate discourse are arrayed as numbered propositions.

*Proposition I:*

*Boulder (and Boulder Valley more generally) was embroiled in paradox by virtue of its mix of affluence and progressive liberalism.*

Boulder’s affluence made its progressive brand of liberalism affordable, and this is no small thing. But this also had the effect of keeping “Denver-like” problems like poverty and race conflict from Boulder’s doors, thus rendering it vulnerable to charges that it was really a haven for white privilege, giving mere lip service to its concerns for the poor and the oppressed. A March 1 editorial in the Daily Camera took aim at Boulder liberalism. “Here in Boulder, this ocean of mostly-white faces, we may use all of the politically correct labels…and we may yearn to be accepted as the tolerant, supportive people we believe we are, but we are not immune from the taint of prejudice….”The editorial goes on to provide a telling example. Based on self-acknowledged prejudicial “profiling” by a resident of an upscale Boulder neighborhood, Boulder police accosted two young Latinos, both innocent of an alleged robbery, and manhandled them before questioning them. Says the editorialist, “We live (by choice) in an environment where we seldom have to live our words. It’s easy ‘armchair’ philosophizing.”[[22]](#endnote-22)

A mix of affluence and progressive liberalism also raises the bar for communities like Boulder, preventing them from ever appearing “good enough.” There are always larger problems to be solved (e.g., famine in Africa, mistreatment of animals) requiring larger expenditures of public resources. And conservatives are right when they express skepticism about how much government can do. Thus, affluent progressive liberalism is an easy target for criticism, even from those it seeks most to help. I believe Mesa PTA President Jordana Ash when she says that Mesa Elementary is “an incredible school, an award-winning school.”[[23]](#endnote-23) And I believe board members Teresa Steele and Jean Bonelli when they express particular concern for the needs of underperforming minority children. But that still leaves Boulder liberals vulnerable to verbal darts from those whose praise it most ardently seeks. Boulder may or may not have “a history of hating black folks,” as Million Man March representative Alvertis Simmons alleged at the 2/27 school board meeting,[[24]](#endnote-24)but it would not be surprising if many black folks in cities like Denver hated Boulder, despite its good works and even better intentions.

*Proposition II:*

*L’affaire Barbiegate posed a series of rhetorical dilemmas, made especially vexing because the Boulder community is liberal, is well-meaning, and is also vulnerable to charges of hypocrisy on the very sorts of issues it was forced to confront.*

Consider first the questions of whether and when one should conceal or reveal one’s prejudices. The adult white subjects in the Barbiegate experiment were savvy enough to express a preference for the lavender dress, not the Barbie with a skin color similar to their own. Arguably, this is a good thing. Direct expressions of racist feelings and beliefs have become anathema in America. But owning up to prejudice can also be regarded as a good thing. The woman who mistakenly implicated the two Latinos in a robbery was congratulated for admitting to unconscious prejudices. Who among us, after all, is not prejudiced? But suppose that the adult white Barbie subjects had responded as the fifth graders had done? Board member Janusz Okolowicz speculated that they may have “lied.”[[25]](#endnote-25)True enough! But their honesty, normally considered a virtue, would not in this case have been rewarded. What’s the difference?

Consider next the dilemmas confronting David Thielen. Should he have played the outraged St. George, eager to slay the dragon of racism? If so, whose racism? The fifth graders? That would have alienated his adult audiences. And besides, he probably was sincere when he theorized on 2/13 that the result of the experiment was “not necessarily a racist one.”[[26]](#endnote-26) Still, why on 2/27 did Thielen bring up the Clarks’ study of preferences by white children for white over black dolls; if not to suggest that these fifth graders had already acquired the seeds of prejudice? And why did he buttress this point with evidence that children start making distinctions about race at age three?

How, then, should Thielen have framed his complaint? As an indictment of the kids’ parents, of Mesa school officials, of school board members? And for what? For having made the subject of current race problems taboo? For failure to prevent the seeds of prejudice from growing? For failure to seize upon a “teachable moment” with a full airing of the issues raised by his daughter’s research findings? Thielen himself seemed unclear about the import of those findings in his initial presentation to the board: “Um and i—it’s not a terribly surprising result, and in my view not a terrib—not necessarily a racist one either.”[[27]](#endnote-27)And perhaps he also feared that interpreting the findings as evidence of racist attitudes could add fuel to the argument that the experiment itself created racial animosities—in violation of BVSD anti-discrimination policy: “Um, the experiment was not derogatory, it was not racially discriminatory—it’s right there—did not create racial animosity. And its conclusion was incredibly innocuous.”[[28]](#endnote-28)

Consider also the dilemmas confronting the school officials. Their professional judgments were at stake in what shaped up as a “sensitivity” contest with no clear rules Janusz Okolowicz put the matter well when he said that “in Boulder Valley, sensitivity is the only commandment; thou shall be sensitive to replace all the other commandments. But sensitivity doesn’t have a standard, it is in the eye of the beholder. Therefore, all kinds of fine, upstanding people, and we hear all of them around, feel incensed—try to show that they are also sensitive to something else. And, we have the real orgy of sensitivity.”[[29]](#endnote-29) Okolowicz comes down eventually on the side of “the little girl”[[30]](#endnote-30) who did the science experiment and on science itself, but not before he had indicated that there was a “logoi” and a “dissoi logoi” in the matter of the Barbiegate experiment, and that issues of racial sensitivity intersected with others, such as freedom of speech.

L’affaire Barbiegate also prompted discussion of other issues of race and ethnicity. Were Boulderites who “profiled” guilty of racism? Had the BVSD done enough in its efforts to close the school achievement gap? Could school choice be reconciled with classical liberalism’s standard of equality of opportunity? Should BVSD set itself the more demanding goal of equality of results? Did its multiculturalism curriculum paper over race and ethnicity problems that needed to be confronted directly?

*Proposition III****:***

*The race controversies that Boulderites confronted were not entirely of their own making. They were reflective of broader divisions of opinion within liberalism over the past fifty years.*

Of special interest were questions of meaning. Liberalism has never been just a political philosophy or program of action. It has also been a hermeneutic with none-too-clear rules of interpretation. On matters of race, what did it mean to be liberal? Too liberal? Not liberal enough? And what did it mean to be racist?[[31]](#endnote-31) Consider the following:

1. Liberals entered the civil rights movement, as Martin Luther King Jr. did, with a clear-cut commitment to a color-blind society that would guarantee equality of opportunity. On balance, the civil rights movement was extremely successful. But as discrimination persisted and as massive government efforts to overcome the effects of past discrimination produced disappointing outcomes, liberals began to seek race-conscious remedies the test of which would be equality of results. Thus liberal universities like my own that initially declared themselves to be “Equal Opportunity” employers now announced, much more ambiguously, that they were “Equal Opportunity, Affirmative Action” employers.
2. The civil rights movement fragmented in the mid-sixties, its steadfast commitments to nonviolence and racial integration giving way to calls for black nationalism and black power “by any means necessary.” Besides fueling a conservative backlash that is still with us today, the movement’s increasing militancy placed greater strains on liberalism’s self-definition. Did rejection of black nationalism and of black power mean that liberals had sold out? Did endorsement of black nationalism and of black power mean that they had abandoned their earlier commitments to racial integration and nonviolence? And what of the increasing lawlessness during the mid- to late sixties? At what point, for example, did liberals need to stop explaining the ghetto riots as manifestations of white racism and begin blaming the rioters for their transgressions?
3. Also increasingly uncertain were questions of who and what was racist. The frustrations experienced by the civil rights movement in the mid- to late sixties convinced many liberals that racism was far more pervasive than had previously been thought and required expanded definitions and better radar-detection. Government had not done enough to overcome institutional racism, covert racism, the naturalized racism of white privilege. But liberals became ensnared by their own rhetoric. The seventies were marked by increased sensitivity to language and to signs of racism in nonverbal behavior. Hence the need, it was assumed, for diversity workshops at which unconscious racists, white liberals included, could learn to appreciate Otherness. This had something of the quality of a double-bind in that to protest against being labeled as racist could be construed as further proof of one’s racism.
4. The culture wars of the seventies and eighties exacerbated fears that what began as an effort to heighten sensitivities wound up stifling thought. With greater awareness of how prejudices were formed had come increased scrutiny of what was taught in the schools as well as “liberatory” efforts at rectification. Similar efforts were directed toward reforming the mass media and popular culture. Not incidentally, liberals pressed the Mattel Corporation to add Black Barbies to its collection of curvaceous Caucasians. But liberals divided over what came to be called “political correctness,” the alleged substitution of dogma for critical inquiry. Typifying the larger conflict was the debate over the literary canon. Liberals responded enthusiastically to calls for an expansion of the literary canon, but many had difficulty with blanket repudiations of the old canon as the work of “dead white males.”Similarly, they endorsed multiculturalism but not necessarily at the price of repudiating western culture’s (Eurocentric?) commitments to universal human rights.
5. Liberals were at a loss to explain the persistence through the nineties of race-related problems that had resisted their best efforts at ameliorating them. Some problems were largely confined to the inner city, but others knew no boundaries: the persistence, for example, of academic achievement gaps across socioeconomic classes and age levels, even in school districts like Boulder Valley’s, that had worked hard to remove them. Some explanations were unthinkable to liberals: genetic inferiority, for one. Others were undiscussable: e.g., the 1972 Moynihan Report on dysfunctional features of black inner-city culture. That report was essentially shelved for many years with the blessing of liberals. And liberals were torn between employing victimage explanations and urging poor blacks not to think of themselves as victims, lest this become a self-fulfilling prophecy. Meanwhile, conservatives were having little difficulty coming up with explanations. Too much government. It had stifled creativity, encouraged infantile dependence, become part of the problem. Too little choice, self-initiative, reliance on the wisdom of the free marketplace.

This is not to say that conservative ideology was seamlessly coherent. Fiscal conservatives warred at times with social conservatives or maintained uneasy coalitions with them. Both groups vacillated between calls for judicial activism and judicial restraint on civil rights issues. Neither lived up to their expressions of compassion for the poor. The comfort religious conservatives took from consulting the Good Book became discomfiting when the Book seemed ambiguous or inconsistent. Fiscal conservatives who preached “free market economics” also used government to secure their own ends. Even as they lobbied for more and more favorable tax policies, agro-business subsidies and other such forms of corporate welfare, they railed at victims of those policies for an inability to compete. And not infrequently they had their hands in the till.

But these problems were difficult for many Americans to comprehend. White collar crime may have had greater adverse consequences to average Americans than street crimes and welfare fraud, but Americans of nearly all income levels increasingly identified themselves with conservative versions of the American dream, which often included the pursuit of economic happiness at the expense of the already disadvantaged.

1. At century’s end, liberals were in rhetorical disarray. Bill Clinton had succeeded to the presidency (the first Democrat in decades) by presenting himself as a centrist. He called for a “Dialogue on Race,” but had little to say himself in the way of proposals for new legislation specifically aimed at redressing problems of past and continuing discrimination. Rather he essentially capitulated on conservative initiatives for welfare reform and longer prison terms for repeat offenders. His biggest accomplishment, from a liberal standpoint, was to stave off a conservative takeover of the Congress. Meanwhile, conservative think tanks were churning out new initiatives on race, many of them having to do with education. By February 2001, the time of Barbiegate, a conservative was back in the saddle, and liberals, despite all that they had done over a fifty-year period to rectify wrongs done to blacks, were now left licking their wounds.

*Proposition IV*:

*The Barbiegaters were for the most rhetorically astute, their apparent “defects of character or logic” providing evidence from a dilemma-centered perspective of competence at persuasion.*

1. The Complainant: Recall my earlier analysis of the dilemmas confronting David Thielen. Both within the local Boulder Valley arena and in the larger context of race and liberalism in America these past fifty years, Thielen’s waffling over whether to come forward, what was at issue, what needed to be done were understandable. Looked at another way, these apparent inconsistencies mirrored those of the community and thus could be appreciated as signs of a common humanity. In other ways Thielen projected exceptional qualities which, in combination with that common humanity, marked him as an ideal type persuader, a “super-representative” of those he was trying to influence, Thielen also came across as a concerned parent and a reluctant warrior, with passion sufficient to ignite a firestorm of controversy and wisdom enough to help put out the fire before it burned out of control. His second speech at the 2/27 board meeting cleverly expressed two kinds of appreciation, the first to be taken at face value, the second ironically. The first list of thanks was a long and inclusive one, beginning with gratitude for what his daughter had done and ending with “a huge thanks to MEAC.”[[32]](#endnote-32) The second list seemed initially to be an appendage to the first but had a Burkeian twist: with appreciation for those in the school system whose errors of judgment in support of yanking the science project had led a lot of people to realize a lot of valuable things. Presented in this light, the school officials were not vicious but simply mistaken, a very human failing, and not to be condemned for that. Little wonder that Thielen got a favorable press, his issue agenda becoming theirs substantially, his arguments shaping their editorial content.[[33]](#endnote-33)

The peroration to Thielen’s second 2/27 speechis stunningly eloquent. Admittedly, he says, race is difficult to talk about but it remains a huge issue that must be addressed, and not merely as a prepackaged lesson in the sterile confines of the classroom. The discussion should also not be confined to the bad things bad people did in the past; it must be extended to themuch more dangerous, i.e., “sensitive” territory of the “here and now…as it comes up.”[[34]](#endnote-34)

This is the hard fight we have to make. Studies have shown that children start disc—making distinctions about race at age three. And if we make the subject taboo, it means they make the decisions without our guidance. We talk to our children about drugs, we talk to them about sex. We should be talking to them about race. Our society has been stuck on the issue of race for the last thirty years, since 1970. And perhaps our children can show us the way out.[[35]](#endnote-35)

1. The Defendants and Their Supporters:Cicero taught us that what is eloquent is not necessarily wise. There are holes in Thielen’s argument, but his powerfully stated appealsfor free and open, “here-and-now” discussion were difficult to resist.Who could possibly object to waging the hard fight against racism, providing guidance to children before ugly stereotypes took form in their heads, being as candid about race as we are about sex and drugs?

This is not to say that pulling the Barbie experiment was wise.It was not. If the object was to contain the genie of race--to bottle up school discussions of race issuesas well as public discussions of race pedagogies--then the decision to remove the Barbie project was clearly counterproductive.Moreover, those who supported removal of the science project quickly became The Defense in the sensitivity contest.

On balance, the defense was rhetorically adept at handling its difficult rhetorical situation. Rhetorical critics seldom applaud banalities, but with the cards stacked against the defense, it was helpful to say what in other contexts would not have needed saying: for example, that “parents want the best for their children and so do the teachers at Mesa.”[[36]](#endnote-36) Some critics of the science fair project wisely paired their criticism with evidence of their progressively liberal, anti-racist bona fides. “Encourage our children to open their minds,” pleaded the Daily Camera’s Features Editor, Maria Cote: “Ask them to read the paper every day to understand that injustice exists everywhere, that prejudice burns ugly and deep in all parts of the country—not just in the South, not just in the past, but in every city and town, today.”[[37]](#endnote-37)Her argument took the form of the classic “yes-but” for such situations. Yes, there is racial inequality in Boulder County, as there is in the rest of the United States. And yes, racism and race relations are too often ignored. It’s true, adds Cote, that these subjects should not be taboo in classrooms. “*But*a third-grade classmate should not be delivering such lessons..”[[38]](#endnote-38)

At issue fundamentally for the defense were questions about what “belonged” where. The Barbie project was not “appropriate” for the science fair, said Clare Schoolmaster.It “belonged” in the classroom where it could be discussed.[[39]](#endnote-39) She had a point, which I shall return to. This, however, is tricky rhetorical ground in discourse directed toward adults. Words like “belongs” and “appropriate” play well in the elementary school classroom.They are teacherly words, often implying the authority of professional judgment. But left undefended, or inadequately defended, they appear more authoritarian than authoritative. On what everyone agreed was the “difficult” topic of race, much that was said by the defense seemed inadequate to the task of explaining why the Barbie project didn’t belong in the science fair.But that should not surprise us, for, just as it is difficult to teach race issues to little kids, so it isdifficult to defend one’s race pedagogies to adults. Clare Schoolmaster provided the most elaborate defense of the decision to pull the project but it relied heavily on speculative professional judgment. The fateful decision came after attempts to work out alternatives with the parents had failed, she said. Letting the project stand on its own was risky. It could have had the reverse effect from what was intended. The media might have had a field day with the decision as well. Speaking on behalf of the staff on 2/27, Schoolmaster emphasized that Mesa does not fear the topic of prejudice or intolerance. “As professionals, we made the decision in the best interest for all our students, staying true to teaching practices that are best for students’ developmental readiness, their capacity for understanding, and their ability to transfer their learning into usefulness for their lives.”

This sort of claims-making leaves the essential weaknesses in Thielen’s case still unexposed. Suppose, however, that someone as knowledgeable about race pedagogy as Schoolmastercould have gone toe to toe with David Thielen, in a forum where neither side enjoyed the presumption of moral superiority or suffered the presumption of error.What might such a school master have been able to say to him?

I think she might have begun with a word that they both used liberally, the word “discussion.”What did Thielen mean by discussion? Discussion how? Discussion for what?Did Thielen have in mind a *guided*discussion, something on the order of what Billig and his colleagues call “cued elicitation,” in which the teacher prompts the student to deliver the correct response?[[40]](#endnote-40) If so, how guided would Thielen have been willing to make the discussion? Would he as teacher have gone so far as to coerce a politically correct outcome? But if so, how open would that discussion be? And if, by contrast, Thielen would have insisted on a fully open discussion, what objections could he possibly register if, say, the prejudiced white students not only gave voice to their stereotypes, but also sought to justify them, and did so convincingly to the other students? “No,” our imagined school master might have said, a free and open discussion isn’t the answer either. And a discussion outcome that reinforced race prejudice wouldn’t sit well with Boulderites or with the larger society. So, we both must fall back on some such notion as “appropriateness.”

Our imagined school master might now take another tack. Clearly Mr. Thielen would not want little children to believe that all was well in American race relations. If so, how far would he be willing to go in the opposite direction? Malcolm X far? Black Panthers far? Afrocentrism far?And if, in fact, he was prepared to turn those cherubic little children into the fiercest of militants, was he not aware that this sort of persuasion would be seen as unprofessional propagandizing, even in liberal Boulder, and certainly in more conservative quarters? So, again, some sense of “appropriateness” is in order. The elementary school teacher is rhetorically required to steer a middle course between saying that things are just right in the race department and saying that they are awful.

Consider next the relative merits of poster display versus give-and-take discussions of controversial matters. Wouldn’t Thielen himself prefer the latter in communications on controversial issues with fellow physicists? And if such discussion is preferable to poster displays among physicists, how much more vital is it that little children get a chance to talk things over in their classes, especially when, as Thielen seemed to acknowledge, the findings from the Barbie experiment can variously be interpreted as “innocuous” indicators of familiarity or as evidence of race prejudice?

This Socratic dialogue that never happened but perhaps should have happened could have done a lot to deflate the balloon of free, open, here-and-now discussion. It could have made more understandable why schools teaching race issues routinely begin (and sometimes end) with stories about unequivocal heroes and villains, good and evil; and why on such matters they place a heavy emphasis on affective learning, postponing talk of scientific research findings for later.

1. The School Board Members:But the 2/27 school board meeting was not set up forsuch a dialogue;they seldom are.Nor did it aim at negotiations leading to the precise wording of an official resolution; that would have required an executive session. This was an open meeting before an audience at which resolutions of some sort could have been introduced but weren’t. What then *was* the 2/27 board meeting designed to accomplish, and what rhetorical requirements did its structure and its functions impose upon its Board members?

Halloran lists the open school board meeting as a species of *public proceeding*, the genus including such other varieties as a courtroom trial, a legislative debate before an audience on a proposed piece of legislation, and the televised deliberations of a national political convention.[[41]](#endnote-41) Halloran’s shoe fits well enough as to suggest two primary rhetorical requirements for the 2/27 school board meeting. The first of these involves provision of a forum for the airing of differences and subsequent decision-making. Although no action was taken or proposed at the 2/27 meeting, it had elements of a trial and elements of a legislative deliberation. Those present heard testimony for and against the science fair project, the decision to remove it, the media’s coverage of Barbiegate, and possible remedial steps that the Board or BVSD administrators could take to prevent future Barbiegates.

Exactly what purpose (or purposes) was to be served by this testimony remained somewhat unclear.Arguably, its goal was to prepare the way for subsequent decision-making on policies, regulations, guidelines. Several board members joined Janusz Okolowicz in commenting on the adequacy of BVSD anti-discrimination and science fair rules. Yet playing up policies and regulations and guidelines may also have been a way of playing down issues of personal responsibility in the Barbiegate case. Without anyone articulating it as such, I believe the Barbiegate case also became “a teachable moment” for Boulder Valley’s adult community, prompting consideration of what it stood for on matters of race, freedom of speech, and the like, and how it thought its value priorities could best be passed on to the next generation.

The second rhetorical requirement for the public proceeding as a whole is described by Halloran in fictive and theatrical terms. It consists of presenting a mythic view of the community to the community as in a certain sense a unit or unity with shared norms to which its members “belong.”What is offered to the community, he says, is one among a number of possible images “of a reality that is itself ultimately more fiction than empirical fact.” (p. 122) The proceeding collectively enacts a view of community and of itself as a representative body, with which the audience may or may not identify. If it succeeds, the body’s legitimacy is enhanced.

This translates into rhetorical requirements for individual board members. They were free to declare for one side or another in the Barbiegate case, but, as Halloran has suggested, they had another, overriding rhetorical function to perform, that of *representing* the community.[[42]](#endnote-42)Failing to fulfill that function or going so far as to attempt subversion of that function would have placed their own legitimacy at risk.[[43]](#endnote-43)More than the others who testified at the meeting, the board members were obliged to affirm the community, to insure a fair hearing for competing viewpoints, to help bridge differences and protect egos, and finally to move the deliberations forward, effecting some degree of closure. This sense of rhetorical obligation to reinforcement of overarching communal values constrains what representatives can say as adversaries and how they can say it. It places a premium on appearing evenhanded, balanced, nonjudgmental—which can conflict with expressions of partisan interests. And the primary responsibility for representing the community rests upon the chair of the public proceeding.Balancing rhetorically his own interest in weighing in on Barbiegate with his obligation as committee chair to represent the community’s interests was done expertly by Vice-President Bill de la Cruz.

As the closing speaker at the 2/27 school board meeting, Vice-President de la Cruz took upon himself the difficult tasks of reconciling opposing positions and healing wounds opened up by Barbiegate in what he said was an effort to move the conversation forward. He presented himself as a credible bridge between the white and minority communities of Boulder Valley, thus indispensable to both, and right for the larger dialectical tasks of reconciliation. De la Cruz’s children were “minorities”;[[44]](#endnote-44) he himself was a combination of the “oppressor and the oppressed.”[[45]](#endnote-45) And his expensive Southwestern attire testified to a comfort with affluence as well as ethnicity, thus adding to his bridging potential.

Moreover, de la Cruz proved to be a master of strategic ambiguity, a hedger par excellence. “Based on the regulations,” he begins, “what was done was proper and in the best interests.”[[46]](#endnote-46)Just *whose*interests are left unclear, but clarity in this instance would not have been a virtue. The utterance serves rather as support for the teachers, which then enables him to say: “It [not the teachers] could have been a little more sensitive to all of the people involved.”[[47]](#endnote-47)This second utterance comes off as something of a reversal of the first, but not entirely so; and any implication that wrong may have been committed is mitigated by the possibility that the fault lay not in the actors but in the wording of the regulations. Thus, the second utterance effectively balances the first, providing succor to those (everyone?) who may have felt at one time or another that they had been treated insensitively.

De la Cruz provides further support to all involved when he says:

So, I’m gonna talk a few minutes more about the piece that intrigued me the most which was the reaction from the racial perspective and how quickly in this community everybody was calling everybody a racist. And um just going from that perspective and to me a racist is somebody who from a series of events and interactions shows that they indeed have no tolerance and no respect for other people. And if I believed that the people in this room or the people in this school were racist, I wouldn’t sit here and try to change things from this seat.[[48]](#endnote-48)

So, according to de la Cruz, no one on either side of the controversy is a racist, at least not an out-and-out, intolerant, disrespectful, overgeneralizing racist. However, in the very same speech segment, de la Cruz retells the story that appeared in the Daily Camera about the Boulder homeowner whose own overgeneralizing led Boulder police to mistreat two Latinos in her upscale Boulder neighborhood.

At first glance,the two statements seem blatantly contradictory. But, like the Daily Camera editorial of 3/1 which took up the case, de la Cruz wasdrawing a distinction between impermissible racism and racist attitudes which, if properly acknowledged and confronted, turn the admitted defect into a potential virtue.

That distinction, here reinforced by de la Cruz, may have been the principal lesson from the “teachable moment” that was Barbiegate. But now de la Cruz, having warmed to the task of rooting out racism, borrows pages from Thielen on the need for a more tough-minded multiculturalist curriculum and from his critics on the need not to refrain from pointing the finger of guilt at anyone.Thielen is right about the need to look at our own attitudes and our behaviors, and not always in a controlled environment. But the school board and the school district are equally committed to rooting out racism, equally committed to looking at the oppression and the injustices. So Barbiegate in de la Cruz’s reframing of it becomes a win-win for all concerned: “we can all benefit from it and move forward.”[[49]](#endnote-49)

**Summary and Conclusions:**

Barbiegate taught me a lot and I thank Karen Tracy and James McDaniel for inviting me to participate in this project. I offer the following conclusions as “lessons learned.”

1. Barbiegateexposed fissures in liberal anti-racism reflective of divisions of liberal opinion nationwide, but rendered more difficult to manage rhetorically in affluent Boulder, “sensitive” Boulder, owing to its vulnerability to charges of hypocrisy. The paradox of affluent progressive liberalism is that it is easy to vilify, despite its good works and even nobler intentions.
2. My dilemma-centered approach helped to account for anomalous features of Barbiegate discourse, such as Thielen’s waffling and the retreat to platitudes by the “defense.”Analysis of the discourse further sharpened my appreciation of the rhetorical problems these actors confronted, and it challenged my own liberal convictions, prompting me to entertain as reasonable, for example, a distinction between permissible and impermissible racism.
3. Halloran’s RPS-like theory of the public proceeding was similarly helpful in making sense of the Board members’ discourse on 2/27. Especially useful in studies of this sort is his notion of a collective rhetorical obligation to honor and further legitimize the myth of community—or else risk one’s own perceived legitimacy.
4. The Barbiegate study further convinced me of the value of a dialogic, Socratic rhetoric, and of distinguishing, as Socrates did, between what persuaded and what was wise. I found myself moved by Thielen but not fully convinced that the race pedagogy he preached was—well—“appropriate” for the elementary school classroom.Removing the poster was unwise, but critics of teaching about racism via a poster display had a point, one that they could not develop effectively under the constraints imposed by school board meeting rules.
5. None of what I’ve said in praise of rhetorical analysis is necessarily incompatible with micro-oriented discourse analysis. However, there shouldn’t be a contest between doing macro- and micro-analysis. Rather, we should be looking for the “big” (e.g., dominant cultural ideologies) in the “small” (e.g., hesitations, interruptions, slips of the tongue). Similarly, we should be looking to the “big” (e.g., institutional requirements, recurring rhetorical dilemmas, cultural contexts) for insights into the “small” (e.g., how de La Cruz’s role as chair helped account for non-obvious elements of his rhetorical balancing act.)
6. Much as I applaud the study of “ordinary democracy,” it poses difficulties for the rhetorical analyst accustomed to the study of extraordinary news events where the record is likely to be far more complete.The many questions left unanswered for me by the record made available to the contributors and by my own limited sleuthing were probably not fatal for the purposes of the study,but they remained limitations of the study nonetheless.
7. While I cannot justify my own claims in this paper by appeals to bedrock foundational supports, I do not regret having weighed in on the issues confronting the Barbiegaters.Postmodern skepticism has effectively called into question blithe assertions of the good, the true, and the real, and I don’t pretend to have resolved the paradoxes it has posed. But po-mo effectively renders itself silent or enfeebled where judgment is called for. There are alternatives to foundationalism and to postmodern skepticism which this essay should have illustrated. Viewed in context, some arguments appear as better than others, some judgments wiser than others. Rhetorical analysis cannot settle Barbiegate-type issues, but it can advance their consideration. “Bracketing” the issues, as the programmatic relativist would have us do, postpones their consideration.

**Endnotes**:

**Chapter Nine**

**China’s Rhetoric of Transition**

**In this chapter**

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* RPS Analysis
* Rhetorical Strategies of the CCP Leaders
  + Chinese Leaders’ Use of Slogans
  + Bargaining Tools
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  + Jiang Zemin’s “Three Represents”
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* Is China Liberalizing?
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* China’s “Charm offensive” – The Use of Soft power
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**Introduction**:

Since1978 China’s ruling Communist Party has moved China’s economy increasingly toward a capitalistic market economy and its foreign policy toward strategic partnership with its former enemies in the West. These changes have required Party leaders to reconcile the reforms rhetorically with continued homage to their predecessors, to Chinese traditions, and to Marxist/Maoist orthodoxies. This chapter focuses on key slogans and catchwords used in top-down rhetoric by each post-Mao regime to facilitate economic/political reforms while legitimizing continued one-party rule.

To appreciate the scale of China’s economic accomplishments as well as its personal costs requires moving beyond statistics. I vividly recall my first visit to Mainland China in 1990 where, outside the old Guangzhou railroad station, hundreds of young laborers from the impoverished countryside scurried about desperately in search of day work while steering clear of the police who could have arrested them for attempting to establish residency in Guangzhou without a permit. Years later in Guangzhou, at a Chinese market, I encountered another day worker gorging himself on a choice piece of garbage, to the embarrassment of onlookers. And on my first visit to Beijing in 1999, I looked down from my hotel window at a crew of meagerly clad construction workers, standing about at their worksite on a cold winter night without heat, hot water or sanitary facilities.

Incidents such as these and others like them have left an indelible impression. At a candy-making factory in Changsha in 1990, nimble fingers substituted for a broken wrapping machine, the young workers’ lunchtime reward for their arduous labor typically consisting of a bowl of rice. At a state-owned embroidery establishment in Changsha, famed for its likenesses of Lenin and Stalin, renowned artists and calligraphers stood shivering in their winter coats in an unheated studio as they prepared models for the embroiderers to copy. On the street young men struggled to push wagons loaded with pollution-producing charcoal uphill. At an impoverished village, where foreigners were forbidden to take photographs, I got a glimpse of what it means to live on less than one dollar per day and why it is that sweatshop labor in the cities was preferable to remaining in place. The village stood in sharp contrast to a long row of suburban-type houses with two car garages, not far from the Changsha airport.

Top-down rhetoric has played a central role in re-crafting China’s dominant political ideology, and in thus providing a basis for promoting economic and political reforms. (Kluver, 1996) In the Chinese context, rhetorical requirements can be derived from its culture and history, from its leadership’s role within the Party (CCP), and the People’s Republic of China (PRC) as nation-state-but also by stirrings of dissent from within and a host of external factors, such as China’s place in the world economy, its geopolitical position vis-à-vis other nations, and the actions of other world leaders. Having joined the World Trade Organization (WTO), for example, China has been under pressure to play by its rules. Having hitched its fortunes to global competition, it has had to be increasingly concerned about the competitiveness of its product in foreign markets, and the availability of markets in China for foreign goods. Having flexed its muscles as regional and even global political player—asserting its views on Iran nuclear development in the Security Council, for example-it must now defend against current and future threats from potential rivals and antagonists, some of whom have already sought to construct China as an enemy nation.

Among the internal pressures on China’s leaders are the weights of tradition, including the influence of Confucian thought; the continuing official deification of Mao despite years of misrule; and Marxist/Leninist ideology, on which the revolutionary state was founded. Each is a constraint on reformist rhetoric, yet each is also an inventional resource that can be appropriated to the cause of reform. As Tsou Tang ably states: “One may see Chinese political development as the outcome of the interaction of a series of strategic choices made by the various actors in conflict or in cooperation with each other. The available alternatives are shaped by the perceived and/or actual structures of constraint and opportunity…”

Lu and Simons’ (2006) analysis underscored the convergent pressures upon successive regimes to bend Marxist-Leninist ideology to the needs for reform. Much as the leaders themselves may have continued to identify with the revolutionary doctrines on which they were nurtured, pragmatism has required that they subordinate Marxist ideology to fulfillment of such service functions as feeding their people and protecting the nations’ borders.

Box 9.1

Opinions differ as to whether Marxist idealism or indeed idealism of any kind still has meaning for Mainland Chinese. For most Chinese, it appears, doctrinal matters pale in significance to practical concerns, foremost of which is making money. Marxist-Leninism is still required reading and the CCP still honors Mao Zedong Thought, but in interviews, even with the Editor of the Tianjin Daily, a

Party controlled newspaper, the attitudes I encountered ranged mostly from indifference to cynicism:

Me: Isn’t it interesting that Marx foresaw a dialectical process beginning with feudalism, transitioning to capitalism and then culminating in socialism? In China, it seems, feudalism gave way to socialism but is moving increasingly to capitalism?

Editor: Nice point! Ha Ha! I hadn’t thought of that.

Me: Does that concern you?

Editor: Not really, as long as we are making money.

At a banquet in my honor in 1999 I’m introduced to a boyhood friend of my former student in Tianjin who is cynically bemused by my questions about China’s ideological obligations to the peasantry:

*Q. Is there a current Party policy on support for the cities versus the countryside?*

*A. Yes. The cities require the bulk of investment because they are the engines of economic growth.*

*Q. But wasn’t Mao’s a peasant revolution? Isn’t support for the cities as opposed to the peasants a betrayal of Mao?*

*A. Oh, well, yes. The Party believes the farmers need support. How else would they raise the food needed to feed us in the cities?*

*Q. But didn’t Mao have in mind something more than that? Not just helping the farmers to better feed the city folk; rather, improving the quality of their lives.*

*A. Oh yes, that’s a very high priority!*

**Here is another recorded impression, also from 1999:**

*When Jiang Zemin calls for stability in the service of prosperity, this resonates in China. People don’t want another Tiananmen Square. Many progressive thinkers look back on the ‘89 protests with a sense of deep regret. I suffered with the students back in ‘89, going so far as to arrange for the construction of a Goddess of Democracy replica on my own campus. The smart thinking now is that the students got out of hand, lost their sense of proportion. Bullets no, but suppression, yes. Can I be writing these words? (A colleague explained that the call for stability needs to be understood in a wider context. China has had SO MUCH instability these past 50 years. “ENOUGH!” people are saying.)*

In the post-Mao period of economic and political reform, more pragmatic thinking has been promoted by the Party. This kind of thinking is characterized by Burke (1961/1937) as melioristic—concerned, as he puts it, with better and worse rather than best and worst. Pragmatism has by no means replaced socialist idealism, but the CCP’s rhetoric has become increasingly de-radicalized after its succession of failed social experiments. Moreover, in the face of public pressures to improve the standard of living, Maoist/Marxist principles have had to be subordinated to its domestic service functions. Thus those within the Party who have held out for ideological purity have been destined to play a losing hand. Economic reform requires more sophisticated economic structures than those they had countenanced and a more rational, more transparent regulatory apparatus. Primary reliance on ideological appeals is no longer sufficient. Likewise, China’s foreign policies have become more pragmatic, moderated by internal and external pressures to avoid prolonged confrontation.

**RPS Analysis**

In their efforts to balance competing interests and appeal to multiple audiences, The CCP leaders faced formidable dilemmas and challenges in the transitional period. They include:

1. CCP leaders faced the disparity of seemingly holding to an acclaimed Marxist/Leninist/Maoist ideology while moving increasingly to a market economy which CCP ideologists had long maintained would lead to increased corruption, moral decline, and a widening of the gap between rich and poor. Because at least some of these prophecies have already come true, the CCP leadership has needed not only rationales for proposed change but also skillfully crafted apologetics for changes gone awry.
2. Of course further reform has been theoretically possible, but has often proved difficult against powerful elites. It could not have been easy, for example, for Jiang Zemin to deal with evidences of corruption at the highest levels of his administration, including allegations that Deng Xiaoping’s family members (his “princelings”) had been enriching themselves under the Jiang Zemin regime.
3. CCP leaders have needed to adapt to multiple audiences in China, each with their own interests and perspectives. These include such “new winners” as entrepreneurs, educated professionals, and technocrats, as well as such “new losers” as the urban unemployed, underemployed state-owned factory workers and peasants displaced by mammoth hydroelectric projects. The list includes of course the ideologically orthodox as well as the ideologically pragmatic within the CCP itself. Needless to say, what pleases one audience may well offend another.
4. CCP leaders have had to balance internal pressures against external pressures. Whatever the current success or failure of the opening to the West, CCP leaders are increasingly hostage to external pressures and demands—e. g., for greater conformity with World Trade Organization (WTO) rules, for privatization of property and respect for property rights, for greater accountability, for greater attention to the West’s human rights concerns, and for political and military support against what are alleged by the West to be international threats. Yet they are also under pressure to pursue their own course.[[50]](#endnote-50)
5. CCP leaders have had to weigh the need for continued Party control against pressures for liberalization of the society and increased autonomy for its people. As China competes in global markets, it also opens itself to new ideas, some of which may threaten the established order. “Mr. Science” seems to have been accepted by the leadership without significant opposition, but what about “Mr. Democracy?”[[51]](#endnote-51) Party leaders have, since the Tiananmen Square uprising, increasingly talked about democracy, but they continue to exercise tight political control, and sometimes ham-handed control, as in the case of internet use (Kluver, 2005). At least for the sake of its image as a modernizing nation, increasingly responsive to its people, CCP leaders face the challenge of balancing the need for political control against demands for democracy from within China and from the international community. This includes not just demands for free elections, but also for greater transparency in administrative and judicial deliberations.
6. Finally, political leaders of all kinds are engaged in non-zero sum games, involving admixtures of what Burke calls the “competitive use of the cooperative.” Trade negotiations epitomize the “mixed-motive” character of such conflicts, counter-posing the need to compete against the need to cooperate. The CCP leaders have played out such mixed motives in China’s trade with the West, shifting between “ideological enemies” to “strategic partners” and from “competition” to “cooperation,” while balancing moralistic and utilitarian concerns.

**Rhetorical Strategies of the CCP Leaders**

In his study of post-Mao rhetoric used to legitimate economic reforms, Kluver (1997) observed that CCP leaders have invoked reinterpretations of orthodox Marxism and national heroes such as Mao Zedong and Deng Xiaoping. Familiar terms like “socialism” and “historical progression” were given new meanings to suit the new economic and political agenda and functioned “to articulate the deepest aspirations and hopes of the nation.” Relying on traditional beliefs in the legitimacy of the rulers, said Kluver, Chinese leaders must “carefully redraft the national myth as to guarantee a place for the Chinese Communist Party in a market-driven, decentralized, politically volatile future.”(Kluver, 1997; Lu and Simons, 2006).

Rhetorical strategies can include time-honored and highly malleable storehouses of maxims, aphorisms, lines of arguments, forms of appeal, and modes of self-presentation. Together they offer a repertoire for responding effectively to difficult situations. Chinese history and culture supply an extraordinarily rich repertoire of rhetorical possibilities and strategies, including Confucian moral appeals, advice on statecraft and tactical schemes as substitutes for force (Lu, 1998; Sun Tzu, 1983) Even as Mao broke from the Confucian tradition, he also cleverly exploited its conventional wisdom, as leaders of the transition have also been required to do. No Chinese leader who seeks change can dishonor tradition. In that sense *every effective Chinese leader must be something of a dialectician and a chameleon.*

*Chinese Leaders’ Use of Slogans*

Slogans and catch phrases have played a pivotal role in the CCP’s top-down rhetoric of transition. They can be ideologically potent by simplifying complicated ideas and they are usually easy to memorize and repeat. For political purposes, they tend also to be ambiguous, amenable to multiple interpretations and adaptable to multiple audiences (while also providing opportunities for reframing by opponents).  Further, popular slogans and catchwords may also contain “code words,” a useful form of communication when there is need to convey hidden political agendas while appearing to conform to the official ideology (Lu and Simons, 2006)

*Bargaining Tools*

China’s economic fortunes, together with its strategic geopolitical position and globalized economy, give it considerable bargaining power on the world’s stage. In international relations, including trade relations, persuasion often takes place, implicitly or explicitly, within a context of power. To Kenneth Burke’s credit, his sense of rhetoric as “symbolic inducement” included actions, not just words. (Burke, 1969/1950) The former include purely symbolic acts, such as ceremonial salutes to the flag, and actions that are at once symbolic and non-symbolic such as currency devaluations, military deployments, crackdowns on corruption, and punishments for violations of intellectual property rights.

When strategies succeed, they change the rhetorical landscape, but not without risk to the leadership. China today is far more prosperous than it was in 1977, far better able to exercise power by use of the carrot rather than the stick, and far more powerful internationally as well as a result of successes in the global marketplace. And, too, the CCP is far more institutionalized than it was when Deng Xiaoping assumed power in 1977. Finally, the new, better educated middle class presents new opportunities for China but it could, with its increasing influence and capacity to voice its discontents, pose greater challenges for the CCP than by those, such as the peasantry and the urban unemployed, who have many more reasons to complain but far fewer resources with which to mount effective protests. The general point here is that the transition is itself a process, its leaders subject to ever-changing rhetorical requirements and problems, but also equipped with new rhetorical resources for meeting those demands.

  Chinese leaders introduced new slogans as a way to control and legitimize ideological innovation. (Kluver, 1997; 2005) From 1977 to 2012 there were three regimes, each associated with a memorable slogan or catch phrase to guide the process of transition. The first, led by Deng Xiaoping, is most notable for Deng’s simultaneous rejection of capitalism in theory and embrace of important components of capitalism in practice, under the banner of “socialism with Chinese characteristics.” The second regime, presided over by Jiang Zemin, propelled China forward at a dizzying pace in economic development, but it may also be remembered for the problems it exacerbated. These problems are given short shrift in the Jiang regime’s most celebrated manifesto “The Three Represents.” The third regime, led by Hu Jintao and Wen Jiabao, sought to redirect priorities, from economic growth at any price to developmental balance, from encouraging entrepreneurship to crackdowns on corruption. Rhetorically speaking, it was an immensely challenging effort, and by no means guaranteed of success. But that the effort was made at all, and not just behind closed doors, is itself a sign of China’s progressive development. This section of the chapter focuses mainly upon Deng Xiaoping’s rhetoric.

*Deng Xiaoping’s “Socialism with Chinese Characteristics”*

As a long-term revolutionary comrade of Mao, Deng Xiaoping had been both loyal to Mao during his political career and resistant to some of Mao’s idealistic schemes. He was persecuted once prior to 1949 for his “wrongful doings” and purged twice during the Cultural Revolution for being a “Capitalist Roader,” epitomized in his famous saying “No matter whether the cat is black or white, it is a good cat so long as it catches mice.”[[52]](#endnote-52)

From the time of Mao’s death in 1976, Deng had been regarded as “China’s architect of economic reform.” Deng’s own tragic experience made him realize the disastrous consequences of holding onto ideological orthodoxies and won him sympathy and support from other communist officials. The Cultural Revolution, launched by Mao in 1966 and ended in 1976 after his death, brought the near-collapse of the state economy, along with public disillusionment with many of Mao’s precepts—especially the principle of continuous class struggle. Mao’s failed social experiments also brought an aversion to the stridency of revolutionary-style rhetoric. Wei-Ming Tu notes that during this time China was “at an ideological crossroad, confronting a profound identity crisis which [would] fundamentally restructure her national character.”Tu (1996)

Insert picture here

On his resumption of power in 1977, Deng took a series of actions under the banner, “rectification of disorders.” In a series of speeches he urged a shift in emphasis from ideological battles to economic development, repeatedly citing Mao’s own words as the source of his ideas. For example, Deng criticized Mao idolater Hua Guofeng for his indiscriminate support of the so-called “double whatevers”:

We all know that there is a popular talk of “double whatevers:” Whatever comrade Mao Zedong has endorsed cannot be changed; whatever comrade Mao Zedong has done cannot be changed. Is this considered upholding the flag of Mao Zedong thought? No! If we keep doing this, we actually distort Mao Zedong thought. The basic principle of Mao Zedong thought is seeking truth from facts and is to apply the general principles of Marxism and Leninism to the practical situation of Chinese revolution. (Deng, 1983, p.126)

In subsequent speeches and writings, Deng reiterated his belief in using practice as the sole criterion for measuring truth and emphasized the need for China’s modernization. Then, as though to insure his bona fides with the old guard, Deng, on March 30, 1979, responded to charges of ideological laxity with what he called the “Four Cardinal Principles”: (1) adherence to the socialist road, (2) adherence to the proletarian dictatorship, (3) adherence to the Communist Party’s leadership, and (4) adherence to Marxism-Leninism and Mao Zedong thought. Scholars have different interpretations of the rhetorical motives of the “Four Cardinal Principles.” Sujian Guo considers it an act of preventing the CCP from losing its power and a signal to remain an authoritarian structure.(Guo, 2000) Tang Tsou (1986) regards this as Deng’s strategy of taking a “middle course” to balance between the Party’s ideological legitimacy and his own economic agenda” D.W. Chang (1988) observed that Deng’s insistence on the Four Cardinal Principles was indeed a strategic response to Mao’s loyalists and to the lingering influence of communist ideology. It was a “political necessity,” said Chang, the purpose of which was to “disarm internal resistance.” (Chang, p. 50) By doing so, Deng could gain support from the old guard, unite the nation, and pave the way for rapid economic reform and an open-door policy. Further, Deng’s insistence on the Four Cardinal Principles served to create a stable environment for economic reform. Said Deng, “China’s stability is the overriding principle. Without a stable environment, nothing can be accomplished; the achievement once gained can get lost.”(Deng,1993, Vol .III, p. 284) The enforcement of the Four Cardinal Principles would allow China to remain stable under the Communist Party’s control.

Deng’s rhetoric to this point illustrates what was required to reconcile the new push for reform with the old Maoist/Marxist doctrine. Using Mao to depart from Mao, as in his critique of the “double whatevers.” Deng reframed the problem, such that, in Burke’s terms (1969) what had been “apart from” could now be “a part of.” By his insistence on the Four Cardinal Principles, Deng probably sought to win over the ideologically orthodox and to provide rhetorical cover for those who welcomed his reforms.

In the early period of economic reform, Deng needed a new slogan that would signify his departure from the Maoist idealist/utopian path, and yet still legitimize the Party’s rule. This new term, “Socialism with Chinese characteristics,” first appeared in a speech Deng presented to Chinese visitors on June 18, 1983. It soon became the mantra for Deng-style reform, its all-encompassing “God” term—used repeatedly by Chinese media and politicians alike.

Several meanings of the term can be identified by examining various Deng speeches. First, Deng explains that “socialism with Chinese characteristics” means making decisions with consideration for Chinese contexts. Implicit here is a claim to Chinese distinctiveness and, by implication, an appeal to Chinese nationalism. In his words, “We can learn from other countries, but we cannot impose different social systems from foreign countries on to China.”(Deng, 1983, Selected Works, Vol. II. p. 141) China must work out its own path to modernization and prosperity. Second, “socialism with Chinese characteristics” means combining a socialist system with a market economy. He states, “Market economy is not owned by capitalism only. Socialism can have market economy as well.”(Deng, 1983, Vol. II, p,236.)For him, what really mattered was to improve productivity and the Chinese standard of living, not ideological correctness. Yet implicit in the framing of Deng’s argument is an ideological appeal to a right of ownership. At the same time, staying on the path of socialism gives the CCP legitimacy to continue its rule. Third, “socialism with Chinese characteristics” means selectively borrowing from the capitalist countries “the good stuff,” primarily their scientific methods and management techniques. (Deng, 1983; 1993) While acknowledging China’s need to borrow selectively from capitalist countries, Deng nevertheless reiterated Maoism’s longstanding objections to capitalism as an economic system. “A capitalist system is profit-driven; it cannot rid itself of exploitation, pillage, and economic crisis,” Deng asserts. (Deng, 1983) In another speech Deng reiterates that “China must adhere to socialism. Capitalism will not work in China. If China took the path of capitalism, its chaotic situation would never end; its poverty would never be changed.”(Deng 1993, p. 63)

Deng recognized the dangers of deviating openly from ideological orthodoxy[[53]](#endnote-53)and wisely undertook the task of redefining socialism rather than repudiating it. During Mao’s era, socialism, understood as a system of state ownership and control of “productive forces” for the benefit of all, constituted the true path to a classless, stateless communist utopia. It was Mao’s belief that with correct conformity to Marxist-Maoist ideals, endless energy would be released for the production and subsequent distribution of the newly created economic wealth.

Deng’s definition of socialism deviates from Mao’s version. Deng argued that socialism should aim at improving the standard of living of the Chinese people. Living in poverty is not the characteristic of socialism, he said. Deng made it clear that the primary task of socialism was the development of productive forces and moving out of poverty. Moreover, socialism, by definition, could not fail, even if success for a time meant increased inequalities through the selective appropriation of capitalist practices.

The slogan was ambiguous, yet strikingly effective, in that it enabled the nation to maintain a largely state-owned economy while allowing for capitalist innovation. Deng’s coinage of the phrase helped rescue the CCP from its weakening mandate and reset the political agenda in China, from ideological purity to the improvement of the material well-being of the Chinese people.

Can a slogan as effective as Deng’s be taken at face value as a direct expression of his privately held beliefs? Probably not. All the while that he voiced support for the Maoist system, Deng managed to de-collectivize farms, reduce dependence on failing, government-owned industries, and permit some degree of private enterprise. Deng promised that “socialism with Chinese characteristics” would benefit the majority of Chinese people, not create wealth for the few. But Deng was against absolute equalitarianism; he allowed that some people and some regions could legitimately get rich first.

*Jiang Zemin’s “Three Represents”*

Deng Xiaoping died in 1997, leaving China with a booming economy, including vast improvements in per capita income, but also increased corruption, mounting unemployment, environmental degradation, and a widening gap between rich and poor.[[54]](#endnote-54) China’s economy, and especially its private enterprises, continued to grow, making up over 50% of GDP. The biggest winners from the reforms, largely entrepreneurs and educated professionals, posed a potential threat to the Party’s authority with their accumulated wealth and increasing demands for political participation. The new losers, mainly workers and peasants, began to lose faith in the legitimacy of the Communist Party’s leadership.

For Deng’s successors, the burden of defending economic reforms as ideologically correct has been progressively lessened. However, they still must pay lip service to Marxist theory and Maoist thought. In his speech to China’s 16th Party Congress, Jiang Zemin recalled ten chief lessons from the reform period, presenting them as having been consensually arrived at through a process of objective analysis. He began with a ritualistic tribute to his ideological predecessors, singling out Deng’s “socialism with Chinese characteristics” as the new guideline for the CCP,

Uphold Deng Xiaoping Theory as our guide and constantly bringing forth theoretical innovation. Deng Xiaoping’s Theory is our banner; and the party’s basic line and program are the fundamental guidelines for every field of our work. Whatever difficulties and risks we may come up against, we must unswervingly abide by the party’s basic theory, line, and program. We should persist in arming the entire party membership with Marxism-Leninism, Mao Zedong thought and Deng Xiaoping Theory and using them to educate our people. We should continue to emancipate our minds, seek truth from facts, keep pace with the times and make innovations in a pioneering spirit. We should respect the creativity of the general public and test and develop the party’s theory, line, principles, and policies through practices. (Jiang, 1999)

This is the first of the ten principles Jiang articulated, and it serves both to honor the old orthodoxies and to display Jiang himself as a Party loyalist whose reforms, like Deng’s, have been *continuous with* longstanding doctrine, rather than *departures* from it. The rhetorical style Jiang used is similar to the Party’s conventional clichés and catchy phrases as it invokes his predecessors in justifying new moves.

The “new moves” were subtly camouflaged in Jiang’s coinage of the so-called “Three Represents.” The slogan aimed at redefining the mission of the CCP under his leadership. The Party represents, he said, (1) the demands for the development of advanced productive forces; (2) the forward direction of advanced culture; (3) and the fundamental interests of the greatest majority of the Chinese people.

Compared with Deng’s rhetoric, Jiang’s speech was more pragmatic and technocratic. He frequently spoke of the need for “keeping pace with the times” in adjusting to changing situations, among them the rising wealth and social power of the new capitalists. Jiang recruited capitalist class members into the Party. Jiang first proposed to recruit private entrepreneurs to the CCP in a speech on July 1st, 2001 in celebration of the 80th anniversary of the CCP, but met with resistance from the veteran party members who signed a petition[[55]](#endnote-55) of ten-thousand words” accusing Jiang of violating the Party’s cardinal principles in its representation of the working class. In a speech at the 16th Party Congress, Jiang replaced the phrase “private entrepreneurs” with “role models from other social strata.” Strategically, “other strata” was far less offensive to the old guard than the term “private entrepreneurs” which is equivalent to “capitalist” in the Chinese mind. In Wu’s view, Jiang’s move was a strategy to ensure his power position as Party leader. As the economic reform had created accumulated wealth, the Party had to represent itself as the vanguard of both the working class and the entrepreneurs/capitalists. This signaled the changing nature of the Party’s original goal and its mission, which was to serve the peasants and working class.(Wu. 2003)

Reaction to the “Three Represents” was mixed. Jiang’s proposal for inclusion of the capitalist class into the Party was met with severe criticism by those who felt the CCP’s ideology had been betrayed and the Constitution violated. Many Chinese viewed the “Three Represents” as just another set of party clichés. Wang and Zheng (2003) interpreted it as a political strategy to rebuild the Party’s image as constantly adapting itself to China’s changing economic and social reality as well as to expand its political support for the regime.

Heisey (2004) observed that while Deng Xiaoping had found a way to build “economic pragmatism,” Jiang Zeming pursued a “path of development’ that would be based upon ‘strategic partnership’ with the West. Jiang’s growth as a diplomat has been widely acknowledged most notably in collaborating with other nations to deter America’s hegemonic impulses while at the same time making China indispensable in the U. S.-led efforts to combat terrorism and halt North Korean nuclear proliferation.

*Hu and Wen’s “Putting People First”*

Hu Jintao succeeded Jiang Zemin as the Party’s General Secretary in November 2002 and became the President of China in March of the following year. Wen Jiabao took on the premiership in March 2003 as well. Just how far they diverged from their predecessors could not have been immediately apparent at the time of their appointments, for they were rhetorically required, as underlings, to hew to the Party line on most matters. It was especially important for Hu and Wen to demonstrate acts of deference toward Jiang and his “Shanghai” faction, currying their favor, for example, on the issue of one-party rule.[[56]](#endnote-56)Like their predecessor, Hu and Wen exalted Marx, Mao, and Deng Xiaoping, but also testified repeatedly to the importance of Jiang’s “Three Represents.” However, Hu and Wen distinguished themselves from Jiang by appealing to traditional Chinese values, by proposing a scheme for “balanced” economic development, and by championing the cause of the poor and dispossessed.

Given the increasing disparity between rich and poor, Hu made repeated reference to the Confucian phrase, “Putting People First” as the manifesto of his government.

The slogan, “putting people first,” echoes Confucian values, in particular those of Mencius (390-305 B.C.E.), a devout follower of Confucius, who advised the state’s kings to think and act in the interests of the people. Hu repeatedly quoted Mencius’s sayings that “hardship and plain life can rejuvenate life; comfort and luxury can lead to death” as a way of aligning himself with the people against official corruption. Huang agrees that Hu’s rhetoric has exemplified “Mencius’ heart-rooted and people-centered government whose rulers must care about the sufferings of the people and stay benevolent in order to sustain their legitimacy and control. In his book, *The Ideal Chinese Political Leader: A Historical and Cultural Perspective*, Guo notes, “In modern Chinese political thought, the notion of benevolent government is related to at least three central components: social equality, wealth of the people, and national greatness.”

Like their predecessors, Hu and Wen had to exhibit lip-service adherence to Marxist/Maoist principles as a precondition for moving ahead, but now they were also rhetorically required to cite Deng and Jiang. Having identified problems that emerged as the result of the economic reforms, Wen Jiabao (2004) offered a declaration of intentions for 2004 that began by taking “Deng Xiaoping theory and the important thought of “Three Represents” as our guide. Only then could Hu and Wen place their own stamp on the reform process. It was at once technocratic and egalitarian, incorporating new scientific knowledge in support of the old Maoist value of “serving the people.”

The disparity between the rich and poor, along with problems of corruption and moral decline created nostalgia for Mao’s era among some Chinese. Hu and Wen’s words also bespoke Maoist ideals, and so too did their symbolic actions. Significantly, Hu traveled to Xibanpo, Mao’s revolutionary base, in December, 2002, where he used both traditional and Maoist slogans in calling for “arduous struggle” and “plain living.” Hu quoted Mao’s “two musts:” “[The party members] must keep the virtues of modesty, caution, humbleness, and calmness; [they] must continue to maintain the party’s tradition of plain living and arduous struggle.”(Hu, 1/3/2003)Mao gave these admonitions to party officials when they took over China in 1949.

Hu and Wen’s examples brought about copycat visits to historic revolutionary sites and poor sections of China by other officials. Besides linking the new order with its revolutionary ideals and thus gaining increased support, these visits sent an implicit warning to officialdom about complacency and corruption in high places. Their demonstrations of concern stood in sharp contrast with Jiang’s regime. In aligning themselves with Maoist values, Hu’s regime not only got out from under Jiang’s shadow, it also established its legitimacy and paved the way for policy change.

Hu and Wen’s leadership style also exemplified the Confucian value of “matching your words with action”(Confucius, Analects, ch’s 13, 20, p.64). In 2006 they initiated the “New Socialist Countryside” program for peasants, including completely eliminating the agricultural tax on farmers while providing free education for rural students and free medical care for peasants. Along with the peasantry they registered compassion for other constituencies, including those displaced from inefficient state-owned factories. Hu was shown on Chinese television visiting a herder’s tent in Inner Mongolia, voicing concern for the poor and the unemployed, and spending the New Year with peasants. Wen did likewise, celebrating the Lunar New Year with mine workers down a 720-meter coal-mine shaft in China’s bitterly cold northeast. During the SARS epidemic, Hu and Wen were reported risking their own lives in paying frequent visits to local hospitals and SARS patients, and giving concrete instructions of how to control the epidemic. Wen was covered in the media visiting the campus of Beijing University during the SARS epidemic. This left the students with an impression of “Wen as ‘a people’s premier’ and built their confidence in the government.”(Luming, 2003) Wen’s image as a “people’s premier” was further shaped by the reported story of him growing up in an ordinary family, having visited 1,800 counties out of 2,000 throughout the country, and having helped migrant workers to have their default wages recovered.[[57]](#endnote-57)

*Impact of Rhetorical Strategies*

Watts (2004) has labeled Hu and Wen as “left-wing interventionists” and their predecessors, by comparison, as “right-wingers.” These designations are currently used by some Western observers to highlight the rhetorical problems faced by Hu and Wen in achieving their respective goals. Indeed, Jiang’s agenda seemed to favor the winners at economic reform and led to a larger economic disparity while Hu/Wen’s rhetoric and actions appealed to the losers and aimed to bridge the gap between the rich and poor.

Depending on which statistics one looks at, China’s turn toward capitalism has either been an unqualified success or a mixed blessing. Jiang’s regime could legitimately boast that the rising tide of economic growth brought China out of dire poverty. But a report, issued by the Chinese government’s own poverty task force acknowledged that China’s poverty rate increased in 2003 for the first time since 1978 with 85 million Chinese residents living on less than $77 per year. (Watts, 2004 In the 2004 bestseller*,An Investigative Report of China’s Peasantry*, Chen and Shun (2004) reported shocking cases of the poverty of peasants in Anhui province as a result of heavy tax burdens imposed by local officials as well as unfair government policies.[[58]](#endnote-58)

**Is China Liberalizing**?

Opinions differ as to what “liberalizing” can mean in the Chinese context. By typically western notions of liberalization as including individual human rights to freedoms of speech and religion and assembly, China might well be judged as something of a political backwater. It continues in its efforts to “harmonize” public opinion by stifling public dissent, disseminating CCP propaganda, putting down collective protests, and imprisoning those most conspicuous in demanding greater freedoms. Moreover China remains wedded to its one-party system.(Roskin, 2012)

Still China is far more open today than it was in times past. In 2004 “the government must respect and protect human rights” was written into the Constitution. Dong (2004) called this a milestone in the development of Chinese human rights and a move from treating human rights as a political entity to a legal concept. In 1999 I noted that China’s increased economic and political power allows the PRC to relax its grip on the news and entertainment media and on the Internet.

While the CCP still maintains one-party rule and government control, ordinary Chinese people enjoy unprecedented levels of freedom of speech in private and in limited public settings, particularly in their criticism of the Party and government. I observed this even at Beijing’s “Youth” college in 1999 when children of the CCP elite being trained to assume roles as guardians of political correctness erupted into vigorous debate amongst themselves over whether reports by Mao’s physician that Mao in his last years kept teenage girls at his bedside for sexual pleasure were fit news for public consumption.

Box 9.2

China’s defenders insist that it be judged on its own terms, as necessarily favoring collective human rights over individual human rights, this in the interests of its vast population and of its need to fend off hostile forces. The argument for framing human rights in collective rather than individual terms was made rather powerfully to me in 2008 by a Chinese colleague. I asked him whether he would add his name to the recently circulated “Charter ’08,” a petition for individual

human rights that had been drafted by Nobel Prize winner Liu Xiaobo and signed by thousands of other Chinese academics.

“Of course not,” he said (or in words to that effect). “Individual human rights” is a neo-colonialist tool of the west to undermine Chinese interests. Here we need to think harmoniously of the collective good. The Confucian concept of harmonious discourse is something you in the west don’t understand. My mission in China is to promote the interests of the Chinese people as a whole, not to impress other academics. Besides, what good would it do? I’d only get arrested. China is bound to liberalize as it becomes more prosperous, with or without these declarations. So what’s the point?

By joining with their predecessors Chinese leaders gain the social capital necessary to forging new paths. In a speech in 2012 designed to set the tone for the 18th Congress, President Hu Jintao invoked Deng Xiaoping’s “socialism with Chinese characteristics” 58 times. Thus did the Hu-Wen regime promote political reforms under the banner of “*democracy* with Chinese characteristics.” Hu argued for greater governmental transparency on grounds that socialism and democracy were compatible.

But these pairings of God words are amenable to multiple interpretations. Few among those preparing to take the reins of power favor contested multi-party elections or universal suffrage or true parliamentary bodies. *The prospect is for a gradual easing of restrictions on dissent, for expanded popular participation in the decision-making process, and for increased adherence to the rule of law, but always with the understanding that the CCP maintains ultimate authority. Not for the foreseeable future will China seek to emulate Western style democracy. Liberalization is more likely to come in the form of village-level elections, greater transparency, increasing influence on the CCP of intellectuals and new entrepreneurs, and freedom to speak one’s mind in private and within the CCP itself. The model closest to where China seems to be heading is Singapore.*

With an aging party leadership and the immense challenges of governance, it has been predicted that power will shift to a younger cadre of technocrats, trained in the West, and given to further liberalization. The new president, Xi Jinping, has replaced Hu Jintao with a background similar to his. Although he is a princeling, he experienced hardship as well after his father fell out of favor with Mao, and to survive he became redder than red.

Xi Jinping will in any case be constrained by China’s already adopted five year plan and by a recently adopted decision to concentrate power in a committee of seven where Xi will merely be first among equals, if that. Former President Jiang Zemin continues to wield enormous power from the sidelines.

In China as in far more liberalized nations, public dissent still risks careers and reputations but it may also earn respect and admiration if pulled off skillfully. Better to offer it obliquely, indirectly, perhaps using strategic ambiguity, or by balancing criticism with praise, or by use of code words and aphorisms, or by way of the winks and nods of allegory, or fables, journalistic analysis or reportage, or when presented as art or entertainment. Saving another’s face is the best way to protect one’s own in China as in the west.

**China as a World Power**

China is now a powerful player on the world stage, working with the U.S. and its western allies to combat terrorism and nuclear proliferation. The strategic partnership with the U.S. is fragile, and there are American policy experts who’d like to frame China as an enemy, so China needs to exercise caution in asserting its interests, but it is better positioned economically and politically to do so. On some occasions it has allied itself with Russia against the west but on others it has worked in tandem with the west, placing pressure on the Iranian and North Korean regimes, for example.

**China’s “Charm offensive” – The Use of Soft power**

Much has been made of China’s adroit use of “soft power.” (e.g., Kurlawtzick, 2007) in projecting images to the world of an increasingly prosperous nation secure in its economic model and system of governance, indeed, the envy of other nations mired in debt and high unemployment whose warring political factions have been unable to come together on much needed policies. China’s economic leadership polls well among its citizenry. Trade with its once-hostile neighbors is brisk, and territorial concessions have further contributed to its achieving big power status without going to war. Not without cause is the subtitle of J. Kurlawtzick’s (2007) *China’s Charm Offensive: How China’s Soft Power is Transforming the World.*

A major goal of its soft power is to appear *inoffensive,* a “soft shield” designed to refute the “China threat” thesis, convince the world to accept and support China’s rise, fend off the penetration of foreign influences, and create a stable and peaceful “neighborhood.”Li, M. (2009) See also Bell, D.A. War, peace and China’s soft power, *Diogenes,* 2009, Feb. 57 (3) 26-40; Yiweil, Wang, Y. , (2008),Ding, S. (1955)

By some measures of soft power, most notably its ratio of cultural imports to exports, China still lags far behind the United States. But China boasts a five thousand year old culture and evidence of its recent accomplishments at science and technology, architecture and the arts, is impressive. (Keane, 2010) The CCP’s “Beijing consensus,” according to Lin (2009) is that China should strive for harmony w/o suppressing differences and should further Sinicize Marxism in developing and projecting “a socialist core value system.”

**Summary and Conclusions**

This chapter has presented a rhetorically focused history along with personal impressions of China’s opening to the west and its shift to a semi-capitalist market economy, beginning in 1977. The CCP leaders’ rhetoric in this period was characterized by reconciliation of the old and the new through coinage or redefinition of Party slogans in response to its domestic needs as well as external constraints. Deng Xiaoping’s “socialism with Chinese characteristics” epitomized his effort to reconcile Maoist ideals with new economic initiatives. Jiang Zemin pushed economic development forward while opening the CCP to entrepreneurial and managerial elites in the name of “advancing the culture” and “keeping up with the times.” Hu and Wen furthered Party legitimacy and the interests of the poor in their efforts at “putting people first.” All of these slogans created rhetorical space to facilitate the economic/social transition as well as justifying continued party rule. On the international front, CCP leaders have made at least temporary peace with China’s former enemies in the West. As this is written, China and the U. S. are joined together in mutually advantageous trade relationships and in a “strategic partnership” on matters of mutual concern.

Over the years, the language of capitalist appropriation has become less tentative, less qualified, less ambiguous, consistent with the reality of a private sector now responsible for at least half of China’s economic growth.(Chan, April 2, 2004) In the early 1980s capitalism was smuggled in rhetorically under the banner of “socialism with Chinese characteristics” and the private sector was officially recognized as a “complement to the state-owned economy. In 1993, the term “market economy” became enshrined in the Constitution. By 1999, private enterprises were constitutionally elevated in status as an “essential part” of China’s economy. As this is written the CCP’s new leaders are seeking to diversify exports to more regions in the world and aiming to achieve what they call “balanced development.” They are doing so in a highly professionalized, transparent manner, utilizing pragmatic, “win-win” arguments in place of ideologically strident appeals for class struggle.

The dilemmas and strategies identified here have included some that are common to political leaders—e. g., those stemming from the need simultaneously to compete and cooperate with others; to appeal simultaneously to audiences with sharply divergent interests or opinions, and to appear principled and consistent while remaining flexible and even opportunistic. Yet the Chinese case seems in some ways unique, given the extreme disparities between the Marxist/Maoist ideology that brought the CCP into power, and in whose name the transition to a market economy has had to be justified.

In general, during the transition period, China’s leaders have had to wrestle with contradictions and paradoxes. Their rhetoric has exhibited an interplay of moralistic and utilitarian intentions. On one hand, it appears to be consistent with time-honored principles in its invocations of Marxian dialectical theory; Mao’s “truth from facts,” and the general principle that policy judgments must be “correct” or “incorrect” and not simply wise or imprudent. On the other hand, CCP leaders have encouraged innovative thinking in the pursuit of economic prosperity and political reform. Ironically, the rhetoric of consistency with time-honored principles has coincided with deviations from those principles in practice. And in the face of these recurring tensions the leaders have communicated vaguely and ambiguously at times, only hinting at goals and meanings, while at other times offering offsetting benefits to different constituencies, and thus blunting opposition. The CCP has had to make use of a wide array of rhetorical strategies, including deception, deliberate ambiguity, behavioral modeling, symbolically freighted moves, and, not least, straight talk. China’s transition has been a dynamic, ever-changing process, both internally and internationally.

China has liberalized in the western sense of permitting greater individual freedoms of speech and assembly while at the same time maintaining a one-party state. It has experimented with elections at a local level and has looked to experts in the west for help in creating other rudiments of a civil society in the adjudication of disputes. With increasing prosperity the PRC is likely to relax its grip on the news and entertainment media and on the Internet. Hong Kong journalists trained in the U.S. clamor for more press freedom and worry about threats to the freedoms they now enjoy, but the market genie is out of the bottle, including the market for internet and other media outlets: there are and will be many choices, I suspect. Meanwhile, at Beijing University, the big internet attraction for the co-eds I met was re-runs of Sex in the City. I worry that the next generation of Peking U students will become too much like the consumerist, careerist, politically disengaged undergraduate students in the States whom I taught before I retired. But that hasn’t happened yet, I’ve been led to believe—neither in Beijing nor in HK.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly to the west, China has managed to present via its soft power a persona as a nation that works, both in naming competent technocrats to leadership positions and in growing an economy at a spectacular rate of development, to the point where it has achieved “big power” status and developed an image among most of its neighbors as attractive and non-threatening. There was a time when Chinese students who studied in the U.S. nearly always opted to remain in the U.S., if at all practical. Now most of them return home. China lags far behind the west in per capita income, in political freedoms, and in news and entertainment media, but it has proven itself adept at innovating and not just imitating and already rivals western models of sustained economic growth in the perceptions of other developed and developing nations.

Although never officially promulgated, several commentators, both Chinese and foreign, argue that China has devised a new and effective political and economic model, one much better suited to China than either Soviet-style communism or Western liberal democracy. They claim the Chinese model yields spectacular growth and stability. Departing from it—say, by introducing Western-style democracy—invites division and chaos, some warn. Therefore, they suggest, China will be governed along these lines:

1. China is ruled by one party, the Communist Party (CCP), with no competition or (open) factions. The elite of the CCP—the Standing Committee—makes all important political decisions.
2. No autonomous civil society outside of state control is officially permitted.
3. Since 2002, the CCP’s elite serves for fixed terms and selects bright and educated successors in advance.
4. The Party renews itself by admitting young technocrats and businesspeople. With some 44 million members and an impressive record of accomplishment it is secure in its ability to fend off external challenges and in a position to loosen restrictions on public expression of factional differences within the Party. Out of the institutionalization of factions within the CCP may come a semblance of Western-style democracy—i.e., of “democracy with Chinese characteristics.” (Xinhua News Oct 19, 2005). with its contending political parties
5. Corruption is kept in check by a Party commission.
6. Administration is decentralized to provincial and local levels.
7. Smaller parts of the economy are in private hands, but the big parts, including banking, are still state-owned or controlled.
8. Foreign economic ties—investments and exports—are encouraged.
9. Chinese are to be kept content through rising material consumption and national pride.
10. The regime crushes small organized discontent but bends to really big and seemingly spontaneous discontent. (Roskin, textbook on China.) Like the business leaders in Heifetz’s (1994) *Leadership Without Easy* Answers, China’s CCP leaders watch the political dance competitions from the balcony to see who should be rewarded.

In a “best case” scenario, the CCP’s more secure position in China and China’s more secure position in the world will coalesce to produce “Democracy with Chinese Characteristics”: institutionalized and fully legitimated factions within the CCP, permitted and indeed encouraged to air their differences so long as CCP control is not challenged. These factions, in turn, will have their supporters, “netizens,” in Kate Zhou’s (2011) term, who use online media to mobilize support for reforms within the CCP and at local and provincial levels. A blending of Confucian, Maoist and Western values in a uniquely Chinese dominant cultural ideology will re-animate the populace, now far-better educated than in the past, lifting their spirits and their adherence to the rule of law as they witness a transformation of government and state-owned enterprises from corrupt crony capitalism to one that responds innovatively and justly to their concerns.

**Questions for Thought and Discussion**

Is China liberalizing? What’s your evidence?

How should China be ruled?

**Note:**

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12 There was a power struggle within the Party between the more conservative revolutionary old guards trying to control the reform and the younger generation of party officials led by Deng Xiaoping trying to promote change. See for example M. Goldman and R. MacFarquhar “Dynamic Economy, Declining party-State” in *TheParadox of China’s Post-Mao Reforms*, eds. Merle Goldman and Roderick MacFarquhar (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1999)

13 The *People’s Daily*, (August 9, 2001). All the sources cited from the *People’s Dai*ly are from its overseas Chinese version. The major news, especially political messages between the overseas and inland versions, is the same.

16 The process by which the entire replacement team was selected is itself a measure of Jiang’s contribution to the CCP’s institutionalization. These leaders did not run for public office but they were considered carefully by their predecessors, who were able to draw upon detailed, confidential dossiers on each of them that had been compiled by the CCP’s secretive, highly trusted Organization Department. They then got as close as China has ever come in the transition period to merit-based selection. See X. Hu & G. Lin (2001)

19 My Chinese colleague followed up with an e-mail (dated 2/12/2009): “China is a different country altogether from what it was 20, 30 years old.  We need to have patience and we need to see change/development - this is a country of 1.3 billion people with five thousand years of history.... America needs change, too. US global capitalism and expansionism and dominance (or US type of democracy and liberty) cause so much human sufferings, epitomized by the human catastrophes in Iraq and Palestine.

See If following notes have been correctly identified, or not

**Chapter Ten**

**Egypt’s Ups and Downs: A Political Tragedy in Three Acts**

**In this chapter**

* Introduction
* Act I: Liberation and Despair
* Act II: Struggles for Power
* Act III The Coup
* Counter-Revolution?
* Summary
* Questions for thought and discussion
* Works Cited

**Introduction**

Egypt has undergone cataclysmic changes since the fall of General Hosni Mubarak on Feb. 11, 2011: a coup in 2013 that toppled a democratically elected president, cycles of violence in the coup’s wake, a rapidly deteriorating economy and near-unanimous approval of a new constitution granting uncontestable power to the military and the dreaded security police;

Presented in this chapteris a dilemma-centered analysis of Egypt’s political tragedy in three acts. Act I begins with the toppling of a dictator, The analysis focuses upon the pushes and pulls of leading political actors, not least the young politicalactivists who ushered in theArab spring.

It ends with the splintering of the liberal-left secular coalition and its inability to achieve success at the polls.

Act 2 continues through early July, 2013 to events in Act 3 that threatened to tear Egypt apart (or by some accounts to restore it to its former greatness). The ups and downs in this chapter’s narrative are never-ending. If you’re enamored of General Sisi the Muslim Brotherhood brought on its own demise and deserved its ignominious fate (El Rashidi, 2018). If you’renota fan, Sisi was another Mubarak, having created another police state and scripted a coup, then blamed the Brotherhood for its own victimage.To spin the narrative with yet another up and down, Sisi brought calm and stability to the country.

But what of the political activists, many incarcerated, some killed, for opposing El-Sisi and defending the rule of law? Did they too deserve their fates? How, if at all, can the conflicts in this troubled country be resolved?

**Act I: Liberation and Despair**

In this book’s preface I wrote of the jubilation in Cairo’s Tahrir Square, in 2011, at news that the Egyptian liberation movement had deposed Hosni Mubarak,a dictator; then, on my return to Cairo a year later, of the souring mood among the political activists as the movement’s efforts to forge a workable political coalition ran afoul of fragmentation from within and resistance from without.Hosni Mubarak resigned under pressure on February 11, 2011. ([www.nytimes.com.2011/12.2](http://www.nytimes.com.2011/12.2)).  For months thereafter protesters of all faiths assembled in and around Cairo’s Tahrir Square to celebrate his removal.Khaled Said filmed police in the act of profiting from the sale of drugs and was repeatedly slammed against stone steps in retaliation. A photo of his bloodied corpse, snapped by his brother on a mobile phone, went viral on Facebook.

**Insert artwork: cartoon Kahled Said.**

In 2011 and again in 2012 I flew to Cairo to celebrate with Egyptianstheir liberation from the rule of Mubarak and to learn what life is like in a police state. Mubarak had been removed but the forces that kept him in power remained. These included the military, the state-owned, state-run media, the judiciary, the bureaucracy, and the dreaded security police. In a short time I made friends with some of the activists and came to understand the issues that divided them. Hosni Mubarak resigned under pressure on February 11, 2011. ([www.nytimes.com.2011/12.2](http://www.nytimes.com.2011/12.2)).

Recent scholarship sheds light on the “deep state” of powerful forces that have long governed Egypt and other nations in theMididle East, insuring continuity of governance through successive dictatorial regimes, beginning with Gamel Abdul Nasser’s nationalist government which overthrew the British monarchy and won Egypt a place as leader of the “Third World.” Nasser Was followed in 1981 by Nobel Prize winner Anwar Sadat who presented himself as a peacekeeper but kept the deep state’s security apparatus in place, helping to further enrich the military and police as the price for Egypt’s stability. From Nasser and Sadat to the reigning General Sisi there is great continuity. Said Omar Ashour, (2016) the general rule as early as 2004 was to send a prisoner to Jordan if you wanted a serious interrogation, to Syria if you wanted a prisoner “disappeared,” and to Egypt if you wanted the prisoner tortured and killed.

Hosni Mubarak resigned under pressure on February 11, 2011. ([www.nytimes.com.2011/12.2](http://www.nytimes.com.2011/12.2)).  For months thereafter protesters of all faiths assembled in and around Cairo’s Tahrir Square to celebrate his removal.Khaled Said filmed police in the act of profiting from the sale of drugs and was repeatedly slammed against stone steps in retaliation. A photo of his bloodied corpse, snapped by his brother on a mobile phone, went viral on Facebook.

The eloquent videos of Asmaa Mahfouz, a 26-year-old female activist, contributed to the extraordinary turnout in Tahrir Square, its accumulated total later estimated to be between six to eight million people. A young activist neatly summarized the new lines of communication: "We use Facebook to schedule the protests, Twitter to coordinate, and YouTube to tell the world*."  Said another activist, the protests called for dignity (the freedom to be), freedom (the opportunity to do), and social justice (things that must be done).*

**Box 10.1**

Upon arrival in Cairo on March 5, 2011 I headed directly for Tahrir Square to share in the excitement. Tents were strewn about and around them were crowds of people, some fixing their attention on a well-known speaker, others in diverse groups, trading stories.

At Beano’s coffee shop, I met with three cousins who'd had important roles in the making of the revolution. Shahira, a journalist, quit as anchor for Nile TV (a foreign

language satellite channel) before President Mubarak was pressured to resign because, as she said, she could no longer continue to lie to her viewers. Yasmin, a

doctoral student, worked on logistics. Reem was centrally involved with a coalition of secularist parties, associations and movement groups working to advance shared goals

and work out their differences. Were I a member of this coalition I would have despaired over the number of enormous problems Egypt faced as well as the potential for internal conflict

and splintering (already evident) among the many organizations comprising the coalition. But they were succeeding, Reem assured me, at meeting these challenges.

I would have also been concerned about the generally revered military. Not everyone on the Left found common cause with it. Blogger Wael Abbas said flat out that it couldn’t be trusted. Political strategist Wael Nawara said that “we” (the revolutionaries) pretend to trust it because it relaxes their guard.  I was reminded of peace demonstrations against America’s involvement in the Vietnam war where young women placed flowers in the rifle barrels of soldiers guarding the Pentagon to relax their guard.

The cousins explained that the revolution would have been impossible without military authorization.  Negotiations with the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF) continue and reforms of no small importance are being made, the cousins reported. Indeed no problems were insurmountable. Not Egypt’s poverty or its extremely high illiteracy rate or its joblessness, or its decaying infrastructure, or its corrupt officials, or the brutality of its security police, or Cairo’s pollution and population density, or regional and religious enmities stood in the way of progress. Egypt needs also to

overcome such decades of hurdles in the way of private investment as red tape and corrupt officials, combined with advantages to military-owned or supported businesses which also enriched many generals.

   Part of the reason for the cousins’ optimism was the sense that Egypt is special, its people ill-disposed to civil conflict, experienced at making do with less, accustomed to putting a smiling face on deprivations so long as there is reason for hope, and proud—immensely proud--of Egypt’s ancient heritage, its distinguished place in the Arab world

and among nations bordering it on the Mediterranean, and its leading role during Nasser’s rule in Third World politics.  Perhaps their main reason for optimism was the sheer thrill of making history—of being one with the other activists at Tahrir Square.

The “Contest” and its Major Players. Eric Trager (July 22, 2011) characterized the situation following Mubarak’s resignation as a three-cornered contest among the liberal-left protesters (the secularists), the military (SCAF), and Egypt’s Muslim Brotherhood (MB), each vying for dominance while also, on occasion, collaborating with one another. Other “players” from within Egypt enter into the account, not least, as I shall explain, remnants of the Mubarak regime (Nawara, W., June 21, 2012). To this list I add the outside players, those nations and international organizations with vested interests in the outcomes of conflicts in Egypt and on which various factions in these internal struggles depend for their support. The need, simultaneously or sequentially, to compete and cooperate while maintaining some semblance of consistency is for all of these entities a core dilemma. Each had also to act in the face of uncertainties about how the others would react. But their objectives were broadly knowable.

  The liberal-left secularists sought since Mubarak’s overthrow to realize the unfulfilled goals of their revolution, this by way of a “second” revolution, more ambitious than the first, that culminated in the creation of a genuinely civil society in Egypt, committed to freedoms of speech, religion and assembly and to equal rights for all under the law.  Buoying their hopes had been their largely peaceful deposition of the Mubarak regime.

Both SCAF and the MB aligned themselves symbolically with the revolution.  In 2011, the military junta and the MB worked in tandem, smoothing the way for Egypt’s transition to democracy with its first free presidential elections, resulting in a narrow victory for President Mohamed Morsi and the Brotherhood’s Freedom and Justice Party. (F&JP). But older MB leaders had not forgotten the days of en masse imprisonments of its leaders by SCAF and Mubarak’s security police. And SCAF’s 21 senior officers were wary of an Islamicized Egypt under MB control. (Friend, July 1, 2011)

Cairo: March 26-April 2, 2012:

In late March, 2012 the once rosy scenario of nonviolent revolution had turned to bleak. A World Bank executive expressed concern over repeated instances of unpremeditated violence in Cairo, much of it initiated by the military and security police, as summarized in a report by Amnesty International (AI, Nov. 22, 2011).Uncertaintynow prevailed among the once confident political activists who spearheaded the revolt about whether they could trust Egypt’s current military leadership, make common cause with the Muslim Brotherhood, and surmount their own ideological differences. There were disagreements too about who should lead them and about how to forge lasting alignments.

Still, the liberal-left coalition labored on, envisioning now a “second revolution” of longer duration, better organized than the first, politically more savvy, less dependent on winning electoral majorities and more focused upon creation of a civil society in Egypt, with equal rights for women and men, with strategies for reaching out to the poor, and with plans to address Egypt’s multitude of economic, educational and environmental problems Islam Lofty, the founder of a new Islamist youth party and an executive member of the Coalition of Revolutionary Youth was among the enthusiasts. “The people who are saying [that the revolution is over] have been saying this from the day Mubarak stepped down,” he said. “The revolution is not marches and demonstrations. It is a huge process to change in social life and the political system, and so on. So we’ve just started the process.” Sorcher, S. (July 25, 2011) But, said Eric Trager (July 22, 2011) “in the six months since Mubarak resigned from office, the youth protesters have not been unable to make much headway in advancing their causes. The activists’ deep internal divisions have taken a toll on the movement, making it impossible to agree.The young, liberal Egyptian activists dedicated to bettering their country who stayed home when the Egyptian revolution came, urged those hailing the triumph of the new Egypt to recall Edmund Burke’s truism: “Bringing down a tyrant is far, far easier than forming a free government.” In the months that followed, no matter how far the Egyptian economy plummeted, how badly the security situation on the border with Israel deteriorated, or how many were killed in criminal, sectarian, or political violence, the narrative was maintained: Though painful, these were the necessary labor pangs of democracy.

 At issue fundamentally in the controversy between liberal-left enthusiasts and skeptics were differing perceptions of the military and the Islamists. These differences stood in the way of a united political front and of coalition-building with others. Some enthusiasts looked to the possibility of accommodations with each. For skeptics such as Bargesi and Tadros (and for many enthusiasts as well) Islamic rule of Egypt remained an even greater nightmare than continued rule by a military dictatorship:

The gravest danger is for us to fall prey to complacency and believe that anIslamist government will either moderate or fail to deliver, and that the Egyptians will vote for someone else in the next elections. The very possibility of next elections is dependent on our capacity to avoid the total anarchy scenario. And the Islamists are not going to moderate. No matter how pragmatic the Muslim Brotherhood is, they will face a constant challenge by Salafists from the right to adhere to a strict standard of religious purity. If the Islamists, now hugely popular, do fail to deliver, genuine liberals must be at the ready to offer voters a clear alternative.” (2011 After the Fall pp.2-3)

When the liberal-left initially made common cause with SCAF, it did so believing, as most Egyptians do, that the military serves the public interest. It was, they explained, Egypt’s most trusted institution and General Tantawi, the head of the military, publicly pledged support for the protesters in a speech at Tahrir Square, then followed up his pledge with ministerial replacements more to the protesters’ liking.

Months later, however, these same protesters were chanting: “Tantawi is Mubarak, Mubarak is Tantawi.” (Guardian, Dec 7, 2012) In what one journalist described as the “shifting Zeitgeist of the Arab Spring,” (Levine, M., April 11, 2011) trust in the military eroded when it used lethal force to break up demonstrations, or allowed others such as the widely hated security police to do so. SCAF’s leadership also announced that it would maintain control through 2012 and possibly 2013, even after the parliamentary and presidential elections. Rebuffing heated calls for a turnover of authority to an interim leadership council, SCAF also announced that it would put in place “supra-constitutional” amendments guaranteeing special privileges that the military had long enjoyed to run businesses and deal in real estate, free from accountability. On these amendments there would be decision by fiat. SCAF’s authority, it said, was the “People of the Couch,” a phrase reminiscent of Nixon’s “Silent Majority.” Enterplanet360 Blog (Jan. 12, 2013) and more recently General Sisi’s “the voice of the people.”

Thus Egypt’s secular liberals were torn between elation at having helped engineer Egypt’s first free parliamentary elections and despair at their outcome. In the first round of voting the well-organized Muslim Brotherhood’s Freedom and Justice Party (F&JP) garnered roughly 40% of the vote, the more fundamentalist Salafist Party captured 25% of the vote, and the liberals and leftists scraped together no more than 15%, split among a number of parties. These proportions approximated figures for a March 2011 referendum on constitutional reform. Some on the liberal left expressed hope that if the Muslim Brotherhood emerged victorious it would join with liberals in opposition to the military and to the Salafists. New York Times columnist Nicholas Kristof wrote in praise of the MB (December 7, 2011; December 10, 2011). Shahira Amin, now host of CNN’s Inside Africa, had kind words for the Salafists. (Jan. 24, 2013) Times columnist Tom Friedman (December 7, 2011) urged his readers to resign themselves to a period of Muslim rule, but not necessarily intolerant Muslim rule. {end of Act 1}

**Act II: Struggles for Power**

The story as told thus far has been of a rocky post-Mubarak era with dramatic ups and downs. Egypt’s dictator was removed, only to be replaced by another military dictatorship, one that vacillated between celebrating the revolution and subverting it. In June 2012, the military assumed legislative powers and control over Egypt’s budget. SCAF used tanks to crush continued protests, aided the much feared security police, and insisted on guarantees designed to maintain its perks.

But SCAF also smoothed the way to a referendum, a parliament, a constitutional council, and presidential elections, only to dissolve the parliament in line with a ruling by the Supreme Constitutional Court SCC), made up largely of Mubarak era holdovers. (Trager, April19, 2012) SCAF next repudiated the constitutional council and threatened to continue its hold on power into 2013. It then worked out an accord whereby a presidential election could be held, provided that the presidential candidates met judicial criteria for legitimacy. As a result once-prominent candidates were disqualified and Mohamed Morsi, previously an also-ran, was elected.

Act II continues through early July, 2013 to events in Act III that threaten to tear Egypt apart (or by some accounts to restore it to its former greatness) while presenting the U.S. government with excruciating political dilemmas.

Act II begins where Act I leaves off, with the presidential election of the Muslim Brotherhood’s Mohamed Morsi and subsequent struggles for power among the Brotherhood, the military, coalitions of liberal-left secularists, various outside players, and what remained of the Mubarak administration. During this chaotic period Morsi and the MB never did achieve governmental control, having been kept on a short leash by Mubarak remnants, including the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF), the security police and the Mubarak-appointed judiciary. It nullified parliamentary elections and a new constitution that had been rushed into being by Morsi and was widely condemned as government-by-decree.Yet despite those limitations, the MB is blamed for failure to succeed. Act III begins in July, 2013 with a coup that removes Morsi from power.

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Reign of the Morsi Regime (June 30, 2012-June 30, 2013):

Founded in 1928 and a force in several Middle East countries, the MB had in 2011 between 600,000 and 750,000 members in Egypt (Trager. July 22, 2011) It had patiently built a devoted Muslim following there, depending on its charities, its health care facilities and its superb organizing abilities to deliver majorities or pluralities in referenda and elections. Most of its leaders had spent time in jail as political prisoners. (Hessler, June 18, 2012) Having initially announced that it would not run a candidate in the presidential elections, the MB wound up fielding two of them, while disciplining breakaway groups of dissenters within its own ranks. When its preferred candidate was disqualified, it coalesced around Morsi, who triumphed by a narrow margin over SCAF’s preferred candidate,Mubarak’s last Prime Minister, Ahma Shafik. When SCAF unilaterally dissolved the previously elected, MB dominated Egyptian parliament and suspended constitutional amendments, the MB displayed its not inconsiderable mobilizing potential to hold mammoth demonstrations at Tahrir Square, sometimes in conjunction with other groups such as the secularists and Salafists.

There followed signs of cooperation by the MB with the military (giving unto Caesar what is Caesar’s), and of SCAF’s reluctant legitimization of MB presidential rule. The MB’s strategy was to concede judicial decisions like the disqualification of its preferred presidential candidate, and to signal an interest in eventually ceding to SCAF its “supra-consitutional” rights contingent on the MB’songoing legitimization. By Fall 2012 SCAF and the MB had tacitly (if not formally) negotiated the terms of a power-sharing agreement.

By comparison with the Salafists President Morsi presented himself in office as a religious moderate in civic affairs, more democrat than theocrat.  (Ottaway, M. Nov 29, 2012, “A Choice of Two Tyrannies)

 The MB evolved considerably since the days when it resisted British occupation and mobilized opposition to home-grown dictators. Now it grappled with the challenges of sharing authority and building consensus with its opponents.

SCAF’s leadership under General Tantawi was also something of a mystery. SCAF had announced repeatedly as early as July, 2011 that it wanted to give up formal power. I surmised that it preferred a weak Egyptian presidency and a weak Parliament that would enable it to preserve its prerogatives and to step in periodically to override the elected governments wishes, this by way of its immense resources for social control. Thus, playing on the instability and potential for chaos of a three-cornered struggle for political power, SCAF could step in militarily and thus perpetuate constitutionally legitimated dictatorship in Egypt*. Said Theodore Friend (July 1, 2011), “Although Islamist activists and secular intellectuals both have been allowed their latitudes in the last sixty years, there was always an implicit leash by which the authoritarian regime (whichever one; the characteristic in Egypt is by now innate) could yank them back or even, metaphorically, strangle them. Friend added that*

One-party governments, despotic at their worst, feel threatened bylocalized protests. From tear gas to rhetorical kisses there is a greatrange of options, in which the military and police are critical, andnot always coordinate.  The army may be deployed systematicallyand brutally with tanks and helicopter gunships (Syria); or it maytake sides with the people (Tunisia); or it may shatter along tribal and geographic lines (in civil war, Libya; or in anti-establishmentanarchy (Yemen).There is no true or sustained neutrality possible for an army in suchtimes.  Egypt's military was not charmed into democratic solidaritywith demonstrators by the popular chant, "The people and the armyare one." No: a conscript army simply did not wish to fire into largecrowds, because their own relatives could be there; and officers were unwilling to give such an order.  The top senior generalsfinally judged Mubarak, one of their own, to have becomeunsupportable. (Friend, T. July01, 2011)

 Social Control:

The general term for the military’s options is social control.It includes everything that is done preventively by governments and supportive institutions to indoctrinate members of a society, and by way of reparative mechanisms such as police arrests and incarcerations to limit opposition. (Edelman, 1985) Preventive social control wards off potential trouble before it takes place, rendering even the poor and the disenfranchised into loyal, obedient, quiescent believers in the society’ dominant cultural ideologies and in the rightness of those who tell them how to think and what to do.[HS7] They manage to talk the talk of democracy without walking the walk.(de Mesquita and Smith, Jun 12, 2011, [nytimes.com](http://nytimes.com/)) I count among them the former Mubarak regime and its military leadership. In appropriating the rhetoric of democracy while running tyrannical regimes, they are not alone. Said sociologist Brandon Gorman (2011) *“Political speeches in the contemporary world illustrate a tendency among heads of state of appealing to democracy and democratic concepts regardless of regime type. Current literature on global norms of democratic governance suggests thatdecoupling [HS8] –or feigning support for democracy without enacting it in local institutions – is endemic in discourses which touch upon global norms.”*(Gorman, 2011, p. 1) Gorman adds that this is particularly true in the Arab world.

Talking the talk without walking the walk is but one form of social control. The rhetoric of social control is but a part of the process which also includes ownership and/or control of dominant media, bribery to stave off protests (as in Saudi Arabia) and the use of brute force. Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak was hardly the worst of the Middle East’s despots but in 2006 he “systematically dismantled a nascent democracy movement by pushing through constitutional amendments that limited opposition parties, suspended judicial supervision of elections and enshrined draconian police powers.”(Hessler, June 18, 2012). SCAF’s social control mechanisms have been far more sophisticated, relying less on brute force and more on a combination of symbolic appeals, intimidation, media control, and the old standby of divide and conquer. Even then, they are estimated to have been responsible for 800 mostly civilian deaths in and around Tahrir Square in 2011 (Friend, T. July 01, 2011)

Egyptian politics is not for the faint-hearted. By November, 2012 Egypt was again in crisis mode, the result of a decree by President Morsi. It was designed, he said, to save the revolution from remnants of the judiciary in the old Mubarak regime which had thwarted the long-delayed process of drafting and then ratifying a new constitution for Egypt. (Hessler,June 18,2012, pp. 41-2)Prompting the Morsi decree were rumors that the court was poised to dissolve the Constitutional Assembly before its year-end deadline for drafting and ratification. Top courts had earlier dissolved a previous Constitutional Assembly as well as the new parliament. Hence leaders of the Muslim Brotherhood began to rush the debates. The assembly had already beaten back efforts by Salafists to expand the role of Islam in government.

 The judiciary, and for that matter, leading members of the Muslim Brotherhood who said they hadn’t been consulted, described the decree as an illegal power grab. Egyptian judges called for a judges’ strike against the Morsi edict, which he had exempted from judicial review until ratification of a constitution. Leaders of the Lawyers’ Association endorsed the call. The Judges Club, loyal to Mubarak, and opposed to the Islamists, voted to suspend all but its most vital activities. Judges chanted for the fall of the regime, echoing a cry in the revolt against Mubarak. From the official State newspaper, Al Ahram, sixty journalists left to make common cause with the protesters. After more than a quarter of the assembly members had quit in protest, a hastily drawn document was pushed through in a sixteen hour voting session.

 Liberal-left activists joined Nasserites in flooding Tahrir Square and its environs once again with as many as 200,000 protesters. Violent protests erupted in several other cities.  MB members were attacked and MB offices broken into. The stock market plunged and so too did President Morsi’s approval ratings

Sensing an opportunity, secularists on the left forged a “National Salvation Front” (NSF), one that would usher in Egypt’s long-awaited civil society. Others sought more modest reforms, such as representation on the council drafting the new constitution of more secularists, more Christians, more women, fewer Islamists. New alliances were forged in the Square, some with Mubarak-era holdovers.

Morsi complained that he’d been misunderstood: the decree was to be of short duration. It bore only on “sovereign” matters. He’d sought to prevent judicial dissolution so that compromises could be worked out. Opposition to the new constitution had been managed by Mubarak cronies. Increasingly vocal criticism threatened to undermine the legitimacy of the charter. But Morsi supporters said their suspicions of obstructionism were vindicated. Morsi spoke “vaguely” of imminent threats, a conspiracy of unnamed foreign enemies and corrupt businessmen. His advisors said that Mubarak loyalists had infiltrated the opposition, vowing to sacrifice democracy to defeat the Islamists. Critics heard from Morsi a familiar refrain, similar to Mubarak’s, of “foreign plots.”

Arguably, Morsi’s concerns were justified. In the ongoing dispute over who owned the “moral high ground,” a Guardian editorial weighed in with Morsi. (December 7, 2012) The crisis, it said, “is not about the proposed constitution, many of whose provisions opposition members put their signatures to, before changing their minds and walking out of the drafting committee. Negotiations on the contentious clauses have been offered and rejected. Nor is it about the date of the referendum, which the Egyptian justice minister…offered to postpone. Again, this was rejected. Nor even is it about the temporary but absolute powers that the Egyptian president, [Mohamed Morsi](http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/mohamed-morsi), assumed for himself – which will lapse the moment the referendum is held whatever the result.”

“So the target of the opposition National Salvation Front is not the constitution, or the emergency decree, but Morsi himself. What follows is a power battle in which the aim is to unseat a democratically elected president, and to prevent a referendum and fresh parliamentary elections being held, both of which Islamists stand a good chance of winning.”

**Box 10.2**

The Egyptian electorate went to the polls five times in 2011 and 2012. In March 2011 they voted by 70 percent for the referendum that charted the future political roadmap. Between November 2011 and January 2012 they gave Islamist parties overwhelming majorities in the lower house of parliament (73 percent) and the upper house (80 percent). On June 30, 2012 they narrowly elected Morsi as president.

In December 2012 they ratified Egypt’s new constitution by a ratio of almost two to one; i.e., a 64 percent majority (Esam Al-Amin, July 19 2013).

At each step in the electoral process, the Morsi regime was met by opposition from remnants of the Mubarak regime in the judiciary which repeatedly obstructed the electoral process, using technical grounds to dissolve the lower house of parliament, invalidate an election law, halt or postpone elections and attempt to nullify the constitution. It became apparent that despite winning elections and pushing through a

new constitution, the Morsi regime was not really in control of the levers of power. Said the New York Times’ David Kirkpatrick on NPR’s Fresh Air with Terry Gross:

*[The military] are proud of the election of President Morsi, and they consider it evidence that they have completed their promise to hand over full power. Now, this is absurd. It’s completely and totally false in a kind of 1984/Through the Looking Glass kind of way, because on the eve of his election, they also dissolved the Parliament and issued a decree claiming themselves not only all legislative authority but all authority over the budget. So they’ve left him [Morsi] all but powerless. So we’re in a kind of bizarre*

*alternative universe in Egypt right now where the nominal president isn’t really the president, and you can tell because the state media is constantly trying to undercut him whenever he tries to challenge the ruling generals.* (Kirkpatrick, December 2012)

*“Morsi undoubtedly made grave mistakes. In pre-empting a decision by the constitutional court to derail his constitution, his decree was cast too wide. The final draft of the constitution has many faults, although none are set in stone. The opposition on the other hand has never accepted the results of freely held elections, parliamentary or presidential, and is doing everything to stop new ones being held.* (Kirkpatrick, December 2012)

As early as November, 2012, the Carnegie Endowment’s Marina Ottaway saw the conflict between Islamist and secular parties “as increasingly taking on the character of a Greek tragedy, with Egypt hurtling toward authoritarianism no matter which side prevails.” These political forces, she added, have no incentive to compete in the same political arena. “One side fights through the vote and the other through the courts—and both appeal to the streets to bypass the official political process… Islamist political parties have widespread popular support, while secular parties have influence over state institutions.” Secular leaders “are part of the old elite of the Mubarak period, which still controls the major institutions of the state.” (Ottaway Nov. 29, 2012, “A Choice of Two Tyrannies.”) Said political strategist Wael Nawara (Jan. 29, 2013), Clashes in Egypt reflect Muslim Brotherhood and opposition failure to work together with an inclusive political process.

Interviews of Morsi and pronouncementsby him presented a mixed picture of a leader torn between moralistic Islamist values and more pragmatic western liberal values--facing “political pressure at home to prove his independence, but demands from the West for reassurance that Egypt under Islamist rule will remain a stable partner.” (Kirkpatrick & Erlanger, September 22, 2012)

My impression of Morsi was of a thin-skinned moralist, too quick to take affront, too insecure to accept blame credibly, not much of a listener but adept at seizing opportunities as when he joined with President Obama in brokering a truce between Israel and Hamas or when SCAF’s bungling of a crisis in the Sinai enabled him to replace SCAF’s leadership with junior officers more to his liking. Morsi the moralist lectured Egyptians on staying up too late at night and purported to take affront at satirical depictions of the prophet Muhammad, but he communicated insecurity when he equated mockery of the prophet with criticisms (seen as “attacks”) of himself as President. (Kristof, 2012) He needed to run a more inclusive presidency with the best talent available to rescue the economy, to do what he could to end fratricidal warfare in Egypt, and to repair the breech created by his ham-handed use of decrees to power a deeply flawed constitution past its detractors.

            In the intervening months before Morsi’s overthrow on 3 July, 2013 the economic situation for Egypt and the political situation for Morsi and the Muslim Brotherhood deteriorated sharply. The Egyptian pound fell to just 60% of its exchange rate against the dollar (Abrams, E. April 18, 2013) Americans expressed less confidence in the Muslim Brotherhood, as indicated in a poll released by the Arab American institute. (Sacribey, O. April 12, 2013). The Egyptian bureaucracy, composed largely of Mubarak appointees,evidenced deep mistrust of the MB and worked to undermine its rule. Plans to hold parliamentary elections were overruled and nullified by a body consisting of Mubarak holdovers. Even if an election were held, the principal opposition to President Morsi’s Freedom and Justice Party vowed to boycott it, thus depriving it of a semblance of legitimacy. In the meantime elements of the state-owned media apparatus engaged in open rebellion and Egypt’s interior ministry sat on its hands and openly joked as MB offices were trampled upon. Morsi gambled that Egypt would prove “too big to fail” for the west’s power-holders, but they held fast in insisting upon politically risky economic reforms as conditions for a desperately needed International MonetaryFund loan. (Kirkpatrick, D.D. &El Sheikh, M.E., Jan. 19, 2013)

            Between January and the end of June, 2013 the situation worsened. Block-long lines for petrol together with the flickering out of electricity to power up air conditioners and fans in the hot summer fueled the anger of an already irate population. People on short fuses took to violence in Cairo, the Sinai, and in cities close to the Suez Canal and the police responsible for directing traffic and keeping the peace went on holiday. The Morsi regime was alternately blamed for attempting to placate the military, police and Interior Ministry and for failing to control them. (Al-Amin July 19-21, 2013; Hubbard, B. and Kirkpatrick, D.D. July 10, 2013). It had previously been excoriated both for attempting to rein in the news and entertainment media and for granting them too much freedom.

**Act III The Coup**

Every coup d’etat in history begins with a military General announcing the overthrow and arrest of the country’s leader, the suspension of the constitution, and the dissolution of the legislature. If people resist it turns bloody. Egypt is no exception. (Al-Amin, July 2013)

Following upon the coup, the Morsi administration was summarily thrown out of office by General Sisi. Charges of possible criminality were levelled at Morsi while he was held incommunicado by the self-proclaimed authorities and MB members were shot in the back while they prayed. Sisi branded the MB as terrorists and encouraged civilians to join with his military in dispersing Muslim protests, by lethal force if necessary, which many did. (Nordland Aug. 25, 2013) Amnesty International called this a recipe for further bloodshed (Amnesty International, 2011) and President Barack Obama sent Sisi a diplomatically worded reminder of protestors’ rights under international law to assemble peacefully.

           At the outset of this chapter I questioned claims by my liberal-left friends in Egypt that the July 3rd overthrow of the democratically elected Morsi regime was itself democratic, an expression of the will of the people, of “crowd democracy” (Nawara, 2013), as reflected in polls, petitions and massive turnouts of popular support.

*The overthrow was a coup, engineered to appear as a youth-inspired rebellion (a “Tamarrud”) but bought and paid for by businessmen with ties to the Mubarak remnants and to the religiously conservative Gulf monarchies.*  That the overthrow of the Muslim Brotherhood was a coup is incontestable. That it was democratic beggars the imagination. The cover story is one of massive, youth-led demonstrations at Tahrir Square in support of the “Tamarrud”),  this together with more signatories to a petition for Morsi’s ouster than voted for Morsi in his presidential election victory, as well as reliable opinion poll evidence testifying overwhelmingly to the rightness of the cause. The inside story is of a secretive plot to overthrow the Morsi regime, long in the planning, this with the largesse and connivance of Gulf Arab monarchies, Israel, American neoconservatives, and wealthy Egyptian businessmen. Said Max Fisher (Fisher, Aug. 22, 2013), Egypt is becoming a proxy conflict. “It’s not an all-out proxy conflict as in Syria but it’s hard to miss the pattern: of regional and global powers, some of them allies, working …to empower their favorite sides in the Egyptian crisis, hoping to determine the future of one of the Middle East’s most important countries.”

            As detailed by Esam Al-Amin (Al-Amin, July 19-21, 2013) the plot was hatched in the United Arab Emirates, then sold to other sheikdoms, to preempt the wave of popular uprisings in the Arab World. When Egypt’s Hosni Mubarak was deposed, ill-gotten fortunes looted from Egypt found their way to banks in the UAE, along with security officials and corrupt business men who migrated to the UAE from Egypt. Saudi Arabia’s Prince Bandar was designated to solicit support from the CIA to topple the Brotherhood by assassinating Morsi, or if that failed, by uniting the coalition to defeat Morsi at the polls. Plan A was thwarted by one of Morsi’s security guards and so the plotters shifted to Plan B.

The plot thickens. In March, 2013, NSF leader El Baradei won support for a plan to undermine Morsi’s rule and destabilize Egypt internally, then convince Western governments to back a military takeover. Reportedly, the military under General Sisi agreed to the plan provided that millions of Egyptians took to the streets on their side. One wealthy businessman, Naguib Sawiris, boasted that he had donated millions of dollars in publicity to the Tamarrud group without their knowledge and had helped arrange for Judge Adley Monsour, a titular Egyptian leader, to sign off on appointments to the military-led government. Private media channels and then the officially neutral public media in Egypt joined in the campaign, as did the UAE’s Al-Arabiyya satellite channel.  *Okaz, a Saudi newspaper, detailed the unfolding scenario three days before the Egyptian military took over.*(Esam Al-Amin, July 19 2013).

            In June 2013, Egyptians fumed at shortages of gas and electricity as well as traffic gridlock on city streets, but after the coup life suddenly improved. “Gas lines have disappeared, power cuts have stopped and the police have returned to the street.” (Hubbard & Kirkpatrick, July 10, 2013) The apparently miraculous end to these problems, said the reporters, seems to suggest that Morsi’s opponents conspired to make his regime fail. “Not only did police officers seem to disappear, but the state agencies responsible for providing electricity failed so fundamentally that gas lines and rolling blackouts fed widespread anger.” They added: “But it is the police returning to the streets that offers the most blatant sign that the institutions once loyal to Mubarak held back while Morsi was in power.”  (Hubbard & Kirkpatrick, July 10, 2013)

In July Brotherhood media outlets were closed down. Morsi, the Brotherhood, and Islamists more generally were demonized as terrorists, accused on spurious evidence of crimes against the state. They were further charged with inciting the police and military violence to take the lives of their fellow Muslims, a classic instance of blaming the victim. General Sisi claimed, and the friendly media dutifully reported as credible, that the military had not used live ammunition in closing down the Brotherhood’s sites of mass protest, this despite widely published evidence to the contrary. (Kirkpatrick et al,2013).

General Sisi’s persona as a Nasser-like populist who had heeded “the voice of the people” also contributed to support of the coup. In 1952 Nasser led a coup against the British controlled monarchy of King Farouk. A Nasser-led “Free Officer” movement overthrew Farouk and wrested control of the military from the British by way of appeal to nationalist sentiments. After years of internal strife and economic decline Egyptians in July, 2013 were looking for a unifying “strong man” and Sisi fit the bill. Even as the military generals issued “supra-constitutional” edicts and siphoned off government funds for personal use, they reinforced the myth of “the army and the people as one” to those who supported Morsi’s overthrow. David Kirkpatrick (July 22nd 2013) said of Morsi’s ouster that it unleashed an alarming “hyper-nationalist euphoria” sweeping up even liberals and leftists who’d struggled against previous military-backed governments in Egypt. “I’ll put it bluntly,” said Kirkpatrick in his interview on NPR’s “Fresh Air with Terry Gross”: “It’s how I imagine Europe in the first part of the 20th century might have felt during the rise of fascism … It may not last. It may be just a momentary national hysteria, but at the moment there is a surreal-seeming enthusiasm for the military … even by people who just a few months ago were calling for the end of military rule.” (Kirkpatrick,Jul 22, 2013)

Thus did the military, the other Mubarak remnants, the secularists, and the outside powers allied against the Morsi regime bring it down and replace it with a military government more to their liking. Add too that an infusion of some $12billion dollars to Egypt in unrestricted funds and goods from the Saudi’s, the Emirates, and Kuwait bailed out the Egyptian economy in 2013, this after it had sharply declined. As a consequence of this impressive joining of money, power, and populist rhetoric,

.  Said Time Magazine Correspondent, Ashraf Khalil (Khalil, Aug. 14, 2013), Egyptians now may be better off economically, but they will be dogged for years to come by the fratricidal conflicts in their country, fought out not in parliaments but on the street

A full Brotherhood purge from public and political life, which seems likely at this point, would drive the venerable and still powerful Islamist organization back underground — where it spent decades of its existence before the 2011 revolution. It would be an embittered, aggrieved faction, emboldened by the memories of its adherents’ recent sacrifices and the knowledge that it won every post-revolutionary election it entered. If the military’s crackdown continues, it will likely radicalize certain elements of the group and could herald a new, unwelcome era of armed Islamist insurgency.

On July 3, 2013 the Morsi regime was summarily and bloodily deposed, exactly one year after Morsi had been democratically elected as president in the first free and fair election in Egypt in sixty years. It was removed from office by President Morsi’s own appointee as defense minister, General Sisi. Charges of possible treason were levelled at Morsi while he was held incommunicado by the self-proclaimed authorities and MB members were shot in the back while they prayed.

General Sisi branded the MB as terrorists and encouraged civilians to join with his military in dispersing Muslim protests, by lethal force if necessary, which many did. (Nordland. Aug 25, 2013). Amnesty International called this shifting of blame a recipe for further bloodshed (<https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2013/07/egypts-decision-to-disperse-sit-ins-is-a-recipe-for-disaster>and President Barack Obama sent Sisi a diplomatically worded reminder of protestors’ rights under international law to assemble peacefully.

But the general mood even among many liberals and secularists aligned with Sisi was one of angry defiance at what they took to be interference by those officials in Washington who registered objections. Said political scientist Samer S. Shehata, (July 2, 2013)

Egypt faces a disturbing paradox: an ostensibly democratic movement is calling on the military, which produced six decades of autocrats, to oust a democratically elected president—all in the name of setting the country, once again, on a path to democracy.

The most credible justification for the coup was the danger under Morsi of Egypt becoming a failed state. (Nawara,Dec. 29, 2012) The Morsi regime mismanaged the economy, failed to run an inclusive administration, rammed through an Islamist constitution by dictatorial decree, was intolerant of dissent, and stood in the way of progress toward creation of a civil society in a modernized Egypt. Added U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry, the Morsi regime had “stolen” the revolution. (Pequet, Nov. 20, 2013)

So, the argument went. The Sisi-led military had paradoxically heeded the “voice of the people.” At worst the coup offered the lesser of two evils.  Egypt had proven once again that it needed a strong man. Like other nations in the Middle East it was not ready for “true” democracy, as in the U.S

This chapter’s use of the term drama has been intended to suggest a view of politics as stage-managed, its “players” in roles that are at least partially scripted. The metaphor of Egyptian politics as tragedy is likewise to suggest a view in Act III of unintended and unwelcome consequences, of leading political actors captive to forces they could not fully control.

New York Times Bureau Chief David Kirkpatrick offered a tragi-comic perspective on post-Morsi Egyptian politics as an Orwellian looking glass, a “1984,” (Fresh Air, NPR, Jul. 22, 2013), what with many liberal-Left secularists aligned in improbable coalitions with those whom they would normally oppose and standing in support of actions they would normally abhor. Even those political actors who are adept at gaming the system for short-term advantage must reckon with the long-term adverse consequences of the coup and its bloody aftermath.

Who/what engineered the movement to overthrow the Morsi regime? Was this to be Egypt’s longed for second revolution or was it a throwback to an earlier period when remnants of the Mubarak regime continued de facto rule of Egypt after he was deposed?

Which nations stood to benefit from Morsi’s overthrow and which were at risk? What will this tell us about the power behind the throne? Already the coup has placed the U.S. and EU in untenable positions, unable to support the new regime without compromising their avowed principles and thereby sullying their reputations, but at risk of being marginalized in Egypt if they pushed too hard against the new government and lost other valuable Middle East allies in the process. (Miller, A.D. November 11, 2013)

One could argue that the Sisi-led military had paradoxically heeded the “voice of the people.” for a second revolution.  Egypt had proven once again that it needed a strongman. Like other nations in the Middle East it was not ready for democracy.

But the costs of deposing a democratically elected president, for Egypt and the other Arab spring nations, have been enormous. It’s hard to imagine seculars and Muslims coming together after Egypt was so violently split apart. Said New York Times editorialist Carol Giacomo (July 13, 2013).

Egypt is the largest and most important country in the Arab world. How it evolves politically and economically will have an important impact on stability in the Middle East and will serve as a template for other countries in the region. Euphoria over the Arab Spring and its potential for constructive change subsided long ago, but the evidence of the past 10 days has raised alarming questions about what democracy means, and in Washington at least, questions about whether it can take root in Egypt – ever.

Liberal-left supporters of the coup said initially that the Egyptian military had heard the “voice of the people” who’d engineered the removal of the Mubarak regime, but these activists, leaders of the anti-Mubarak liberation movement, have become increasingly strident in their public expressions of opposition to the Muslim Brotherhood and to the Sisi regime’s repressive measures.

I argue here that theirs was not a second revolution by a grassroots movement but a counter-revolution by an Astroturf movement, engineered with a combination of money, power and mass persuasion. Among its objectives were to restore remnants of the old Mubarak regime’s legitimized power in Egypt, to advance the electoral ambitions of Egypt’s liberal-Left secularists (Nordland, Aug. 25, 2013), to serve the interests of various outside powers, and to decimate the Muslim Brotherhood. It had been seen as a threat to Egypt, to Israel, to the Gulf’s Arab sheikdoms, and by some accounts, to Middle East civilization as we know it. (Stack, 2013)

*The notion of Egyptian politics as tragedy is likewise to suggest a view in Act III of unintended and unwelcome consequences, of leading political actors captive to forces they could not fully control and standing in support of actions they would normally abhor.* As in all such “dysfunctional political systems” (see chapter 3), some among the players in Egypt are adept at gaming the system for short-term advantage, but even they must reckon with the long-term adverse consequences of the coup and its bloody aftermath.

Relatively few Egyptian academics and journalists dared in July and August, 2013, to speak out publicly against the coup and the subsequent massacres. One speaks out at one’s peril, reported New York Times reporter Robert Mackey (Dec. 3, 2013) citing Omar Robert Hamilton, a founder of the Cairene film collective, Mosireen, which for three years has been documenting the deaths of peaceful protesters. [get visuals]

*In April 2017 the Trump administration changed course.* No longer would it keep Sisi at a distance, as Obama had done. Now Trump would publicly praise Sisi for reigning in the “trouble-makers”: i.e. the Muslim Brotherhood and other “terrorists.” Until now the institutions of repression in Egypt, such as the security police and the military kept them under control, but they became adept at playing one against the other. (Ashour, O. March 2016)

**Box 10.3**

Headlines in 2013 out of Cairo since the coup tell a frightening story

Egypt’s military government and its political allies bought some time, but none of the planners and plotters found a way to extricate Egypt from its most daunting challenge: reconciling the plotters and the plotted against. Greatly complicating the task of reconciliation has been the enmity brought on by massacres of innocent Muslims, this on such questionable grounds, and the far less frequent blood-letting in response by the Muslim Brotherhood and its allies. Too many Muslim supporters voted in the Morsi regime for any new government to succeed in the long term by continued suppression, demonization, and mass murder. (Al-Amin, Aug 16, 2013). Autocratic, military regimes can continue to rule for decades by a politics of suppression, but in the Middle East the forces for liberation will inevitably rise again now that young people have had a taste of it.

**Summary**

Egyptian politics is complicated; yet another example in this book of dilemmas coming in bunches. To lead any one of its many secularist political parties is invariably to be elated at the fact of free and fair elections and disappointed by their outcomes. To lead any Egyptian party, or faction, coalition, or association is to attend meeting after meeting where little of substance gets done, this because power is divided and the will to collaborate in power-sharing gives way to splits and recriminations. To be in Egypt during this hectic period is exhilarating and exasperating, the excitement of a liberation movement in process giving way to despair over its outcomes.

            Egypt illustrates well the need to compete alongside the need to collaborate, the need for consistency and for flexibility, for trust and for suspicion, for the ability to predict others’ moves and for unpredictability on one’s own part, the need to impose by way of power moves balanced against predisposing by way of persuasion.

To chart the moves and countermoves, briefly described in this chapter, is to recognize just how complicated Egyptian politics has been since Mubarak was deposed. SCAF alone has fluctuated wildly between supporting the political activists and violently suppressing them. During the short period of Morsi’s presidency, the MB’s relationship to the military was that of a very bad marriage, held together for the sake of the children, with tacit negotiations resulting in protection of the military’s economic interests in exchange for protection of the Morsi regime at a time when nearly everyone was up in arms at its Mubarak-like decrees.

**Questions for thoughts and discussion**

1. IN Act III, which journalists are most trustworthy. Why?
2. Did the MB steal the revolution?
3. Define and illustrate:
4. Proxy warfare
5. Double game
6. Contrast Sisi and Obama on policy and practice.
7. Contrast MB, Qatar and Al Jazeera. Why did Qatar succeed?

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**Endnotes**

[1] Said Morocco-based Ahmed Charai (Sep 1, 2013), The significance of Egypt’s civil war is almost impossible to overstate. Nearly one of every four Arabs—some 82 million people—live in Egypt….It is also the birthplace of the Muslim Brotherhood, which now has influential branches in every Arab Nation. The Brotherhood created political Islam. Yusuf al-Quardawi, one of its leading thinkers, summarized the group’s totalitarian ambitions: “Islam is a comprehensive school of thought, a creed, an ideology, and cannot be satisfied but by (completely) controlling society and directing all aspects of life, to the construction of the state, a caliphate.”

 A caliphate would unite the Muslim world under a single unelected ruler who would harness the economic and military might of Muslims and rule according to Islam’s 7th-century rulers, known as caliphs. While the true values of Islam are tolerance, coexistence and humility, the Brotherhood has a different darker vision.

If the Brotherhood returns to power, it will use Egypt’s economic might to sponsor civil wars in other Arab states. Egypt would have a foreign policy akin to Iran’s. (New York Daily News; reprinted by FPRI) . See also Stack (2013)

[2] For background on the movement organizations and online media giving rise to the January 25th overthrow of the Mubarak regime, see Lim (2012)

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**Chapter Eleven**

**War and Media**

**In this chapter:**

* Introduction
* The Post-9/11 Bombings
* Iraq as a “Battle” in the War on Terror
* Invasion and Beyond
* The Political War over Afghanistan
* Israel and the Palestinians in Gaza: The Language of Power and the Power of Language
* Israel and the Palestinians in Gaza: The Language of Power and the Power of Language
* The Issue of Israeli Apartheid
* Summary and Concluding Comments
* Works Cited

**Introduction**

This chapter provides accounts of the rhetoric used to justify the post-9/11, U.S.-led-invasions and occupations of Iraq and Afghanistan and, in the summer of 2014, Israel’s war on Palestinians living in Gaza. Each such case involved rapidly escalated clashes of interest and ideology (Deutsch, 1969) in which the self-satisfying binary discourses of good and evil, hero and villain, oppressor and victim (etc.) stood inthe way of conflict resolution. These and other such oppositions may appear to detached observers as “mere rhetoric,” but to those caught up in the struggles they are every bit as real as the ground beneath their feet. Chapter Two’s case studies on the social construction of child abuse provides an analogous instance of how “out-there” realities are internalized and objectified (made real) by way of *sociocultural processes of communal interchange.*(Berger, 1967 Gergen, 1983; see also Simons, 1990). The “trick” in every case is to appear as reluctant warriors. The power of language as regards Gaza was such as to shift the onus of guilt for invading from Israel to Gaza for its weapons and tunnels.

Drawing upon news accounts of the conflict in Gaza in summer, 2014, the chapter concludes with commentary on the language of power and the power of language in the social construction of that war. Here another set of concepts should prove useful, those used in analysis of the Mobil ad in Chapter Two on how shared systems of belief (i.e. Ideologies) are socially constructed. “Truth,” in the socially constructed sense, is a function of shared beliefs about what leads to what (and follows what), what stands above what (and below what), what’s linked with what (and opposed to what), what *causes* what (and is caused by what), what’s good, bad or indifferent. Sociologist William Gamson (1992) characterized as *packages* the “god“ words and “devil” words we affix when labeling and describing, contextualizing and decontextualizing, the frames (and reframes) we employ when explaining and arguing, and the stories we tell in piecing together the fragments of our accounts, drawing together comparisons and contrasts while embedding analogies, guiding metaphors and memorable phrases or aphorisms in the process.

**The Post-9/11 Bombings**

For most Americans the 9/11/2001 bombings were a tragedy; for neoconservatives bent on invading Iraq they were also an opportunity. The administration’s crisis rhetoric fueled and channeled the fury already aroused by the attacks themselves. It was not unlike the rhetoric of past presidents responding to past crises. (Bacevich, A.J., 2010; Bostdorff, 1994; Kinzer, 2006; Rampton and Stauber, 2006)

Former president George W. Bush was right when he said that 9/11 was a turning point in American history. Given that history, given the shock and severity of the attacks, given America’s distinctive position as the world’s sole surviving superpower, given the political advantages to the president of meeting fire with rhetorical fire, the administration’s vitriolic response was surely understandable. Now, in hindsight, many have concluded that it was also regrettable.

The president’s post-9/11 rhetoric provided the basic binaries in terms of which the “war on terror” was launched and then morphed into the war in Iraq. Its short-term effectiveness conferred enormous power upon the president, which he was able to use not just to persuade, but also to intimidate. Periodic reminders of 9/11 have served as well to trump concerns about usurpations of power by the Bush administration and to override criticisms even by appointed commissions and counterterrorism experts.

In the weeks and months following 9/11, Americans were particularly vulnerable to projections of future threats from Middle East pariahs, however ill-founded the claims. From the outset consideration of invading Iraq occasioned more debate than usual. This debate, said George Packer, was because it was a war of choice, without any visible evidence of an imminent threat to America or the United Kingdom from Iraq.

In addition to the war of words, there were verbal battles over words about words—disputes over whose words were “mere rhetoric” and whose were credible, over who said what when and with what ulterior motives, over what should have been said but wasn’t, and over meanings of politically sensitive words like *democracy*, *patriotism*, *terrorism*, and *torture*. Along with the words and words about words were the stark and unforgettable television images of violence, themselves powerful influences but also fought over rhetorically as evidence for this or that claim about the war.

Rhetorical analysis serves importantly as a vehicle for understanding propaganda and the strategic considerations giving rise to it. It helps explain why, for example, in the immediate wake of the 9/11 bombings, the Bush administration chose to evade the hard questions of motivation for the attacks and to respond instead with a sanitized, melodramatic framing of the crisis, coupled with the launch of a vaguely defined, seemingly unlimited “war on terror.” It also helps to explain why the press, the Democrats, and the Republicans in Congress deferred to the administration, adding their own exaggerations, evasions, and outright distortions to those of the administration in the aftermath of 9/11, and how the rhetoric of antiterrorism led from the Trade Towers and the Pentagon to the bombings of Baghdad. The troubled occupation of Iraq provides further evidence that what worked rhetorically in the short run has been a source of subsequent difficulties.

The case for invading Iraq was made soon after the Gulf War ended in1991 with Saddam Hussein still in power, but it took a giant leap forward ten years later with the 9/11/2001 attacks. Active discussion took place shortly after the attacks in Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld’s war council about building a case for removing Saddam Hussein’s regime from power. A major television speech by the President to the Congress on September 20, 2001, was a step in that direction. There he framed the 9/11attacks as an assault on America’s sacred virtues of freedom and democracy and launched his “war on terror.” In the wake of 9/11, the news media spoke as one in their condemnation of the attacks and in support of the President, helping send his approval ratings from below 50 percent before 9/11 to nearly90 percent, a record high, after September 20**.**

The 9/11 attacks and the melodramatic crisis rhetoric that followed made the invasion of Iraq politically feasible. No sooner had the President completed his televised “Address to the Congress” on 9/20 then the pundits joined as one in concluding that he had demonstrated extraordinary leadership ability. Threat-induced crisis rhetoric routinely has that effect. Said Denise M. Bostdorff, who has studied the genre. It has enabledAmerican presidents to show leadership, grab headlines, exhibit toughness, and demand unity. (Bostdorff, 1993 It also gains them policy support on unrelated issues, increases their party’s electoral power, accrues symbolic reserves, and helps them weather untidy endings. Crisis rhetoric, says Elisabeth Anker, is often melodramatic, presenting conflict in the simplistic terms of pure good versus pure evil. The events of 9/11 in particular seemed to cry out for a hyperbolic, decontextualized account of what had occurred, akin to cowboy westerns and children’s fables.

The two-dimensional characters of fictional melodrama and the use ofexaggeration and polarization for dramatic effect find their way into political crisis rhetoric by way of a valorized “us” and a dehumanized or demonized “them.” Victims, villains, and heroes are joined together in a sanitized narrative, shorn of moral complexity. “We” have an urgent mission to perform. We must act, not just out of fear but from a clear sense of moral purpose. Good must triumph, and good will triumph, but victory will not be easy. The enemy is wily, clever, and will stop at nothing. It has already threatened (or victimized) us. By some accounts, this danger may justify borrowing a page from their book while exempting ourselves from moral standards that we impose upon others. After all, God is on our side, Satan (or his equivalent) on theirs.

These narrative components may be cross-cultural and trans-historical; they are by no means confined to contemporary American militarists. Yet the themes run deep in the American psyche, and are daily reinforced in American popular culture. They also fit well with former President Bush’s persona as a religious warrior, a Texas-styled sheriff in a Hollywood western who was called upon by God to make the world a better place.

While the President’s rhetorical response to 9/11 on September 20, 2001, was uniquely adapted to his ends, audiences, and circumstances, his speechwriters were able to craft much of the address before policy was set, merely by adhering to scripture-like formulas

True to form, the Bush narrative presented a stripped-down account of how the 9/11 attacks came to be that left no room for moral ambiguity, or for criticism. Bush constructed America as a nation unified by an attack on nothing less than its sacred virtues of freedom and democracy, said Anker, a country whose victimage therefore entitled it to “enact heroic retribution on the evil forces that caused its injury.”With polar oppositions such as these, the administration rallied the American people and reassured them, while also serving notice to the rest of the world of America’s unmistakable resolve. Doing anything less at the time might well have seemed heretical. And from the Bush administration’s perspective, its melodramatic rhetoric also had the virtue of cowing potential critics while equipping its legions of supporters and spokespersons with a simple, easily repeatable message. Introducing complexity was discouraged. Merely inviting discussion of why American foreign policies were widely disliked in the Arab and Muslim worlds became “playing their game.” Yet these same polarities would ultimately be undermined by stubborn realities on the ground in Iraq and by inconsistencies between Bush administration rhetoric and its practices elsewhere in the world.

**Iraq as a “Battle” in the War on Terror**

Building on its construction of the threat confronting the United States, the Bush administration launched its open-ended, vaguely stated “war on terror.” A chief virtue of its vagaries was its rhetorical adaptability. The anti-terror campaign began with assaults on the Taliban and al Qaeda in Afghanistan and Pakistan, coupled with swift passage of legislation designed to fortify the military and to increase national security. At this time it was difficult if not impossible to challenge even such draconian measures as unlimited prison detentions of enemy suspects without court hearings. Periodic reminders of 9/11 served to trump concerns about usurpations of power by the Bush administration and to override criticisms even by appointed commissions and counterterrorism experts. The 9/11 attacks and the crisis rhetoric that followed in their wake enabled the administration to gain control over the terms and limits of permissible debate.

Much of the rest of this story is well known, but new light can be shed by retelling it from a rhetorical perspective. Emboldened by his success, the President chose in January 2002 to extend the reach of his rhetoric to what he called in his State of the Union message, the “Axis of Evil.” Iraq was ear marked as a possible target of U.S. military might, along with Iran and North Korea.

Months after 9/11 Americans remained highly vulnerable to insinuations of possible connections between Saddam Hussein and Osama bin Laden. For millions of Americans innuendo sufficed as a substitute for proof. By August 2002 a full-scale campaign to win support for invading Iraq and deposing Saddam Hussein’s Baathist regime had begun. It comported with the long-standing ambitions of a group of influential neoconservatives as part of a larger plan to exert America’s will in the Middle East. The Bush administration chose its public rationales for invasion carefully. In a major speech by the president on October 7, Saddam was said to possess weapons of mass destruction (WMD) and the means to deploy them. It was also suggested that he had secret links to al Qaeda, and may have had something to do with the 9/11 attacks. Later these allegations were to be severely undermined, but not before the Republicans scored heavily in the November 2002midterm elections. The Bush administration clung stubbornly to these rationales in the face of troubling counter-indicators, even to the point of incurring the wrath of traditional allies when, in March 2003, it declared its intention to intervene militarily in Iraq in the absence of a UN Security Council mandate.

Thus did the administration’s post-9/11 crisis rhetoric morph into its case for war with Iraq. In subsequent speeches Bush would continue to capitalize on the appeal of his antiterrorist rhetoric, finding new enemies and new rationales for aggressive action. Iraq was now but a “battle” in the larger war on terrorism. A flow of resistance fighters into Iraq to lend assistance to its homegrown insurgents lent self-fulfilling evidence that the American-led effort to “liberate” Iraq was truly critical to the larger antiterrorist struggle.

One indication of the president’s increased power was the willingness of the main stream news media to put aside doubts and help make the administration’s case for war**.** As Congress deliberated on anti-terror legislation, an “echoing press” fell in lock step with the administration. (Coe et al, 2004). Writing in the usually dovish *New Yorker*, columnist Jeffrey Goldberg (Mar 22, 2003) urged readers to join with the Administration in support of its unproven and eventually disproven claims about Iraq’s weapons potential, but at no point did Goldberg weigh in the balance the potentially dire consequences of going to war on specious grounds and then having to manage a prolonged and unwelcome occupation. The mainstream opinion media took credit for expanding consideration of whether the U.S. should invade Iraq largely on its own or gain coalition support after first bringing the question of invasion to the U.N. Security Council, but as too often happens when the opinion media weigh in, the issues were narrowed to a choice between just two alternatives, thus communicating an image of balance while failing to take up other issues(Jacobs and Townsley, 2011; Solomon, 2005) Moreover, the arguments for the second option were cast in PR terms. Said Norman Solomon (2005),

“Washington’s maneuvers at the U.N. have been integral to public relations efforts for domestic and foreign consumption. In practice, one of the key steps toward starting a war is to go through the motions of exploring alternatives to war. Such pantomimes of diplomacy help to make war possible.” (Solomon, 2005, p. 44) In that same spirit, columnist Fareed Zakaria extolled the virtues of *appearing* to prefer alternatives to war. Even if the U.N. sponsored inspections in Iraq “do not produce the perfect crisis…Washington will still be better off for having tried” because it will be *seen* as having attempted to avoid war.” (Zakaria, Sept. 2, 2002, Newsweek)Wrote NYT Columnist Tom Friedman (Nov 13, 2002), “The Bush team discovered that the best way to legitimate its overwhelming might –in a war of choice—was not by simply imposing it, but by channeling it through the U.N.” When in January, 2003, France signaled plans to deny the U.S. an authorizing resolution for war, the American mainstream news media cried foul, “a betrayal,” “a diplomatic version of an ambush.” The same W*ashington Post* article quoted Secretary of State Colin Powell: “If the United Nations is going to be relevant, it has to take a firm stand.” “Au contraire,” replied the French foreign minister, in refusing to support an authorizing resolution, the Security Council is being uncommonly relevant.

Having urged the Bush administration to take its case for invasion to the U.N., Colin Powell was on the spot when on Feb. 5, 2003, he responded to the skeptics with a vigorous defense. The televised speech won accolades by the mainstream U.S. media but was ridiculed by the liberal Guardian and by other newspapers in the UK. Some critics assailed its logic but rhetorical critic David Zarefsky (2007) found the evidence wanting. Said Norman Solomon (2005, pp. 45-6), Powell “fudged, exaggerated and concocted.” Citing defector Hussein Kamel’s revelation of a pre-war unconventional weapons system, Powell failed to add, according to Kamel, that the weapons had all been destroyed. (Solomon, p.45)

Solomon’s W*ar Made Easy* (2005) is an ironic guide to the rhetoric of war-making in the American context. His book is organized around lines of argument for war: for example:

* America is a fair and noble superpower,
* Our leaders would never tell us outright lies,
* This is about human rights,
* If this war is wrong the media will tell us.
* The Pentagon fights wars as humanely as possible. (
* Withdrawal will cripple U.S. credibility.
* As we all know America went to war in Iraq, as it had done in Afghanistan, with the “coalition of the willing.”

The American media’s subservience to the government continued through to the “liberation” of Iraq in May 2003.During the invasion star reporters were “embedded” with the troops and were thus unlikely to offer criticisms of the invasion. A tragic consequence of that complicity was America’s failure to prepare adequately for the occupation of Iraq. Another was the failure of editorialists, commentators, columnists, and the like to weigh in candidly on possible motives for the U.S.-led intervention or on its long-term consequences. Once the war commenced, Fox News demonstrated beyond doubt to rivals like CNN and MSNBC the pulling power of unabashed jingoism.

The *New York Times* and *Washington Post* eventually apologized for their failure to check out the veracity of claims by their more hawkish reporters but not before being scooped by Jonathan Landay, Warren Strobel, and others at Knight-Ritter (later McClatchy Newspapers) whose watchdog journalism unearthed blatantly specious claims for war planted by utterly unreliable news sources.. (Wemple, E., March 19, 2013) [endnote rneeded with quote] The previously hawkish Dan Rather would later lament that the mainstream news media had substituted “jingoism for journalism.” (Sharkey J.E, 2003).

In times of crisis, as in the period following the 9/11 attacks, watchdog journalism gave way to lapdog journalism by an “echoing press” (Coe et.al.,2004). Few TV commentators or mainstream news reporters dared question the White House. Coe et al (2004) found that news opinion mirrored legislation—of the Patriot Act, for example, and of the Enemy Combatants Act.

The post-9/11 period coincides with significant changes in America’s so-called golden era, a “media regime” where political news and opinion emanated from handfuls of pre-eminent print and television sources, closely linked to political and business elites, and rendered trustworthy because they evidenced adherence to norms of social responsibility, this at a time when news and opinion journalism were still profitable. All this has changed, maintain Bruce Williams and Michael Delli-Carpini (2011), but not necessarily for the worse.

**Invasion and Beyond**

U.S. troops went into Baghdad expecting to be greeted as liberators. They soon learned that they were unwelcome occupiers. (PBS documentary on Iraq, Jul. 28, 2014) Yet the administration’s “war on terror” displayed great resilience, the Bush administration demonstrating skill at fending off criticism while repeatedly invoking9/11 as an emblematic reminder of the need for steadfast vigilance. A stunning example of that resilience was the Bush administration’s ability to survive high-level exposures of pre-9/11 ineptness at preventing the 9/11 attacks.

Yet another indicator of resilience was the administration’s ability to roll with the punches over 9/11-related news from elsewhere in the world, including, for example, the mysterious disappearance from Tora Bora in Afghanistan of Osama bin Laden, and his subsequent appearances on Arab TV. Still another example was the occupation, at human and economic costs to Americans and Iraqis alike, reminiscent of Vietnam. Despite these problems the Bush administration managed in fall 2004 to maintain public support for “staying the course” in Iraq and to triumph over the Democrats in the 2004 elections. Gradually, however, the narrative began to unravel. And while not all of the problems can be laid at the feet of rhetoric, it appears that the Bush administration increasingly fell victim to its own desperate efforts to prop up the case for war, offering, for example, overly optimistic projections for success in Iraq based on spurious statistics, denying high-level authorization for the use of torture while at the same time calling for exemptions to the Geneva Convention’s strictures against torture, and efforts to discredit former acting ambassador to Iraq, Joseph Wilson, who had been a vociferous critic of some of the administration’s earlier intelligence claims.

Increasingly over time the threads in the narrative linking the war on terror to the war in Iraq wore thin. What did Iraq have to do with the bombings of the Trade Towers and the Pentagon, asked Security Council members even before the invasion? Why not go after corrupt and autocratic Saudi Arabia, from which not just the hijackers had come but also the form of jihad that Saudi extremists had helped export to the rest of the Muslim world? Why, asked the Spanish, who had been terrorized by an Al Qaeda–type attack, must we keep troops in Iraq in order to prevent further such attacks on our territory? By remaining in Iraq, aren’t we creating more terrorists than we are killing or imprisoning?

Troublesome questions such as these continued to plague the Bush administration. They included questions of mission in Iraq, of who our friends and enemies were, of why the Sunni Arab world continued to support the Iraqi resistance, and of whether, by turning political power over to the Iraqi Shiites, the United States was playing into the hands of Islamic extremists, including its long-standing enemies in Iran.

Once having invaded and occupied, it was of course impolitic simply to turn back, or to confess wrongdoing. The decision to invade and the decisions made in the course of the occupation created other rhetorical dilemmas, not least tensions between the need to appear consistent and the need for flexibility, the need to appear credible and the need to dissemble. Dilemmas such as these bedevil political leaders. Routinely advised to stay on message, they are also criticized for sticking with failed messages. Damned if they seem evasive, they are ridiculed if their self-disclosures become self-damning. Honesty and openness are regarded as qualifications for office by a trusting public, but political leaders are often obliged to cover over narrow self-interest with the fig leaf of morality and the aura of sincerity. Leadership requires covering over transgressions of moral codes with cover stories. The astute leader plays double games: simultaneously wresting advantages from an adversary while pretending to have the adversary’s interests at heart.

Neither is it always possible to satisfy competing interests simultaneously, or to reconcile conflicting interests. Consider the paradoxes, for example, of “liberating” Iraq by way of a “shock and awe” aerial bombardment, and of ordering its people to become “free” by way of an America-imposed electoral process. Imposing one’s will on a people while also trying to win their hearts and minds has been a perennial problem ever since the United States invaded and occupied Iraq. As of this writing it remains a problem in Afghanistan.

One year after President Bush’s reelection, polls indicated that Americans had become disenchanted with the war—no longer willing to reward its congressional supporters and punish its critics as they did in the 2002 elections; no longer eager to cheer on the president, as they did when he stood aboard the carrier *U.S.S. Abraham Lincoln* to proclaim “Mission accomplished” in Iraq; not sure whether to place much stock in the transfer of political power under way in Iraq; not certain, even, whether American troops should remain in Iraq, with whatever consequences that might entail.

It is too early to know how long the political instability in Iraq will persist. Ten years after Bush’s reelection, Iraq seemed on the verge of imminent collapse. In rapid succession Iraq’s Anbar Province fell to Sunni militants; then Ninevah Province and Salahuddin Province. On June 4th, 2014 a group calling itself the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria(“ISIS”)seized Mosul, Iraq’s second largest city, freeing thousands of prisoners and joining with troops who dropped their weapons, shed their uniforms and blended in with the fleeing masses as they headed south toward Baghdad. Ominously, the takeover of Mosul was the work of Syrian fighters who’d crossed over the lawless border. Nuri Kamal al-Maliki, Iraq’s recently re-elected prime minister, called on friendly governments for help. Maliki had been chastised for sweeps through Sunni areas of Iraq where hundreds of innocent civilians were rounded up.

The two biggest cities in Iraq’s Anbar province fell to Al Qaeda operatives in 2013.There is little doubt but that the Bush administration was unprepared for the aftermath of the Iraq invasion, including the strength of the Sunni Arab resistance and the developing civil war. The United States continued to be incapable of reconciling its ongoing mythic crisis narrative with real-world constraints. Outside the United States its sanitized version of “why they hate us” was generally not believed. Nor was the president credible when he declared (repeatedly) that our aim in Iraq was to stop “terror” in its tracks—before it could return to the United States. Not until after the 2004 elections did the president acknowledge that the Iraq insurgency was mostly homegrown. As the United States attempted to reach out to Arabs and Muslims by way of “public diplomacy” campaigns in the Middle East and declarations of intent to bring peace, freedom, and democracy to that troubled region, its efforts fell afoul of its continuing alliances with Arab dictatorships, its tilt toward Israel in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and its own record of human rights violations in Iraq and Afghanistan, including killings of innocents, illegal detentions of Muslim suspects, and widespread prison abuses.

This is not to say that the Democrats were in a better position to fix in Iraq what the Bush administration had broken. President Bush’s electoral success in 2004 was as much a function of Democrats’ failures, due in large measure to their rhetorical dilemmas. Critics of the war were in the unenviable position of appearing to welcome bad news from Iraq—either that or to mute their opposition by focusing on means rather than ends. The nomination of former Senator John Kerry was regarded initially as an opportunity for the Democrats to adopt a centrist stance on the war, and even to “out-hawk” the Bush administration on a number of issues, such as the alleged failure of the Defense Department to supply U.S. troops with sufficient armor to conduct its rightful mission. But the Republicans managed to reframe that attempted centrism as flip-flopping. In general, the Republicans proved themselves masterful at rendering as treasonable, or at least unpatriotic, any criticisms that cut to the heart of their own overblown rhetoric.

But Kerry’s effort at straddling the middle on the war with a nuanced position began to seem self-contradictory. “First I voted for it,” said Kerry; “then I voted against it.” Hence, the Republicans managed without difficulty to reframe Kerry’s attempted centrism as flip-flopping.

From time to time since the occupation began, news of hopeful developments—the transfer of political power to Iraqis, signs of economic redevelopment in Iraq, and the planned replacement of American troops by Iraqi soldiers and police—had seemed to give renewed meaning to the invasion. But the president’s options became increasingly limited. The condition known as quagmire, or situational entrapment, is marked by dilemmas of a sort that seem at once unendurable and unsolvable. A striking example: the presence of U.S. troops in Iraq appeared essential for purposes of preventing civil war but served also to fuel the Iraq insurgency and the larger Jihadist movement.

Looking back on the praise bestowed upon President Bush for his melodramatic framing of the threat to America made manifest on 9/11, it seems that the conventional standards for judging crisis rhetoric of this kind need rethinking. Opinion polls at the time confirmed expert judgments that his speech of September 20, 2001 had been highly effective on its target audiences. But findings such as these provide scant indication of the long-term consequences of an important speech. What works in the short run often fails over the long term. What meets immediate expectations often fails to take into account what in retrospect were the needs of the moment. What persuades targeted audiences may have deleterious effects on unintended audiences, including potential recruits for the Jihadists’ cause. What leads journalists and politicians at the time to pronounce unequivocally favorable judgments may conceal privately held doubts and suspicions. And too, there is the danger that those who craftthe important speech may get carried away by their own rhetoric.

**The Political War over Afghanistan**

The U.S.-led war in Afghanistan has gone badly. Said Maureen Dowd, “After nine years, more than a thousand troops dead, and hundreds of billions spent that could have been put toward developing new forms of fuel so that all our miseries and all our fun doesn’t derive from oil, we’ve fought our way to a stalemate… Even our corrupt puppet doesn’t think we can prevail. Hamid Karzai told two former Afghan officials that he had lost faith in the Americans and was trying to strike his own deal with the Taliban and Pakistan.” (Dowd, Nov. 23, 2010).

So American interests may have been undercut by the man we installed in Kabul and propped up after a fraudulent election. American officials have vacillated between criticizing him openly and making nice. If he succeeded at brokering a deal, it would likely embarrass the administration and sully America’s reputation abroad, but also provide the administration’s excuse for drawing down most of its troops in Afghanistan and narrowing its long-term mission. Getting out of wars is a lot more difficult than getting into them.

When President Obama acceded to pressures for a “troop surge” in Afghanistan, what had been “Bush’s War” became “Obama’s War,” with all the attendant political risks to himself, to his administration and to incumbent Democrats seeking reelection. Yet not committing to sending in more troops might have been riskier still: proof positive that a president who had never served in the military lacked the will to fight.

The war was plagued from the start by predictable tensions between the need for military power used to “take out” the enemy and the need to win Afghanis’ hearts and minds. The latter concern prompted the since fired General Stanley McChrystal to order a change in the rules of engagement with the enemy so as to reduce unintended killings and maiming of innocent civilians. He’d warned his troops about “insurgent math” — for each innocent you kill, you make 10 enemies.

But these altered rules have left American and allied troops more vulnerable to attack by the enemy and unclear as to when and how to use firepower. McChrystal’s replacement as Commander in Afghanistan, the highly respected General David Petraeus, vowed to clarify the rules of engagement and to mend fences with Karzai.

But the key dilemmas would remain in place. As in Iraq, “liberation” comes to be seen over time as “occupation.” The fiercely independent Afghanis whom we’ve pledged to help became dependent on our largesse at the same time as they wanted to be rid of us. Afghanis are factionalized along ethnic and regional lines but they are as one in seeking to beat back foreign invaders. Our continued presence fuels the Taliban’s call for Jihad against the “infidel” and our untoward actions, such as the killing of innocent civilians, often fulfill their worst prophecies. Recall conflict theorist Thomas Schelling’s(1960) distinction between *moves* and *speech*. Moves, such as errant aerial bombardments, have an evidentiary quality greater than mere expressions of good intentions.

Those, like the Taliban, who want us out, are confident that they can outwait us after these many years of stalemate. This has been President Karzai’s argument but it was also voiced by Joseph Biden and by U.S. State Department officials, including former Ambassador Karl Eikenberry at a time when the generals were pressuring the administration to provide more troops.

Maureen Dowd is once again on point: “It’s just another sign of the complete incoherence of Afghan policy. The people in charge are divided against each other. And the policy is divided against itself. We’re fighting a war against an enemy that we’re desperately trying to co-opt and win over in a country where Al Qaeda, which was supposed to be the enemy, is no longer based.” (Dowd, Nov. 23, 2010)

What then could the Obama administration have done to bring a modicum of peace and stability to Afghanistan while promoting the Democrats’ political interests here at home? The first thing it must do, said Tory MP, Rory Stewart, is tone down the inflammatory rhetoric on Afghanistan that Obama began using as a presidential candidate. The second thing it must do is make a credible case for doing less in Afghanistan and with fewer resources but with the likelihood of greater accomplishments over the long haul. Stewart’s efforts to influence policies on Afghanistan in the U.S. and UK exemplify the use of dilemma-centered analysis as a prelude to exercising adaptive leadership.

**Israel and the Palestinians in Gaza: The Language of Power and the Power of Language**

As against the commonplace view of words as the veridical representation of things, this section of thechapter invites consideration of how the “reality” of war is socially constructed. It takes as the object of its inquiry the asymmetric conflict between Israel and the Palestinians in Gaza during the summer of 2014 in which the ratio of Gazans killed to Israelis killed was greater than 10:1.

What labels should be assigned to this fateful conflict? What descriptions should be provided and what stories told? Said Kenneth Burke, each such representation is also a misrepresentation that deflects attention from some features of an object it knowingly reflects. (Burke, 1966). Much as I might treat as “hard fact” that killings took place, I cannot comprehend their totality and here must expand the scope or circumference of my inquiry with the help of others.

It is at this point that “I” and the others become a “We”, *and that our social* construction *becomes a reality*. What I learn is *internalized and then objectivized—treated as a thing, reified, hypostatized—and then, together with other accounts, is externalized: what Peter Berger called ”the outpouring of human being on to the world.”(p.?)*

*That account is mediated, necessarily so, and the filterings provided by my sources and the sources on whom they depend is in the hands of powerful others—network executives, newspaper owners, internet providers, and the like, and it is in this sense that the language of power becomes the power of language.*

But I mean that in another sense as well.

*The “we”* on whom we depend need a vocabulary for war, consisting of such “devil” words as oppression and aggression, extremism and terrorism, violence and torture. How these terms are defined and used in the stories we’re told exert a powerful influence on what we’ve come to believe. Just as there is no such thing as a “traitor” for the winning side, so “our” nation never engages in “acts of violence.”

In Gaza as in Iraq, one highly influential source was GOP pollster and speech writer, Frank Luntz, author of *Words that Work: Communicating the Principles of Prevention &Protection in the War on Terror (200?). It was intended, said Luntz, to create talking points for explaining* these policies:

1. “9/11 changed everything.” No speech about homeland security or Iraq should begin without a reference to “9/11.”
2. The principles of “prevention” and “protection” still have universal support.
3. Prevention at home can require aggressive action abroad.
4. Terrorism has no boundaries and neither should errors to prevent it.
5. The world is a better place without Saddam Hussein.

Luntz’s meaty advice to the Israelis can be found in a confidential, well-researched “playbook” for Israeli spokesmen entitled Global Language Dictionary (Dec 2008-Jan 2009).It includes the following:

1. *The “right of return” [by displaced Palestinian refugees “is a tough issue for Israelis to communicate effectively because so much of Israeli language sounds like “separate but equal” words of the 1950 segregationists and 1980s advocates of Apartheid.” But it does no good to say exactly what that means.*
2. Americans agree that Israel has a right to defensible borders.” But it does no good to define exactly what those borders should be. Say “*Palestinians aren’t content with their own land.* Now they’re demanding territory inside Israel.”
3. In bold type and with italics, Luntz says that Israeli spokesmen must never, ever justify “the deliberate slaughter of innocent women and children. The best way, the only way to achieve lasting peace is to achieve mutual respect.”
4. The study admits that the Israeli government does not really want a two-state solution but says this should be masked since 78 percent of Americans do want such a state.
5. An “effective Israeli sound bite”: “I particularly want to reach out to Palestinian mothers who have lost their children. No parent should have to bury their children.”
6. Israeli spokesmen and political leaders should deplore “the deliberate slaughter of innocent women and children,” and they must aggressively challenge those who accuse Israel of such a crime.
7. “The best way, the only way, to achieve lasting peace is to achieve mutual respect. “ Israel’s desire for peace with the Palestinians should be emphasized at all times. But any pressure on Israel to make peace can be reduced by saying “one step at a time, one day at a time.”

The Issue of Israeli Apartheid.

In late July, 2014, an issue that had lurked in the background came to the fore on MONDOWEISS, a left-leaning online journal of opinion which circulates widely in Israel, Europe, and the U.S.: By its words and actions has Israel been guilty of genocide in its treatment of the Hamas Palestinians?

The question touched a raw nerve, evoking memories of Nazi Germany and its extermination during the Holocaust of more than six million Jews. On-line contributors offered discomfiting comparisons:

1. Tombishop’s comment:

“America was founded on the genocide of the Native Americans and the enslavement of Africans. Anyone who has not faced that fact will readily accept it is OK to do it again.

1. BPM says:

Isn’t it bad enough they were slaughtered in the gas chambers? Now Israel defiles their memory to defend Israel against people who had absolutely nothing to do with the Holocaust. Israel is bent on confirming every racial stereotype about Jews. If you are a thinking Jew with a conscience, Israel is your worst enemy.

1. Mooser comments: Well, what you are saying is that all that “suffering and discrimination (quoted simply to use the same term, not argumentatively) we have been subject to, and which forms the basis of our claim as a country, might be the very thing which makes it not a good idea to have one.

Oy Gevalt! Why is life so unfair?

1. Qjualtrough says:

Jaw-dropping to see the victims of genocide and their descendants calling for the genocide of others. If they feel so strongly about it, why don’t they go to Israel to do some of the dirty work themselves?

1. Donald comments:

The point is that a lot of bloody-minded people in America and Israel, Jews and non-Jews, have it in their heads that they can support a military operation guaranteed to slaughter massive numbers of civilians and feel their hearts are pure because the enemy is pure evil. That’s the point that matters here, since the US supports Israel and Israel is about to add to the already large death toll because they’re the Good Guys and and America agrees.

1. Abierno says:

Just a historical note – when the Japanese began their invasion of China,

It was on the pretext that the Chinese had captured a Japanese soldier. They then went on to kill millions of people—all in the name of Japanese racial purity.

1. Donald’s comment

If Israel is to blame for practicing genocide, why not spread the guilt? The United States has been Israel’s primary benefactor: its recipient of billions in aid, military assistance as well as diplomatic support.

**Summary and Concluding Comments**

Presented here has been a dilemma-centered rhetorical history, beginning with the post-9/11 rhetoric used by the Bush administration to bring America into wars in Afghanistan and Iraq and concluding with the wars of words and wars of images (and wars of words *about* wars of words and images) used in the continuing struggle to come to terms with these two highly problematic undertakings. Each is still immensely expensive in terms of treasure and lives lost and national reputations diminished. As the wars wind down there is little to show for them beyond the lessons of failure, of quagmire, or situational entrapment, at once unendurable and unsolvable in which, for example, the U.S. troop presence has been essential and inflammatory, needed to achieve a modicum of stability but also destabilizing by virtue of its fueling the anger of civilian populations.

In situations of this kind, political leaders risk charges of flip-flopping by shifting positions or criticisms of ineptness for staying on failed messages. Rhetoric that works well in the short run and on target audiences backfires in the long run and has backlash effects on unintended audiences. What seems to be meeting immediate expectations often fails to take into account what in retrospect were the needs of the moment.

Still, inflammatory, crisis rhetoric comports well with the fury of those experiencing mammoth attacks on their nation, such as the 9/11 bombings. However ambiguous it may be, the trope of a “war on terror’ gets the blood boiling and the support flowing to those who speak in its name. Even in the 2004 presidential election it was enough for Republican George W. Bush to defeat the flip-flopping Democratic nominee, Senator John Kerry.

Looking back on the praise bestowed upon President Bush for his melodramatic framing of the threat to America made manifest on 9/11, it seems that the conventional standards for judging crisis rhetoric of this kind need rethinking. So too is it imperative that the news media maintain their independence as watchdogs rather than lapdogs.How in retrospect should we bring moral judgment to bear on those who lead America into wars on specious grounds as in Iraq and Afghanistan?

I take up this question in Ch. 12., this in the context of Kenneth Burke’s admonition to refrain from outright moral condemnation out of appreciation for our own foibles, our own foolishness (Burke, 1961). Suffice it to say in this chapter that opinions among U.S. political leaders tended to divide between those, such as National Security Chief Condoleeza Rice, Defense Secretary William Rumsfeld and former V.P RichardCheney who continued to defend the wars, and those like Democratic presidential hopefuls Joe Biden and John Edwards who conceded to having “made a mistake.”

Washington Post columnist Richard Cohen(Nov. 29, 2005) addressed the matter thoughtfully:

A line is forming outside the Iraq confessional. It consists of Democratic presidential aspirants - where's Hillary? - who voted for the war in Iraq and now concede that they made a "mistake." Former senator John Edwards did that Nov. 13 in a Post op-ed article, and Sen. Joseph Biden uttered the "M" word Sunday on "Meet the Press." "It was a mistake," said Biden. "It was a mistake," wrote Edwards. Yes and yes, says Cohen. “But it is also a mistake to call it a mistake.”  
  Both senators have a point, of course. They were told by the president and members of his War Cabinet - Cheney, Rice, Rumsfeld - that Iraq possessed weapons of mass destruction. In particular, those three emphasized Iraq's purported nuclear weapons program. As late as August 2003, Condoleezza Rice was saying that she was "certain to this day that this regime was a threat, that it was pursuing a nuclear weapon, that it had biological and chemical weapons, that it had used them." To be charitable, she didn't know what she was talking about.As it turned out, neither did Vice President Cheney or Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld. Cheney said, "Increasingly, we believe that the United States will become the target" of an Iraqi nuclear weapon, and Rumsfeld raised a truly horrible specter: "Imagine a Sept. 11th with weapons of mass destruction" that would kill "tens of thousands of innocent men, women and children." Imagine a defense secretary who thought he was propaganda minister.

Said Cohen “I quote this trio of braying exaggerators - all of them still in the administration - because they emphasized the purported nuclear weapons threat. Yet by the time the war began, March 20, 2003, it was quite clear that Iraq had no nuclear weapons program. All the evidence for one -- the aluminum tubes, the uranium from Africa - had been challenged. What's more, U.N. inspectors in Iraq had found nothing. "We have to date found no evidence of ongoing prohibited nuclear or nuclear-related activities in Iraq," said Mohamed El Baradei of the U.N.'s International Atomic Energy Agency. That was on Feb. 14. The next month, the United States went to war anyway.

“In their respective confessions, neither Edwards nor Biden explains why they were not persuaded by the evidence that Bush & Co. were exaggerating - concocting is possibly a better word - Saddam Hussein's nuclear threat. Sept. 11 changed all that. The terrorist attacks, coupled with the still-unexplained deaths of five people from anthrax sent through the mail, unhinged America. Cooler heads in the Bush administration seized the moment to plump for a war they had always wanted while many of the rest of us - myself included - got caught up in an emotional frenzy. Even after the passions of the moment cooled - even after it was clear Iraq was no real imminent threat - few of us demanded that Bush back down. The best I could do was whisper some doubt. On July 25, 2002, I wrote that the Bush administration would pay dearly if it was going to wage war for specious reasons. "War plans are being drawn up in the Pentagon," I wrote. "But explanations are lacking at the White House.”

“Well, those explanations are still lacking. But so, too, are those from Democrats who say they made a "mistake" in supporting the war. What sort of mistake? It's not a mistake to be misled. But it is a mistake, if that's even the right word, to lack the courage of your convictions, to get swept up in the zeitgeist and dig in your heels even harder - not as a consequence of hardening conviction but of accumulating doubt. This is a mistake of great consequence, a failure of judgment or political courage, and it needs to be explained.”

“I do not hold the new war critics to a higher standard than those who led us to war or who still think it was a dandy idea. But we will learn nothing from this debacle if the word "mistake" can be used like a blackboard eraser just to wipe the slate clean. This is no different from what Bush is trying to do: The intelligence was bad, not his wretched judgment. To accept this explanation does not - both for the president and his critics - undo the mistake. On the contrary, it compounds it.(Cohen, 2005)

**Summary**

This chapter has provided accounts of the rationales used by the GW Bush administration for invading, then occupying first Afghanistan, then Iraq, and subsequently Israel’s war on Gaza in 2014. These in retrospect have been failed undertakings, now seen as culpable failures in judgment, but in the context of the “9/11” bombings they make political sense

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Endnotes

1 For an excellent account of how 9/11 played to the interests of neocons and of others in and close to the Bush administration who had long campaigned for forceful removal of Saddam Hussein and his Baathist regime, see George Packer, (2005) *The Assassin’s Gate: America in Iraq* (New York: Farrar, Strauss and Giroux). See also James Mann, *Rise of the Vulcans: The History of Bush’s War Cabinet* (New York: Viking Books, 2004). On the horrors perpetrated by Saddam Hussein and his regime, see Con Coughlin, *Saddam: His Rise and Fall*(New York: Harper, 2004).

2. See for example Daniel Okrent (Mar. 6, 2005), “The War of the Words: A Dispatch from the Front Lines,”*New York Times*, March 6, 2005, 12.

3. Robert L. Ivie, *Democracy and the War on Terror* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press,2005).

4 See for example Mark Danner (2006) *The Secret Way to War: The Downing Street Memo and the Iraq War’s Buried History.* New York: New York Review of Books.;Frantzich, S.F. “September 11th and the Bush Presidency: Rally-Round-the-Rubble,” *White House Studies* (Spring 2004): 1-3.

5. See Packer, *The Assassin’s Gate*, 40–41. According to Packer, history began anew for George W. Bush on 9/11, and made him newly receptive to a national security staff already predisposed toward regime change in Iraq. Apparently it was an easy sell.

6. See [*http://www.cnn.com/2001/US/09/20/gen.bush.transcript/*retrieved](http://www.cnn.com/2001/US/09/20/gen.bush.transcript/retrieved) 9/21/2011

7. Following the 9/11 attacks, President Bush enjoyed the highest presidential approval ratings in recorded history, upwards of 90 percent. See Stephen F. Frantzich, “September 11th and the Bush Presidency: Rally-Round-the-Rubble,” *White House Studies* (Spring 2004): 1-3.

8. Media reactions were overwhelmingly positive. See Packer, *The Assassin’s Gate*, chap. 2.

9. Denise M. Bostdorff, *The Presidency and the Rhetoric of Foreign Crisis* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1994).

10. See Elisabeth Anker, “Villains, Victims, and Heroes: Melodrama, Media, and September 11th,”*Journal of Communication* 55 (2005): 22–37; Elisabeth Anker, “From Politics to Evil: Melodrama and State Politics,” *eScholarship Repository* (Berkeley: Institute of Government Studies, 2005) at *http://repositories.cdlib.org/igs/WP2005–1*. That which is subsumed by Anker under the heading of melodramatic discourse or melodramatic narrative finds expression by other names: e.g., agonistic rhetoric, binary discourse, political fundamentalism, prophetic dualism, crisis rhetoric, or simply domestic war propaganda. See for example). On binary discourse, see Kevin Coe, David Domke, Eric S. Graham, Sue Lockett John, and Victor W. Pickard, “No Shades of Gray: The Binary Discourse of George W. Bush and an Echoing Press,” *Journal of Communication* 54 (2004): 234–52. See Bostdorff, *The Presidency and the Rhetoric of Foreign Crisis*, on crisis rhetoric. On prophetic dualism, see Philip Wander, “The Rhetoric of American Foreign Policy,” *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 70 (1984): 339–61. On domestic propaganda and agonistic discourse, see James J. Kimble, “‘Whither Propaganda?’Agonism and the ‘Engineering of Dissent,’” *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 91 (2005): 201–18.

11. See Anker, “From Politics to Evil”; Domke, *God Willing*; Kimble, “‘Whither Propaganda?’”

12. Chris Hedges, *War Is a Force That Gives Us Meaning* (New York: Anchor Books, 2003).

13. On American exceptionalism, see Dan Nimmo and James E. Combs, *Subliminal Politics: Myths and Mythmakers in America* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1980)*.* See also Denise M. Bostdorff, “George W. Bush’s Post–September 11 Rhetoric of Covenant Renewal: Upholding the Faith of the Greatest Generation,” *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 89 (2003); McDougall, W.A. (Oct 12, 2012) **American Exceptionalism...Exposed, e-Notes, FPRI.** Philadelphia: *FPRI.*

14.Eikenberry, k. Taliban can wait us out.

Question: **There are concerns that the Taliban is sitting in the wings, just waiting for the withdrawal of American troops. Are those concerns valid?**

**Response:** I have heard this argument since I first served in Afghanistan in 2002. I don't buy it. By 2016 we'll be in the 15th year of a military mission that began in 2001. Will another 15 years be adequate to prove we can "wait them out?" It is time for the Afghans to take charge of their own destiny. Furthermore, the Taliban are not a cohesive movement; there is not a centralized Taliban command "waiting in the wings." Last, the Taliban are not the primary threat to Afghan stability. The greater challenges are Pakistan's policies towards Afghanistan, Afghanistan national political reconciliation, and massive government corruption.

14. See, for example, Andrew J. Bacevich, *The New American Militarism: How Americans Are Seduced by War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005); and Bostdorff, D.

15. Several essays in Lee Artz and Yahya R. Kamilipour’s *Bring ’Em On: Media and Politics in the Iraq War* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2005) speak to this point.

See especially: Tanja Thomas and Fabian Virchow’s “Banal Militarism and the Culture of War.” See also Michael Billig’s *Banal Nationalism* (London: Sage, 1995) for its astute analysis of how nationalism insinuates itself into British and American culture in subtle, barely noticeable ways.

16. Gone from modern-day political melodramas are the grandiose gestures and stirring music that marked old-fashioned morality plays, but they have been more than adequately replaced by television’s capacity to bring heart-rending documentary footage and diatribe directly into the home.

17. See, for example, D. T. Max’s excellent account of the crafting of the September 20 address:“The Making of the Speech,” *New York Times Magazine*, October 7, 2001.

18. Anker, “From Politics to Evil,” 4.

19. Of particular interest to me as a rhetorician were the Bush administration’s uses of

Deception short of outright lying in making the case for war; also its ability to “pre-persuade,” as Pratkanis and Aronson put it, by their influence and/or control of the terms and conditions of debate. This included, for example, gaining widespread acceptance of the assumption that skeptics and naysayers had the burden of proof in showing that Saddam *didn’t* possess hidden weapons of mass destruction. See also A. Pratkanis and E. Aronson, *Age of Propaganda* (New York: Freeman, 2000). Zarefsky (2008).

20. Mark Danner, *The Secret Way to War: The Downing Street Memo and the Iraq War’s Buried History* (New York: New York Review of Books, 2006).

21. See for example Sheldon Rampton and John Stauber, *The Best War Ever: Lies, Damned Lies, and the Mess in Iraq* (New York: Tarcher/Penguin, 2006).

22. But see Sheldon Rampton and John Stauber’s *Weapons of Mass Deception* (New York: Tarcher/Penguin, 2003) on Iraqi perceptions of the American-assisted toppling of Saddam’s statue.

23. See Danner, *The Secret Way to War*; also Daniel Benjamin and Steven Simon, *The Next atttack: The Failure of the War on Terror and a* Strategy *for Getting It Right* (New York: NewYork *Times Guardian,* Books, 2005). See also V. Plame and Joseph Wilson (Feb 7, 2013). How the Bush government sold the war and we bought it. Guardian.( retrieved June 5, 2014)

25. On war reporting, see Eric Wemple’s encomium to Jonathan Landay and Warren Strobel, two Knight-Ritter reporters “who bucked the U.S. media repetition of the Bush administration’s march-to-Iraq messaging” Said Landay, “We work[ed} for a chain of 30newspapers. Even some of our own newspapers wouldn’t print our own stories, because they say it wasn’t in the Washington Post, They hadn’t seen it in the New York Times… So it was very lonely. Washington Post.Com, March 19, 2013, Retrieved 6/11/2014.

26.Said Michael X. DelliCarpini& Bruce A. Williams, authors of After Broadcast News: Media Regimes, Democracy, and the New Information Environment (Cambridge University Press, 2011), we explore the implications of changes that have radically reconfigured the mediated public sphere in which we live. In it we argue that these changes have dissolved the assumptions, distinctions, and hierarchies in place during what we call the "Age of Broadcast News." These changes have been regularly noted by scholars and journalists, though almost exclusively from the perspective of this quickly collapsing era. As a result, the crisis of this particular "media regime" is seen as a crisis of democracy itself. Viewed from a broader historical vantage, however, it is the Age of Broadcast News that is exceptional in its attempts to limit politically relevant media to a single genre ("news") and a single authority ("professional journalists"). More significantly, there is little evidence that the Age of Broadcast News did a measurably better job than previous regimes at informing the public, encouraging enlightened democratic dialogue, or - in short - serving the broader interests of a democratic society.

**Chapter Twelve**

**Summary, Conclusions and More Questions**

**In this chapter:**

* Summary
* Presuppositions: a review
* Conclusions and More Questions
  1. Can Persuasion be Saved?
  2. How to Come to Judgment
* Coming to Judgment
* Faculty Advocacy in the University Classroom: Dilemmas and Strategies
* Exploring Differences on Incendiary Issues outside the University classroom. The case of Donald Trump

**Summary**

We better understand, practice, and critically analyze politics when we can anticipate its dilemmas, are aware of the pushes and pulls that give rise to them, and are strategically savvy in coping with them. How that proposition bears on various political contexts--e.g. electoral politics in the U.S., struggles for dominance in Egypt—is what this book is about: a dilemma-centered approach to political persuasion, drawing together psychological studies, rhetorical studies, and systems theories, as viewed from the perspectives of persuaders, their audiences, and those among us who deign to call ourselves critics or analysts. Featured in Chapter 2 of the book is my co-active approach, this together with other analytic tools for “genre-alizing” about political persuasion.

**Presuppositions: a review**

1. Nearly all examples in the book talk about strategizing by leaders of one kind or another in the face of dilemmas. 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.
2. As a rule, leaders of social movements can expect greater fragmentation from within and greater opposition from without than leaders of well-established institutions and business organizations. Moreover, the strategies they implement for coping with role conflicts or other such problems are apt to create new problems. (Simons, 1994, 1970; Simons and Jones, 2012).
3. Dilemma-centered analysis can be used in diagnosing difficulties, explaining seemingly odd or anomalous discourse, assisting in strategic planning and implementation, assessing strategic alternatives, and in deriving insights about the challenges of leadership and political persuasion more generally. (These alternatives are illustrated throughout the book. Of particular interest are recurrent dilemmas, as in my “top ten” list of predictable predicaments in Chapter 2.
4. Strategizing involves ‘means-ends’ considerations about how to use the resources at our disposal to realize goals, overcome obstacles and exploit opportunities. Examples of political communication strategies include: Transcendence, Triangulation, Dividing and Conquering, Intensifying and Downplaying, ‘Yes-But,’ Reframing, Silence (where talk is expected) and Shrinking the Change. Add to these, at another level of abstraction, identifying as and identifying with used as difference-bridging techniques of co-active persuasion, among them ‘yes-yes,’‘yes-but’ concessions, arguing from the perspective of the other; and, slicing the pie a different way, linking and dividing, associating and dissociating, intensifying and downplaying,  contextualizing and decontextualizing, framing and reframing and the various emotional and motivational appeals: to fear, for example, and guilt, shame,  love, hate, and a range of “attitudinizings” in between. Of interest are recurrent dilemmas, as in my “top ten” list of predictable predicaments in Chapter 1.
5. Nearly all examples in this book are about strategizing by leaders of one kind or another in the face of dilemmas. 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. As a rule, leaders of social movements can expect greater fragmentation from within and greater opposition from without than leaders of well-established institutions and business organizations. Moreover, the strategies they implement for coping with role conflicts or other such problems are apt to create new problems. (Simons, 1994, 1970; Simons and Jones, 2012).
6. Rather than focusing exclusively on case-by case rhetorical analysis, dilemma-centered scholarship should pull together rhetorical histories, as in Chapters 8-11, that provide contexts for these analyses.
7. Opinions differ over the roles of fact and logic in persuasion. This book holds that persuasion is extra-factual and extra-logical, not necessarily false to fact or illogical but dependent on other factors such as the attractiveness of the communicator, media selections, and presentational style. Communicators focused exclusively on fact and logic ignore these other factors at their peril.
8. As against the commonplace view of opinion statements as gateways to the mind, this book shares Michael Billig’s (1996) view of them as multifunctional. They may be stances taken to impress others or to convince them on controversial issues. They may also be vehicles for self-discovery, tossed out to hear how they sound and to get feedback from others as part of the ongoing process of thinking as an argumentative process of conversing with oneself. (Billig, 1996) With Billig, it takes delight in arguments without resolutions, those occupying the vast space between definitely YES and decidedly NO.
9. *Political Persuasion* shares Baxter and Montgomery’s (1996) eloquently expressed conviction that social life is a “dynamic knot of contradictions, a ceaseless interplay between contrary or opposing tendencies.”
10. Rather than perpetuating tired old controversies over humanistic versus social-scientific approaches to the study of political persuasion, the book has drawn from both while also emphasizing their complementarities. It holds no brief for the superiority of a dilemma-centered, leader-focused “RPS” approach to the study of movement rhetoric over other, more recent contributions but cautions against both a contextual movement theorizing and a theoretical movement analysis.

  With Peter Berger (sacred canopy doubleday garden city NJ), it adheres to a cyclical view of history that dissolves disputes as to whether movements are effects or originators of rhetoric. We humans are severely constrained by circumstances in some cases but have freedom within the realm of necessity to do what is strategically indicated and structurally required. (Andrews, 1973)

These presuppositions (or guiding principles) serve in this book as taken-for-granteds (“TFG’s”). Readers are encouraged to give critical thought and discussion to each of them. Are they consistent, one with another? Try applying Andrews’ distinction between structurally required and strategically indicated to other cases: for example: President Barack Obama’s decision to reestablish relations with the Iranian government, President Donald Trump’s decision to pull out of the world-wide Paris accord on global warming andClimate change.

**More Questions and Issues**

1. *Can Persuasion be Saved?*

In Saving Persuasion, Bryan Garsten (2009) argued that the societal remedy for persuasion’s excesses; e.g., its panderers and demagogues, is not to rein persuasion in by transforming it into what it is not but to encourage its efflorescence. Constraining the art of persuasion by requiring that it adhere to the demands of a sovereign (Hobbes) or of one or another version of public reason (Rousseau, Locke, Habermas, Rawls) will not solve the commonplace problems of ill-informed, irrational decision-making by a polarized electorate but will only make matters worse.

A politics of persuasion- in which people try to change one another’s minds by appealing not only to reason but also to passions and sometimes to prejudices, is a mode of politics that is worth defending. Persuasion is worthwhile because it requires us to pay attention to our fellow citizens and to display a certain respect for their points of view and their judgments. The effort to persuade requires us to engage with others wherever they stand and to begin our argument there, as opposed to simply asserting that they would adopt our position if they were more reasonable. This way of proceeding can be contrasted to the sort of argumentation described in many recent theories of deliberation which can seem insensitive to the particularities of people’s lives and leave them feeling alienated from the results of public discussions. (Garsten, 2009:3)

Reconciling grounds for suspicion about the viability of a politics of persuasion with Garsten’s affirmations requires a more nuanced defense of it than the one he initially provides. It also requires more and better evidence for his claims about the positive effects of rule by persuasion, his own evidence consisting mainly of the “insights” of other political philosophers and of his own well told examples. Garsten himself sees as a great danger the potential for “alienation of judgment” that comes from mistrust of the intentions of political leaders and of the aptitudes of those subjected to their persuasive wiles. He acknowledges too that public debate in a democracy can exacerbate differences and lead to “enclaves of like-minded believers.” (Garsten, p. 199) But he remains steadfast in his view that rule by persuasion is preferable to what Sheldon Wolin (cited on p. 199) calls “the homogenizing, oppressive character of public reason.”

**Box 12.1   School on Trial**

At an inner-city junior high school for students booted out

of other schools, an eighth-grade English class came to life when a student proposed that the school be put on trial for unfair rules. The student who proposed the mock trial found himself in the role of the defense attorney for the administration, and he could not resist doing a convincing job in its behalf.

Witness 1 for the prosecution was destroyed on cross-examination as he was caught over-generalizing. No, he admitted, the milk at the school is not always spoiled. In fact, it rarely is. Witness 2 was forced to concede that the school doesn’t really enforce its rule against bringing candy to class. Then the defense attorney caught the prosecution off guard by pressing an objection: The prosecution had been leading the witness. And so it went. When the deliberations were concluded, the seven student judges voted 6 to 1 for the administration (Michie, 1998).

I have found instances of what Garsten calls “real persuasion” marked by respect for the concrete other, rather than the generalized other (p. 197), and in which the exchange of ideas fostered self-mastery, attentiveness to others’ beliefs, and stimulated reflection. (Garsten, 2009)   I’ve typically found “real persuasion” where there was an exchange of ideas, a talking with, this in contrast with univocal modes of persuasion, a talking to or talking at, as in oratory or in the testimony at the Boulder Valley School Board meetings described in Chapter 8.

In Sweden, Garsten’s “real persuasion” took place at a seemingly spontaneous gathering on the street between a candidate for Parliament and ordinary citizens eager to question him. In South Africa and more recently in Myanmar, it took place in meetings of reconciliation and a measure of forgiveness between sworn enemies. In London on Wednesdays it occurred repeatedly as BBC aired “Question Time” in the House of Commons.  In Cairo March 2011, I found it in coffee shops and frequently at Tahrir Square as people of all ages and classes came together to celebrate the removal of the Mubarak regime and consider next steps.

**Box 12.2 “Why are you not a Muslim?”**

In one such encounter a barrel-chested Nasserite who had discovered a Nasser pin on my jacket, assumed that I was a Muslim. When I told him that I was not he was shocked and when I confessed to him that I was an agnostic, he found it unimaginable. “That’s worse than being a Christian,” he said. “Why are you not a Muslim?”

I was taken aback by the question and a bit frightened, until I realized that the man was concerned for my future. “How when I died would I get to a better place? How would I be martyred?” I answered by asking my new friend which of us he preferred: an agnostic like me or a Muslim like Mubarak?

Mubarak or a non-Muslim like me. “You,” he replied, with tears in his eyes. There were about ten of us at that Tahrir meeting, including six or so who would be sharing a tent for a night. When I left that evening there were hugs all around.

These are among the relatively simple stories of the power of persuasion free of pandering and demagoguery. In our age of social media and the internet the stories get more complex. In China on an almost daily basis there is news of a liberalization process for which there is no precise beginning and no single persuader. Millions participate in holding the new regime to its promises and it often accedes so long as the CCP is able to retain its grip on power. On this day (Jan. 7, 2013), the CCP pledged to overhaul its re-education system. “Legal advocates said an announcement fueled hopes that the draconian system of labor camps, established in the 1950s, would be significantly modified.” (Jacobs, January 7, 2013). On this same day hundreds gathered outside the relatively liberal “Southern Weekend,” a newspaper whose journalists erupted in anger over what they took to be excessive interference by local propaganda officials. (Wong, Jan. 7, 2013) The journalists received backing via the internet by prominent celebrities and commentators, each with followings in the tens of millions.

By way of online media, word spread quickly from one site of protest to another, and as it did role models played in key positions.

**Textbox 12.3 Bassem Youssef’s satire**

In Egypt a heart surgeon turned satirist named Bassem Youssef used comedian Jon Stewart and the Daily Show as his inspiration in mocking the Morsi-led regime and the pretensions of ultraconservative television sheiks over the application of Sharia law (Kirkpatrick, D.D. and El Sheikh, M., Dec, 30, 2012) In the weeks leading up to the referendum over the Islamist-backed charter,

sheiks hosting Islamist variations on Egypt’s version of “The 700 Club” spent weeks attacking the protesters who clogged Cairo’s streets, calling them perverts, drug users, paid thugs and Christians. When Youssef began mocking the sheiks for their outlandish allegations, they turned on him, too, accusing him of sexual immorality and even poor hygiene. “Bassem Zipper,” one called him, “the varmint.” He doesn’t know how to wash after using the bathroom,” another one said.

Far from being offended, Youssef replayed clips of their attacks. “To those who tell me, ‘You insult the sheiks and scholars,’ I say, ‘The equation is very simple,’ he told his audience. “ ‘Just like you don’t consider us Muslims, to us, you’re not sheiks or scholars.’ ” Mr. Youssef is winning not only the laughs of young audiences but also the endorsements of respected Muslim scholars. He even won a grudging apology from one of his critics.

Of the many stories, I recounted in Chapter 5 about campaigns for institutional change, my favorite remains the one about the climate and energy project in and around Salina, Kansas. This was a campaign that defied the odds. Recounting scientific predictions of global warming didn’t work. Drilling home the dangers of global warming had made the problem worse. Al Gore is anathema in Salina. Barack Obama comes in a close second to Gore. The Obama administration’s efforts to regulate greenhouse gases were highly unpopular in Salina because of opposition to large-scale government intervention. Some Salina residents are skeptical that humans might fundamentally alter a world that was created by God.

Here then was a project that shouldn’t have worked. What made it successful best illustrates why persuasion in Garsten’s sense is worth saving. Focus group research confirmed what everyone in Kansas already knew. Folks there thrived on the competition between their high school basketball teams. They suspected deep down that global warming was afoot. They disliked the idea of any other country gaining an edge on the United States. These were among the openings on which the campaign could seize. It launched an area-wide competition to conserve, leading to a variety of energy-cutting projects and a green-conscious citizenry.

 For all that’s been said in this book about the power of persuasion we need also to recognize its limitations. It is more likely to intensify the views of those already convinced than to win converts from one moment to the next. As against Richard Neustadt’s claim that “The power of the presidency is the power to persuade” (Klein, 2012), recall that George Edwards analyzed the persuasive effectiveness of several reputedly spellbinding American presidents and found unchanged approval ratings as well as backlash effects. The presidents whose rhetoric he studied included Franklin Delano Roosevelt, Ronald Reagan, Bill Clinton and Barack Obama, all of whom believed in the power of presidential rhetoric to win the day.

1. *How to Come to Judgment*

Because persuasion deals in matters of judgment, rather than certainties, it makes little sense to speak of the persuader as proving a case beyond the shadow of a doubt. What constitutes “proof” varies from situation to situation and from audience to audience. Similarly, it makes little sense to think of persuasive arguments as definitive or compelling.

This, however, is not an endorsement of impulsive or random decision making or of perpetual indecision. On important matters, the cost of lackadaisical judgment falls not just on us but on society, enabling those who manipulate the system to poison the metaphorical well from which we all drink.

Admittedly there are good reasons for indifference and even for exploiting the systems on which we rely. All people, educated or not, use cognitive shortcuts. Highly educated people commit logical fallacies. So-called experts give contradictory advice. In general, says Sophia Rosenfeld (2014), based on a review of recent literature, Americans like me are easily manipulated, distracted by fleeting emotions, attentive to irrelevant matters, poor at predicting what we will want in future, and prone to seeing patterns where they don’t exist.  Americans are overwhelmed by the number of choices they are called upon to make: as consumers, as parents, as citizens. Many choices are meaningless, as between parity products, such as shampoos. In countries dominated by the ideologies of consumerism, freedom, and individualism—people tend to feel anxious and are worn out by the effort. So concerned are we with our private lives that we tend to be indifferent to affairs of state. As suggested in Chapter 7, blame for poverty and its ill effects tends to be ascribed to irresponsibility. Structural inequalities are airbrushed out of the picture. (Edsall, 2012, Age of Austerity)

In Chapter 7 I suggested that cognitive shorthands can be serviceable. They can also be harmful to self and society, as when citizens blindly submit to authority, when entire communities develop lynch mob mentalities in response to threats real or imagined, or when voters jump on the proverbial bandwagon and elect popular candidates rather than their more qualified campaign rivals. Some of that knee-jerk thinking seems built into the way most of us live: fast-paced, thousands of messages coming at us every day, little time for reflection, lots of distractions.

The Langer et al. study further evidences what other psychologists have demonstrated as well. People act mindfully, engage in central processing- when they are motivated to think critically and cando so. People act mindlessly, engage in peripheral processing- when they are unable or unmotivated to think critically. All of us act mindlessly some of the time, and some of us seem to operate on automatic pilot—relying on cognitive short-hands, nearly all the time.

While needed, cognitive shorthands can be harmful to self and society, as when people blindly submit to authority, when entire communities develop lynch mob mentalities in response to threats real or imagined, or when voters jump on the proverbial bandwagon and elect popular candidates rather than their more qualified campaign rivals. Some of that knee-jerk thinking seems built into the fast-paced way most of us live, with little time for reflection and too many distractions.

Langer (1989) adds to what has been said here about the differences between mindlessness and mindfulness. Repetition is identified as one of the major causes of mindlessness. Associated with mindlessness is a tendency to create premature cognitive commitments and to allow such commitments to impose “false limits” on our competence and potential.

As discussed in Chapter 2, all of us rely on filters, or schemas, by which to process new information.  But we need schemas that will allow contextual factors to enter into our judgments. The mindful message processor values the play of uncertainty, appreciates the potential of nonconformity, and welcomes the opportunity to take personal responsibility in making decisions. Mindfulness is also less outcome oriented than process oriented. The mindful persuadee develops *“second-order mindfulness”* in thinking about the process itself. Second-order mindfulness “recognizes that there is “no logical stopping point” on many of the issues we confront (p. 200).In what follows I illustrate these points by way of a case study.

Case Study 12.1:

  In June 2017, the mainstream news media, led by the Washington Post, broke the news that the U.S. Justice Department had assembled the evidence necessary to hold President Donald Trump under suspicion of obstruction of Justice, an impeachable offense.

Reaction was swift. Trump tweeted that he’d become the victim of a “witch hunt.” It was, he said, “phony” and “sad.” “I’m being investigated for firing the FBI Director by the man who told me to fire the FBI Director!” That man was R.J. Rosenstein, the   deputy attorney general, who appointed a special counsel, Robert S. Mueller III to conduct the investigation after Trump fired the FBI director, James B. Comey. Newt Gingrich, an ally of the President, pushed back, accusing Mueller of being the tip of the “deep state spear”aimed at destroying the Trump presidency.

Needless to say,the Trump imbroglio was of consuming interest in the U.S. and abroad. As the investigation widened, Trump’s approval ratings dropped. His attacks on his own Justice Department did not help him. What he wanted and didn’t get was a public statement that he was not “under a cloud” of suspicion. Instead, what he got was self-confirming evidence of a President dangerously out of control. At issue for Trump’s Republican colleagues were the limits of partisanship. Was there a point at which they could no longer defend him? Suggested next are rules-of-thumb for judgment-making.

**Coming to Judgment**

1. *Check your basic assumptions:* Have you been treating assumptions as facts, ignoring counterarguments, or perhaps trusting too much in the opinions of others without thinking things through yourself? Alternatively, have you been relying too much on your own judgments, oblivious to such sources of irrationality as Freudian defense mechanisms, motivated reasoning, and the uncritical internalization of dominant cultural ideologies? The process of inquiry may lead you to abandon your initially held convictions, or it may strengthen them. It should lead in either case to a more sophisticated sense of the issues at hand and to a position better reflecting the topic’s complexities.
2. *Apply Billig’s (1996) rule of reversal.* If a given principle seems to embody all that you believe, try reversing it to see whether its contrary also makes sense, in which case you might seek Aristotle’s “golden mean” or other moderate position. Consider, for example, that while cleanliness may be next to godliness obsessive cleanliness may require psychotherapy.
3. Once you are satisfied that your position, although not without flaws, is “least worst” among the alternatives available, feel free to become its impassioned advocate.

**Faculty Advocacy in the University Classroom: Dilemmas and Strategies**

What are the ethical obligations of academics who teach courses on political persuasion?I asked this question of faculty in Communication and Journalism from throughout the U.S. who’d been shown a video highly critical of the Religious Right, put out by People for the America Way, entitled “Life and Liberty for Those Who Obey.” The occasion was a presidential election debriefing at the University of Maryland. *I*f you showed that video to one of your classes, I asked, how would you teach it?

Many hands went up. We’d been unaccustomed to talking about our teaching at these debriefings and my questions hit a nerve:

*“A professor’s job is to profess, said one person in the room.*

*“A professor’s job is to educate, not advocate,” countered another.*

*“Teach students how to think, not what to think.”*

*“If you critique the religious right based on what you’ve seen, be sure to devote at least equal time to critiquing the video. It’s biased. Where I come from I’d be lynched if I showed it to one of my classes.”*

*“Conduct an unbiased class discussion of the video.” Be no less critical of the discussion’s techniques of persuasion as you are of the video.*

*“Present all the facts, letting the students decide.”*

*Provide a lecture to your class on the Religious Right.” “Be objective.”*

*“In conducting a class discussion, play the devil’s advocate, championing the least popular view of the video.”*

And so on. The list of alternative pedagogies should be familiar to us all.  Implicated here are ideological dilemmas, reflective of common sense notions of teaching and learning (Billig et al, 1988) What follows is a dilemma-centered analysis of the teaching alternatives.

As noted in Chapter 1, objectivity is an ambiguous term. One meaning of objectivity is being accurate, free from distortion, true to the facts. Another, considered especially appropriate with regard to controversial issues, is balance, impartiality, and evenhandedness. In reporting on the firing of a popular minister of state, as opposed to the reporting of a humdrum fire on Main Street, the instructor critical of the Religious Right could appear to be accurate or evenhanded while persuading in the guise of objectivity.

The tension between these two standards of objectivity is exhibited in at least two ways, says Hackett (1984). First, a balanced account may misrepresent an imbalanced state of affairs. One political party may be running a clean campaign, and the opposition party a dirty one. There may not be as many good things to say about the opposing party as bad things.

A second problem, suggests Hackett (1984), is that there is no rule for deciding what should and should not be considered controversial; hence, there is no way to determine what should be treated as a topic for matter-of-fact lecturing and what should be treated evenhandedly. Is “white privilege” a controversial issue? Many professors don’t give it a second thought. Meanwhile, professors who think about white privilege a great deal assume that its being a problem is not controversial.

Some academics argue that faculty advocacy is not only desirable but that on controversial issues, professors cannot help but project their views by the readings they assign, the lectures they present, and the manner in which they lecture and conduct class discussions. But critics of this view maintain that it is not difficult to project the appearance of evenhandedness while concealing one’s own views.[[59]](#endnote-59)

    On other matters there tends to be greater agreement. There is general agreement that professors should not advance views in the classroom that are irrelevant to the subjects they are hired to teach.

Another concern is power. Instructors not only have the capacity to assign high or low grades but also can reward with high praise or punish by intimidation. “What? You didn’t know that the human genome project has already yielded advances in the treatment of cancer? Haven’t you been reading the newspaper?”

More controversial is whether professors should refrain from knowingly causing offense to their students? How can concerns about causing offense be balanced against the need to provoke thought and perhaps overcome prejudices?

Yet another consideration is manner of promotion. Some ethicists believe that professors should, where relevant, take and defend controversial positions in the classroom, even at the risk of causing offense. But they insist that professors should not do so in a one-sided, dogmatic manner. Rather, they should provide full and fair background on the controversy, including presentation (or assigned readings) of opposing positions. Only then should they profess, but even then they are obligated not to impose their views, not to reward conformity, and not to intimidate or otherwise coerce.

Faced with ethical teaching dilemmas the professor might turn to the students and ask, “If you were in my shoes, how would you have handled this problem?” This question tends to be highly provocative, unleashing all manner of insights about advocacy in the classroom, including insights about persuasion in the guise of objective lecture or discussion (Simons, 1995). The question is a type of reflexive reframing, inviting as it does pedagogical talk about pedagogical talk. Typically, students come up with arguments for and against faculty advocacy similar to those just presented. Yet the discussion is anything but routine because it prompts consideration of the appropriate functions of the college classroom and not just the specific issue that was initially raised. One lesson from this exercise is that sometimes the best answer to a question (e.g., “How should I have handled this problem?”) is the question itself. I call this “Teaching the Pedagogies.” (1999). See also Gerald Graff (1992), Beyond the Culture Wars.

*Questions for Thought and Discussion*

* What are the Advantages and Disadvantages of the various teaching (and learning) alternatives?
* Should teachers of political persuasion refrain from revealing their own positions on controversial issues?
* Should they advocate openly while encouraging students to voice their concerns?

**Exploring Differences on Incendiary Issues outsidethe University classroom. The case of Donald Trump**

          Every so often academic communities are riven with conflict: none more so than the GOP nomination and razor thin election of Donald Trump in 2016.At the liberal-leaning University of Michigan the Trump victory was incomprehensible to most students and their faculty mentors while to the minority of students who supported him, the widespread vilification of Trump was so divisive and equally mystifying as to close down communication between his supporters and detractors. (Hartocollis, Dec. 8, 2016).

*Questions for Thought and Discussion*

* How, if you are a Trump supporter would you defend Trump against charges of sexism (or misogyny), racism(or xenophobia, narcissism, and demagoguery)?
* How, if you are a Trump supporter, would you criticize the left for failing to appreciate Trump and the concerns of his constituencies (e.g. blue collar workers; Evangelicals)?
* How would you defend or criticize the Hillary Clinton campaign?
* How would you explain and possibly defend Trump for some of his policy positions?

Critiques of Trump: present a critique of his presidential campaign while also explaining why it was so effective. What questions would you pose to Trump supporters that they would find most difficult to answer truthfully?

What is it that prompted the millions of Americans who were taken in by Trump’s tweets to see him as uniquely adept at building a fan base and carrying it through to victory in primary after primary and again in the presidential election? On this question, we may come to better appreciate his distinctive speaking style.[[60]](#endnote-60)

For their part Trump aficionados are advised to make as glowing an account of Trump’s political persuasion as the evidence, carefully evaluated, will allow. That caveat shouldeither concede or reasonably refute the usual criticisms of the man. Consider the argument that he remained true to himself.

*Commentary on ISIS, the self-proclaimed “Islamic State.”*

Recall from Chapter 3 that like maladaptive organizational routines and unwanted but repetitive interpersonal dynamics, dysfunctional) political systems (DPS’s) are nested within other destructive systems, are self-perpetuating and prone to magnification from runaway feedback loops, and are difficult to diagnose due to habituation and consequent system blindness. Managers of dysfunctional systems often find themselves trapped between incompatible goals. In Kafkaesque, self-perpetuating systems reasoning is circular, beginning and ending with question-begged premises that appear validated due to blindness about the circularity.

Political systems are malfunctioning by degrees. Some, like America’s post-9/11”state of exceptions” to torture, renditions, and the like (Danner, Nov. 22, 2012) were labyrinthine, impolitic to criticize openly, but sufficiently gratifying or otherwise rewarding to some political leaders and ordinary citizens as to be system-maintaining even as they did great harm to the nation’s moral fabric and victimize innocent civilians along with those who are a certifiable risk to society.

Other DPS’s are nested within more open systems where criticism is permissible and repair possible. The U.S. Senate Intelligence Committee opened up the drone bombings of suspected terrorists to a degree of review. Rape in the U.S. military is finally getting some attention. Genital mutilation is down in Senegal and the internet has been a force for political reform in China and Egypt. The myth of weapons of mass destruction in Iraq has long since been exposed.

But even in relatively open systems like the U.S., money often (not always) buys politics, regulations and regulatory systems often serve the regulated, companies “too big to fail” effectively game the system to the detriment of the commons, and political parties out of power, “sabotage and blame” parties in power. What is needed, is not just systems open to criticism in the legal sense but also systems where decision-makers are receptive to the criticism and able to act on it. I argue here that the West’s relationship to ISIS is systemically dysfunctional.

*ISIS Versus the West: A Commentary*

What is it? Why is it? What draws people to it? How should the big powers respond to it?

On its own terms ISIS is a Caliphate governed theocratically which, until Fall, 2017, spanned much of northern Syria and Iraq, unlike the caliphate created by the French and British after the fall of the Ottoman empire following World War I. The challenge of ISIS has been made manifest by bombings for which it has taken credit and social media propaganda campaigns of perception management designed to cast its most violent actions in a favorable light. Said Atran and Hamid (2015) it has struck most spectacularly in Paris, (symbolized by them as the “land of joie de vivre”) and it stages violence theatrically “so as to create and manage chaos.”

Terrorism expert Olivier Roy (June16, 2014) described it in an interview (Chotiner, 2014) as an offspring of Al Q’aeda and as a globalized international movement. ISIS, he adds, is an army of militants but not a political party. Its leaders seem of late to realize the need to shift from militant Jihad to effective administration of its “liberated areas.” No regional military group—not Shia, not Kurds, not Alawites-- is capable of taking on ISIS, and the Sunnis, as in Mosul, have reason to collaborate with ISIS in opposition to the Iraqi central government in Baghdad. For more on the lure of ISIS, see Ruthven (March 31. 2016) She claims that it has amassed great wealth and fighting power, using violence against those who do not share its values, this with a messianic rhetoric that induces sacrifice by large numbers of recruits, many of whom were drawn to ISIS while in prison for petty crimes “Jihad U.” and were attracted to ISIS because of its resemblance to video games they had played, like The Assasins. See also Atran and Hamid (Nov. 2015)

As this is written (December, 2016) France is recovering from multiple attacks on civilian targets in Paris, Russia from the downing of its airplane carrying tourists to Egypt, Lebanon from an attack on a tourist center in Beirut, the United States from the fear-inspired impact of these attacks on its presidential nomination campaigns, and on its security and surveillance systems, with resultant proposals by candidates for draconian immigration policies… Any given attack greatly magnifies the challenges of governance, increasing the likelihood of over-reactions and consequent system failure. Socialist President Francois Hollande begins to sound like George W. Bush, just as Bush’s scripted, post-9/11 crisis rhetoric bore strong resemblance to that of his nemesis, Osama bin Laden. In this respect it displays affinities with the rhetoric of ISIS in its critiques of that original hybrid: the “Zionist crusaders.”

Political systems are dysfunctional by degrees. Some, like America’s post-9/11”state of exceptions” to torture, renditions, and the like (as described in Chapter 3 by Danner, date?) were labyrinthine, impolitic to criticize openly, but sufficiently gratifying and otherwise rewarding as to be system-maintaining even as they did great harm to the nation’s moral fabric and victimized innocent civilians along with those who are a certifiable risk to society.

The question, what spawned ISIS, leads back to cycles of fear-induced reactions inthe West (e.g. to the 9/11 bombings), to wealthy client states like Saudi Arabia,which financed the spread of Wahabi Islamism, to neo-conservative exceptionalism whichsanctioned invasions and unwelcome occupations of Iraq and Afghanistan, to “anything thatmoves” B-52 bombings of Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia, and the "collateral damage" theyproduced; to largely indiscriminate support for Israel by the U.S. and likewise for the Arabmonarchies,  for draconian immigration policies, and to hyper-vigilant surveillance policies,abhorrent but, in the current situation, understandable.[[61]](#endnote-61)This omnibus list is far from complete. Says Canadian journalist John Zada (date?),itleaves out advances in media technology, making it possible for ISIS to beam its message aroundthe world. Zada’s general point is that many people who are drawn to ISIS[[62]](#endnote-62), as having been victimized by the United States which, by last count, has invaded and occupied Muslim countries 14 times.

Another factor: ISIS came into being in then-Sunni-dominated Iraq when Rumsfeld appointee, Paul Bremer, disbanded the Baathist military, who had run the Iraqiarmy, propelling it into the arms of ISIS. As they war against ISIS the Big Powers take sides with and against each other, scrambling for credit at bringing ISIS down while dodging criticism for failing to bring it down or rescue entrapped Syrians when that was possible. For each major power interests are at stake: this favored Kurdish state, that mercenary army, those contested oil fields that supply route.

Why is ISISnow fashionable among youth, even among non-Muslims living in Europe? I cite the following from Atran and Hamid (NYR, Nov. 19, 2015):

‘Among the senior ranks of such groups there are many who have had access to considerable education. (Why, I ask, do educated people support the orchestration of chaos, including violence as a kind of theater?)

…Prior marriage does not seem to be an incentive to those now volunteering for ISIS.

…And the caliphate…We dream of it like the Jews long dreamed of Zion. Maybe it can be a federation, like the European Union, of Muslim peoples.

…The fight against the Barbarians of the Islamic state is precisely what ISIS intended.”

The deeper the West becomes involved in military action in the Middle East, the closer ISIS comes to its goal of creating and managing chaos.The general pattern, then, is one of reverberations and radicalizations. The big powers reap what they sow. World leaders who counsel restraint, like Barack Obama, risking their popularity (Baker, Nov. 25, 2015).

**Summary**

This book has moved between theories and case studies with a view toward advancing the understanding, practice and critical analysis of political persuasion. Its preface put forward a rhetorical perspective on political persuasion, with rhetoric understood not simply as a synonym for persuasion but also as the history of the controversy about it which came to the fore in Plato’s dialogues on the sophists. (Leff, 1987; Fish, 1989) The preface argued not for Plato or the sophists but for the contemporary significance of the controversy itself.

Persuasion without that controversy is about variables and effects. Persuasion with that controversy is about political life and the life of the mind- about power and justice, reason and truth--still pitting “homo-seriosis” and “homo-rhetoricus” against each other in their seemingly inconclusive but illuminating disputes.

As it has evolved over the centuries, Rhetoric has become a meaning-making process of coming to judgment and bringing others to those same judgments, this by way of reason-giving and motivational appeals of every kind. It is an advantage-seeking activity but not necessarily to the detriment of others. Said Kenneth Burke (1937) seemingly endless conflicts can end in reconciliation. Warring parties may agree that persuasion is preferable to guns. But Burke also warns that the appearance of cooperation can be used for partisan purposes. One finds repeated evidence in Burke’s writings on political rhetoric of the dilemmatic, mixed-motive character of social life: the need simultaneously or sequentially to compete and cooperate with others. These “mixed-motive” features of social systems are as characteristic of “Big P” politics where government and issues of governance play important roles, as they are of the “small p” politics of the bedroom and the bar room where, for example, couples may quarrel over who should pick up whose socks in the morning and who should pick up the tab for the drinks. However interesting these issues can be, this book focuses on politics with a Big P.  What sets them apart from ‘small p’ politics is their relation to government and governance.

Political actors may operate ‘outside the system’ and public officials may speak for ‘the system,’ but both operate in relation to systems that they oppose or defend. ‘The system’ may be difficult to pin down, as at a local school system or state university where the educational system is tied to the government-as-system and nests interconnected subsystems, such as individual public schools in the school system and colleges of liberal arts in the state university. But in both cases situations and roles as political actors impel and constrain what is said and symbolically done.

Mere transitioning from the old to the new required rhetorical strategies for accommodating traditions institutionalized in taken-for-granted maxims and aphorisms, and coping with other dilemmas, not least power versus persuasion, ethics vs. effectiveness, consistency vs. flexibility, conflict versus cooperation, where a unifying maxim is “as long as we’re making money.”

Chapter 10 on Egypt, presents the most perplexing dilemmas in its “Tragedy in Three Acts.”  As reflected in the thinking of two highly respected Egyptian friends, here named Ashraf and Wael, the Arab Spring was either a noble undertaking, necessary for overturning the much-hated Mubarak regime, or a tragic failure, manifested by a return to chaos in Egypt under Islamic rule, and culminating in a coup that removed the Islamic regime. Methodologically, the book has moved vertically between theory and practice and horizontally in comparing cases, this for purposes of enhanced understanding, practice, and critical analysis. Case analysis can compare one system with another, one role with another, one set of dilemmas and strategic options with another, and lead to “genre-alizations” about characteristics of a given rhetorical genre, such as the eulogizing of assassinated presidents, protest rhetoric, war propaganda, and issue advocacy advertising as in Mobil’s “Logical Allies of Business. By these means, theories at various levels of abstraction can be constructed, and comparisons drawn between and among different cases. Out of such comparisons, for example, can come generic characteristics of the political apologia (Chapter 2), and theories of a particular case, as in former president Bill Clinton’s “Monica-Gate” political apologia on charges of wrongdoing in office (Chapter 2).Other “genre-alizations” in this book have included characteristics of dysfunctional political systems (Chapter 3) direct-to-consumer advertising (Chapter 3), predictable predicaments in leading social movements (Chapter 4) and campaigns in support of military invasions (Chapter 11). Cutting across all these chapters are questions about political persuasion’s ethics and effectiveness: i.e., about doing things right versus doing them smart.

And then there were the racially motivated killings in Charleston, South Carolina, eloquently eulogized by Barack Obama (Chapter 2), the rise of Isis (the “Islamic State”), news of the capitulations by conservatives to Affordable Health Care, Gay Marriage, the removal of the Confederate Flag from public buildings in the South, and the normalization of relations between the U.S., Iran, and Cuba.  Fox News, then CNN, held lively television debates featuring leading contenders for the Republican nomination for President, including its frontrunner, Donald Trump. One of the debate’s moderators, Megan Kelly, assailed Trump with a list of his misogynistic remarks:“You’ve called women you don’t like fat pigs, dogs, slobs and disgusting animals...”

Said New York Tmes columnist, Frank Bruni “It was riveting. It was admirable. It compels me to write a cluster of words I never imagined writing: Hooray for Fox News”. (Bruni, Aug. 6, 2015). Trump responded that Kelly was probably menstruating.

How should we come to judgment on events such as these? How, and with what goals, should they be addressed in the University classroom?  How, and with what measure of decorum, should we communicate our reactions to inflammatory remarks. When, if at all, are expressions of moral outrage justified?  How(and why are unwanted, dysfunctional, but repetitive patterns perpetuated?

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1. End Notes

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2. [http://[astro.Temple.edu/~hsimons](http://astro.temple.edu/~hsimons).] [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
3. Endnotes [↑](#endnote-ref-3)
4. 1 See for example Kevin De Luca’s critique of my definition in Image Politics (1998. The New Rhetoric of Environmental Militarism (New York: Guilford)

   See Lepore, J. (2010). *The Whites of Their Eyes*. Princeton: Princeton UP. [↑](#endnote-ref-4)
5. See also Lepore, J. (2010) ,on distortions (Dec. 26, 2011 New York Times, see also her book: *The Tea Party and Their Remaking of American Conservatism (2012);*also; Lepore, (2011)The Whites of Their Eyes: The Tea Party's Revolution and the Battle over American History (The Public Square)

   4 Controversies persist as to whether movements use rhetoric, are products of rhetoric, or both. See Foust and Cox (2009) See also De Luca’s (1999) critique of my “paradigm” in Image Politics: The new environmental activism. NEW York: Guilford. See also Brian Ott’s (2011) critique of my approach. [↑](#endnote-ref-5)
6. Twitter use in the 2012 presidential contest increased tenfold over 2008, said Stuart Stevens at the Annenberg presidential debriefing in each of the last seven election cycles, the “FIRE” sector (finance, insurance and real estate) accounted for the largest industry share of presidential and Congressional campaign contributions. (not counting “super-pacs”). Moreover, party nominations are also highly dependent on contributions from these same “industries.” (Drutman, Sept. 20, 2012) [↑](#endnote-ref-6)
7. Benenson’s polling warrants critical attention in that he served also as a leading strategist for the 2008 and 2012 Obama campaigns. The Nov. 7, 2012 New York Times op-ed by Benenson finds support in the poll for belief and value claims that just happen to coincide with the campaign’s framing of the 2008-10 economic downturn as the result of faulty decisions by previous administrations, especially the G.W. Bush administration, and then of sound decisions by the Obama administration to “rescue” the economy. Polling questions can in themselves be persuasive or at least prompt “yea-saying” responses as forms of impression management. (Billig, 1996) [↑](#endnote-ref-7)
8. See also Thomas B. Edsall’s review of Joseph Stiglitz’ The Price of Inequality. (Aug 3, 2012) nytimes.com. Stiglitz characterizes the United States as “separate but unequal.” See also Tom Paine’s account in the Daily Kos (April 17, 2012) of Congressional testimony by Senator Bernie Sanders: “Oligarchy and Plutocracy Replacing Democracy in America.” [↑](#endnote-ref-8)
9. I was one such visitor in June, 2003, a Visiting Professor at CU Boulder. Besides teaching a course, leading some colloquia, and catching my breath, I also tried to catch on to the distinctive culture of Boulder. I believe it figured prominently in Barbiegate. [↑](#endnote-ref-9)
10. These classic values are given contemporary expression in Robert N. Bellah, Richard Madsen, William M. Sullivan, Ann Swidler, and Stephen M. Tipton in *The Good Society* (New York: Random House, 1992). [↑](#endnote-ref-10)
11. Lamented radical political theorist Robert Paul Wolff, “The confusion of contemporary American political thought shows itself nicely in the paradoxical fact that while liberals invoke the authority of John Stuart Mill’s great libertarian tract, *On Liberty*, conservatives echo the rhetoric and deploy the arguments of Mill’s other great contribution to social philosophy, *The Principles of Political Economy*. What is more paradoxical still, Mill’s strongest arguments for what is today known as conservatism are set forth in *On Liberty*, a fact which liberals seem congenitally unable to notice; while in the pages of the *Principles,* we can find the germs of a justification of that welfare-state philosophy which modern conservatives abhor.” See *The Poverty of Liberalism* (Boston: Beacon, 1968), 3. [↑](#endnote-ref-11)
12. I was teaching at Boulder when Bill Moyers’ fabulous speech on progressive liberalism arrived on line via the Common Dreams News Center (June 10, 2003). It had been presented in Washington DC to the Campaign for America’s Future on June 4, 2003. Progressivism, says Moyers, “started late in the 19th century and remade the American experience piece by piece until it peaked in the last third of the 20th century.” (p. 2) It counts as its accomplishments the eight-hour day, the minimum wage, the conservation of natural resources and the protection of our air, water, and land, women’s rights an d civil rights. Moyers incorporates classical liberalism’s democratic ideal into his “story” of progressivism, but he insists that it is unrealizable in nations that do not share a commitment to civil rights and to a leveling of incomes and opportunities. Thus, the progressive liberal asks whether “’we the people’ is a spiritual idea embedded in a political reality…or merely a charade masquerading as piety and manipulated by the powerful and privileged to sustain their own way of life at the expense of others.” (p. 2). If income inequality is on the rise, if it persists and grows, then unless you believe that some people are naturally born to privilege, “it’s a sign that opportunity is less than equal.” Self-interest “may be a great motivator for production and progress, but is amoral unless contained within the framework of community.” (p. 9) The rich “have the right to buy more cars than anyone else, more homes, vacations, gadgets and gizmos, [but] they do not have the right to buy more democracy than anyone else. “ (p. 9) [↑](#endnote-ref-12)
13. Professor Kotani’s Japanese students had difficulty understanding American conceptions of liberalism, and by the time I’d heard them out I was a bit confused myself. Why is lifestyle libertarianism linked in progressive liberalism with welfare state capitalism? What logic joins them together? And can the working class beneficiaries of progressive liberalism be counted as liberals because they vote their interests, or must they articulate to themselves an altruistic rationale for their benefits, as affluent progressive liberals do? I don’t have good answers to these questions. [↑](#endnote-ref-13)
14. Kenneth Burke, *Attitudes Toward History (*Boston: Beacon, 1937/1961), 39-44. [↑](#endnote-ref-14)
15. The civil rights movement was the model for many other movements (e.g., gay/lesbian rights, Latino rights, welfare rights) with which liberalism strongly identified and from

    which conservatism benefited greatly in the form of a late-sixties white backlash that persists even today. [↑](#endnote-ref-15)
16. See for example “Social Movements,” *Encyclopedia of Rhetoric*, ed. Thomas Sloane (New York: Oxford). Readers familiar with my “Requirements-Problems-Strategies” (RPS) approach to the study of movements and much else will recognize elements of it in this essay. [↑](#endnote-ref-16)
17. Michael Billig, Susan Condor, Derek Edwards, Mike Gane, David Middleton, and Alan Radley, *Ideological Dilemmas (*London: Sage, 1989). [↑](#endnote-ref-17)
18. One can find numerous examples of both creative adaptations and tactical blunders in *Ideological Dilemmas.* [↑](#endnote-ref-18)
19. I learned some things about what transpired from telephone conversations with Clint Talbott and Amy Bounds of the Daily Camera, and a subsequent e-mail from Bounds but I would have liked to have learned a good deal more. Bounds passed along two Daily Camera pieces that were not in the contributors’ press file, the first her own news-breaker, dated 2/14, the second an editorial highly critical of the teachers’ decision, that appeared two days later. Talbott surprised me further with news that the story had been carried along by bloggers (web loggers). As to its origins, the Camera had gotten the story from Thielen, but had refused to divulge it until after the 2/13 Board meeting because up until then he had insisted on anonymity. Still, why didn’t the newspaper investigate the matter through its other sources?

    And what was Thielen afraid of? One concern surely was for his daughter’s privacy. Despite repeated requests from the national news shows and talk shows, said Bounds, he never allowed his daughter to be interviewed and insisted that her name be kept out of the press. (Bounds, Aug. 13, 2003)

    As for the thinking of school officials, their strategizing, if any, about how to defend the decision to pull the project, the dynamics of influence at Mesa Elementary and within the larger BVSD—all this remained a mystery to me. I did learn from Amy Bounds that Principal Greg Thompson was ultimately responsible for the removal decision, and that he was new to Mesa Elementary, having recently come from Australia. [↑](#endnote-ref-19)
20. See Jonathan Potter, *Representing Reality: Discourse, Rhetoric, and Social Construction* (London: Sage, 1996), Ch. 1. [↑](#endnote-ref-20)
21. See Barbara Herrnstein Smith, *Belief and Resistance: Dynamics of Contemporary Intellectual Controversy (*Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1992). See also my essay on “The Rhetoric of Philosophical Incommensurability” *The Rhetoric of Incommensurability,* ed. Randy Harris (W. Lafayette, IN: Parlor Press, in press). [↑](#endnote-ref-21)
22. Appendix B, 1. [↑](#endnote-ref-22)
23. Appendix A, F. [↑](#endnote-ref-23)
24. Appendix A, G. [↑](#endnote-ref-24)
25. Appendix A, I. [↑](#endnote-ref-25)
26. Appendix A, C. [↑](#endnote-ref-26)
27. Appendix A, C. [↑](#endnote-ref-27)
28. Appendix A, C. [↑](#endnote-ref-28)
29. Appendix A, I. [↑](#endnote-ref-29)
30. Appendix A, I. [↑](#endnote-ref-30)
31. For strongly opposed views on these and related race issues, see the conservative critique by Dinesh D’Souza, *The End of Racism* (New York, Free Press, 1995); and the liberal defense by Andrew Hacker, *Two Nations* (New York, Ballantine, 1995). [↑](#endnote-ref-31)
32. Appendix A, C. [↑](#endnote-ref-32)
33. This generalization at least applies to the press record made available to the book’s contributors, and to the additional Daily Camera editorial that I was able to obtain. [↑](#endnote-ref-33)
34. Appendix A, C. [↑](#endnote-ref-34)
35. Appendix A, C. [↑](#endnote-ref-35)
36. Appendix B, 11. [↑](#endnote-ref-36)
37. Appendix B, 2. [↑](#endnote-ref-37)
38. Appendix B, 2. [↑](#endnote-ref-38)
39. Appendix A, E. [↑](#endnote-ref-39)
40. *Ideological Dilemmas,* chapter 4. [↑](#endnote-ref-40)
41. See Michael Halloran, “Doing Public Business in Public,” *Form and Genre: Shaping Rhetorical Action*, eds. Karlyn Kohrs Campbell and Kathleen Hall Jamieson (Washington, DC: National Communication Association, 1978), 118-138. [↑](#endnote-ref-41)
42. [↑](#endnote-ref-42)
43. At the Nixon impeachment deliberations of the House Judiciary Committee, which Halloran analyzed, this meant that even Nixon’s supporters, those who opposed impeachment, risked opprobrium from Committee members if they sought to subvert the deliberations, but added to the committee’s perceived legitimacy if they behaved cooperatively. Hence, their rhetorical dilemma. The performances of Nixon supporters Charles Sandman and Charles Wiggins provided a study in contrasts. [↑](#endnote-ref-43)
44. Appendix A, N. [↑](#endnote-ref-44)
45. Appendix A, N. [↑](#endnote-ref-45)
46. Appendix A, N. [↑](#endnote-ref-46)
47. Appendix A, N. [↑](#endnote-ref-47)
48. Appendix A, N. [↑](#endnote-ref-48)
49. Appendix A, N.9 [↑](#endnote-ref-49)
50. **Endnotes**

    The “opening to the West,” signified by the famous handshake between Premier Chou En-Lai and President Richard Nixon in 1972, took on added meaning by the normalization of relations, undertaken by President Jimmy Carter in 1979. See Lu & Simons, 2006 [↑](#endnote-ref-50)
51. The slogans of “Mr. Science” and “Mr. Democracy” were advocated during the New Culture Movement (1910s-1920s) by Chinese intellectuals. The movement aimed to reject completely traditional Chinese culture and introduce Western science and democracy to China. Even though the CCP endorsed the discourse of science, it was not based on the interpretation of western scientific reasoning characterized by induction. *Kexue,* the Chinese word for science is loosely used to refer to the truthfulness of Marxist theory on social change. Also, the term *minzhu* (democracy) is used in a limited sense of seeking opinions of the majority as opposed to a political system and free speech. [↑](#endnote-ref-51)
52. Mao labeled Deng “a rightest,” yet considered him “a rare talent,” “softness melded with toughness” and invited him back to office in charge of China’s economy and state affairs in 1973. According to Dr. Li’s account, Mao appointed Deng as the Vice Premier of China, assisting Premier Zhou Enlai who was seriously ill on state affairs. China’s economy collapsed due to the chaos of the Cultural Revolution. After two years in office, Deng was denounced again for not following Mao’s revolutionary path and was forced to step down. After Mao’s Death, Hua Guofeng, Mao’s appointed successor, become the interim CCP Chairman. Hua resigned in 1978 and was replaced by Hu Yaobang (1978-1987). During this time, Deng Xiaoping was the Chairman of the Central Military Commission, the most powerful position in China and Vice Chairman of the CCP. [↑](#endnote-ref-52)
53. Culture-specific rhetorical repertoires are probably variants of cross-cultural and perhaps even structural possibilities, inherent in the pragmatics of symbol use. See for example, Burke’s introduction to the *Grammar of Motives*. Also See M. Billig, *Ideology and Opinions* (London: Sage, 1991) [↑](#endnote-ref-53)
54. During the four years before Deng’s death, the number of officially laid-off workers quadrupled. See X. Hu & G. Lin, *Transition Toward Post-Deng China*. (Singapore: Singapore University Press, 2001). Counting superfluous hands in the countryside, said Willy Lam (1999), more than 200 million Chinese were unemployed or underemployed. For China’s corruption problem, see Xiaobo Lu. *Cadres andCorruption: The Organizational Involution of the Chinese Communist Party* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2000). [↑](#endnote-ref-54)
55. In the petition, Jiang is also criticized for his failure to address the issues of economic disparities and for his promotion of a personality cult. However, after Jiang’s July 1st speech, more than 100.000 private entrepreneurs submitted their application to join the party. See Wang, J & Zheng Y. (2003) [↑](#endnote-ref-55)
56. See Xing Lu, *Rhetoric in Ancient China, Fifth to Third Century B. C. E.: A Comparison with Classical Greek Rhetoric* (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1998). Many of the strategies in *Sunzi Bing Fa* and *Gui Gu Zi* have been applied to statecraft, trading and business negotiation, and interpersonal relationships. For English translation and studies of these texts, see Sun Tzu, *The Art of War*, ed. & trans. James Clavell (New York: Delacorte Press, 1983); W, K. Liao, The Complete Works of Han Fei Tzu (London: Arthur Probsthan, 1939); Daniel Coyle, Guiguizi: On the Cosmological Axes of Chinese Persuasion, diss. (University of Hawaii, 1999) [↑](#endnote-ref-56)
57. See Guili Chen and Tao Shun, *An Investigative Report of China’s Peasantry* (2004) 217-224 on Wen’s visits to rural areas. See *People’s Daily* Online, Nov. 12, 2003 on the report of Wen Jiabao helping the migrant worker getting the delayed payment back from their employers. Migrant workers are peasants working on the cities. The employers tend to delay the wage payment and use the money for further expansion of their business. [↑](#endnote-ref-57)
58. Guili Chen and Tao Shun, *An Investigative Report of China’s Peasantry* (Beijing: The People’s Press, 2004). Wenran Jiang reports that biggest worry is the ever-growing tax burden placed on the rural population. While average agricultural income grew by 90% in the 1994-7 period, the rural tax burden jumped 800%. More than 300 taxes and fees have been imposed by all levels of government. For example, some townships demand 14 kinds of fees to register marriage. Wenran Jiang, “China’s Silent Rural Revolution” Project Syndicate, (April, 2004) 1. <http://www.projectsyndicate.org/article_print_text?mid=1529&lang=7> [↑](#endnote-ref-58)
59. **Endnotes**

    Readers are encouraged to weigh in on this issue. See also the Preface for Prof. Carolyn Miller’s power point lecture on concealing or revealing rhetoric’s tools. It’s also available via Google-.needs checking [↑](#endnote-ref-59)
60. See M. Kranish and M. Fisher, *Trump Revealed: An American Journey of Ambition, Ego, Money, and Power. New York: Scribner, 2016.*A recent essay by Mark Danner on “The Real Trump” (Dec. 22, 2016) vividly illustrates his self-promoting, ill-informed fuzzy thinking that characterized his rallies See also my Case Study 6.1 on Trump in Chapter 6. [↑](#endnote-ref-60)
61. See especially Ian Fisher’s (Nov. 18, 2015) excellent account in the New York Times. And see also Clark Macauley’s “The Psychology of Terrrorism” (SSRC 9/11 Archive, 2015) [↑](#endnote-ref-61)
62. see the Muslim world [↑](#endnote-ref-62)