Comm 482

Political Messaging

Tuesday, March 8

Free Write

❖ What is the difference between a strategy and a tactic?

Updates and Reminders

❖ Discussion Board due Sunday by 11:59 p.m.

❖ Quiz on Chapter 4, Politics and Emotions, and Obama Chapter (Sunday by 11:59 p.m.)

❖ Next Week: Continued discussion on Messaging; no Quiz

❖ **Political Messaging Assignment** due Sunday, March 20

Political News

❖ State of the Union

    ❖ Biden bounce in poll numbers

❖ Florida approves "Don't Say Gay" Bill

❖ First jury trial in Capitol insurrection case results in guilty verdict for militia member

❖ Russian Invasion of Ukraine updates?

    ❖ Biden bans use of Russian oil

❖ Others?

Bias in Media Update

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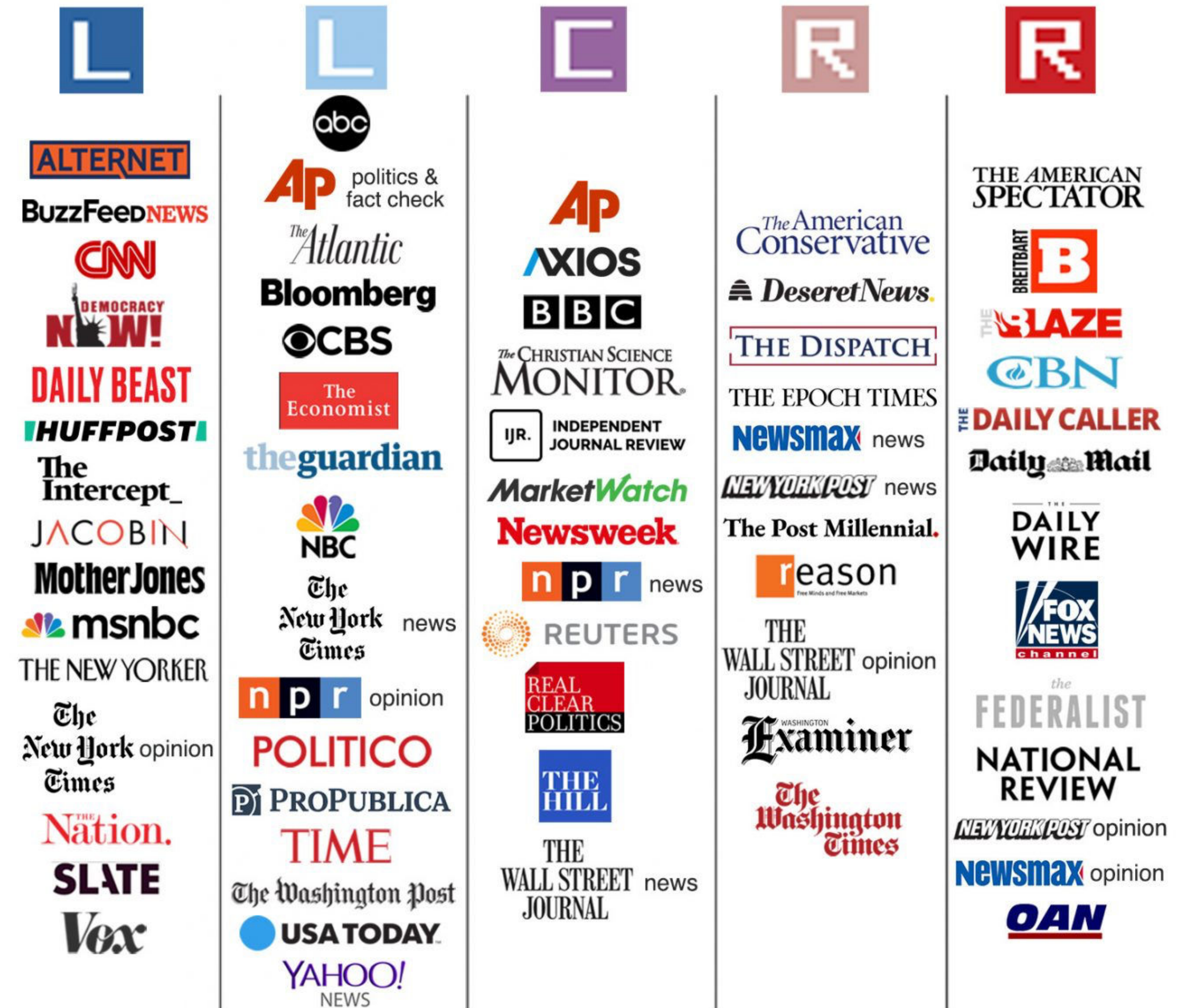
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Textbook Chapter 4 – Campaign Strategy

Strategy without tactics is the slowest route to victory.
Tactics without strategy is the noise before defeat.

Sun Tzu - The Art of War

Strategy: A plan of action or policy designed to achieve a major or overall aim; *long term* goals and how you'll get there

Tactics: concrete, and often smaller steps toward achieving goals; specific and *short-term* actions

Messaging would likely be considered a tactic used in an overall strategy. Any specific message is useful only to the extent that it contributes to the overall campaign strategy.

Comprehensive Campaign Model

❖ Campaign strategy: the controlling authority for the campaign budget, dictating targeting, staffing, fund-raising, scheduling, and virtually ever function of the campaign

   ❖ Identifies target groups, which affect budget allocations for media, direct mail, phone banks, etc.; Provides guide for staff and consultants to carry out the campaign plan

❖ Comprehensive Model: Holistic view of the campaign process

   ❖ Contrast to focus on individual campaign messages

   ❖ Specific messages only useful if it contributes to overall campaign strategy

Differing Approaches to Strategy Analysis

❖ SWOT

❖ Who'll Say What

❖ CAT Analysis

❖ Situational Analysis

SWOT Analysis

"Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats"

Strengths: Assets of the candidate and the campaign, including positive attributes of the candidate, any major voting blocs committed to the candidate, and financial resources.

Weaknesses: Negative aspects of the candidate's record, such as inability to attract supporters, and to raise funds.

Opportunities: Factors outside the campaign that could provide a positive benefit to the candidate, including state of the economy, partisan trends that favor the candidate, general mood of the electorate, or the presence of a major campaign issue on which the candidate has a potentially popular record. Need to develop a list of possible events that can be used for your candidate's benefit.

Threats: External factors that could adversely affect the campaign, including negative moods among the electorate, partisan trends that negatively affect the candidate, and campaign issues that work against the candidate. May also include institutional and cultural barriers to the candidate's success. Must anticipate problems and to limit their negative impact on the campaign.

Who'll Say What Matrix

Chart of anticipated campaign messages, both by your side and by that of the opposition. This chart can then be used for polling purposes (to test the strengths and weaknesses of all messages) and for planning campaign strategies

	What Will Be Said About . . .	
	Our Candidate	*Their Candidate*
What Our Candidate Will Say	. . . About himself	. . . About the other candidate
What Their Candidate Will Say	. . . About our candidate	. . . About themselves

Can be used in conjunction with SWOT

CAT Analysis
"Contingencies, Assumptions, Tactics"

Contingencies: threshold conditions that must be present for the candidate to have a chance to win and for a campaign strategy to be effective. "if-type" statements, such as "If Condition X is present, then Strategy Y can be effective."

Assumptions: elements in a campaign that serve as the premises for campaign communications, or the rationales behind campaign decisions. Predictive statements about the reactions of political communication elements.
  · Predictions about how an opponent might respond to a campaign message
  · Predictions about a change in the voters' perception of a candidate during a campaign.

Tactics: specific maneuvers that take advantage of the contingent conditions and/or operationally define the assumptions of the campaign. The implementation efforts, based on polling data, suggested by the campaign consultants.

The results of CAT analysis provide a schematic description of the elements needed for successful communication in a particular political situation and can be useful in determining why particular political communication attempts are successful or unsuccessful.

Incumbent Campaign Style

Tactics associated with incumbent campaigning include the following (p. 82):
1. Creating pseudoevents to attract and control media attention.
2. Making appointments to state and federal jobs, state and national party committees.
3. Creating governmental task forces to investigate issues of public concern.
4. Appropriating federal funds and/or grants.
5. Consulting or negotiating with world leaders.
6. Manipulating the economy or other important domestic issues.
7. Endorsements by party and other important leaders.
8. Emphasizing accomplishments.
9. Creating and maintaining an "above-the-fray" posture.
10. Depending on surrogates for the campaign trail.
11. Interpreting and intensifying a foreign policy problem so that it becomes an international crisis.

Challenger Campaign Style

Tactics associated with challenger campaigns include the following (p. 94):
1. Attacking the record of opponents.
2. Taking the offensive position on issues.
3. Calling for a change.
4. Emphasizing optimism for the future.
5. Speaking to traditional values instead of calling for value changes.
6. Appearing to represent the philosophical center of the political party.
7. Delegating personal or harsh attacks in an effort to control demagogic rhetoric.

Situational Analysis

Campaigns can and should be planned, organized, and executed on the basis of a systematic strategy

"Checklist for Strategic Assessment":

1. *Campaign resources.* All campaigns must confront the problems of how to most effectively deploy scarce resources. There is only so much time, so much money, and so much candidate energy that can be expended before election day.
2. *Campaign setting.* All campaigns operate within the confines of a given campaign setting, and that setting includes several factors that are relatively immutable (the campaign will not change) and several factors that are mutable (the campaign can change). The campaign should identify which factors can be changed, and direct their efforts at controlling them.
3. *Strategic assessment.* A crucial element in the overall strategic assessment is to meet three functions of campaigns: conversion (persuading voters to support a candidate), reinforcement (solidifying the commitment of supporters), and activation (getting out the vote). The campaign must draw strategic inferences from its possibilities, knowing that reinforcement and activation are much more likely than conversion.
4. *Planning.* The planning of campaign strategy depends on information and research. The campaign must know as much as possible about the constituency, the candidate, the opposition, and other crucial factors in the race. Campaign information includes both scientific data and political experience and judgment.
5. *Systematic strategy.* All of the foregoing considerations must be integrated into a single, comprehensive, overall strategy. Once the elements of the strategy have been set, the remainder of the campaign should simply unfold according to the dictates of the master plan. The small, day-to-day decisions should be guided by the larger strategic plan.

Three Traditional Models

❖ **Easy Decision**

- ❖ "committed" - partisan, nothing will change their mind

- ❖ "undecideds" - highly informed, see gray areas

- ❖ "indifferents" - crucial swing voters, may not vote at all, rely on emotion, and appreciate help in decision making.

- ❖ "Political decisions are made by the indifferents"

  - ❖ Strategy is to create messages that sharpen the differences between candidates

❖ **Ticket-Splitting**

- ❖ Voters who vote for both Democratic and Republican candidates in the same election cycle; typically younger, more educated, high consumers of media; issue oriented and interested in problem-solving

  - ❖ Strategy is to place messages in areas where these voters consume media (sports, etc.)

❖ **Least Objectionable Candidate**

- ❖ Candidates win not because they appeal to the most voters, but because they offend the fewest. Moderate voters are the main deciders

  - ❖ Strategy: Create messages that can be interpreted by the voter in a manner consistent with the voter's own position. Can lead to bland campaigns in which the candidate is accused of not taking a firm position on issues

21st Century Models

Partisan Politics and the "Permanent Majority"
Based on appealing to a large partisan base rather than seeking votes from moderate positions.

Assumptions
- Identification with the candidate's party significantly outpaces that with the opponent's party, particularly if that partisan identification exceeds a majority.
- Partisanship becomes the primary anchor for the voters' decisions. In some areas, a local issue (e.g., weak economy) may override partisan concerns.
- The candidate has a record of strong identification with the party. Generally, newcomers to either party have a tougher time employing this approach.

- Critiqued as "winner-take-all" politics that makes it difficult to get legislation done

Positional Strategies

Reliance on positional rhetorics to distinguish candidate from the opposition.

How it works: Define a position that will make it easy for the voters to make a decision that favors the candidate

Three main variations:

Only Alternative - negative campaign that positions the candidate as the only viable alternative to an unpopular opponent; for primaries, position oneself as the only "viable alternative" for defeating the nominee of the other party.

Role Definition - defining the candidate as an "ideal candidate" for a given situation; if problem solving is needed, then position that candidate as the only one (or at least the best among the field) at solving problems.

Triangulation Strategies - create a distraction, which can reduce the number of votes cast for an opponent. Third party (straw) candidate, or focus on issue that will pull away votes from another candidate.

And more..

❖ **Coalitional Strategies** - building coalitions among seemingly disparate groups (think Obama in 2008 and 2012)

❖ **Anxiety Strategies** - manipulate the voters on contemporary issues that stoke fear and anxiety (think Trump on border issues, etc.)

Obama and Political Messaging

❖ Definitely read, but I am more interested in you seeing this as an example of analyzing messages, particularly related to the opposition.

❖ What were some of Obama's major messages of the campaign?

❖ McCain as linked to unpopular incumbent (Bush)

❖ Failing Economy

❖ McCain as too old, out of touch

❖ Campaign messages change the standards of judgment that voters use in evaluating the candidates and frame the way that the contenders, their stands on issues, and their character and temperament are understood.

Political Messaging: Emotions Win

❖ **Language**: Framing is everything; use language of your audience; use words that are emotional and easily visualized; offense is more powerful than defense

❖ **Archetypes**: A perfect example of a thing or object; a personification of value and beliefs

❖ **Emotions:** fear, hope, etc.

❖ **Storytelling/Narrative:** powerful in that they convey emotions much better than statistics and facts