

The background is a light blue gradient with several realistic water droplets of various sizes scattered across the surface. The droplets have highlights and shadows, giving them a three-dimensional appearance.

# STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION

ALEXANDER VUVING

DKI APCSS

STRATEGIC STUDIES CENTER – SENIOR SECURITY STUDIES PROGRAM

# WHAT IS STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION?

Influence the  
behavior of  
others

How to  
influence  
others?

Through  
messages

What are  
messages?

# IS THIS STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION?

Thailand's decision on  
Chinese submarine  
procurement

Putin “peddling lies” about  
ailing Russian economy,  
say EU ministers.

Hamas and Fatah signed an agreement in  
Beijing, “ending” their division.

# Case Study: China's Strategic Communication



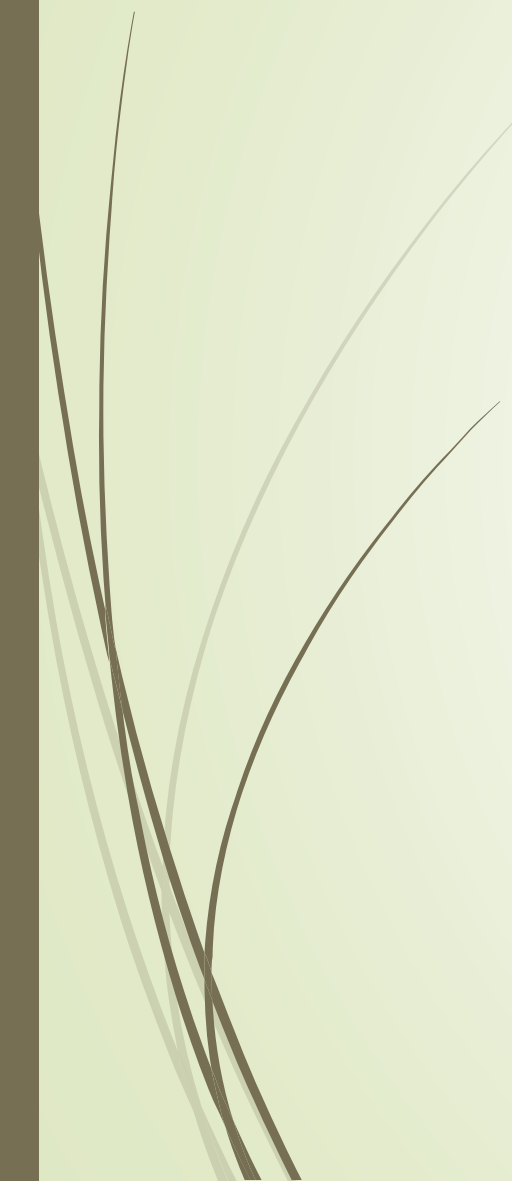


# China's Approach to Strategic Communication

- “Discourse Power” & Control of the Mind
- Leninist regime relies heavily on the state's control & manipulation of the information environment.
  - Propaganda, Censorship, Self-censorship
  - Political, Information, Psychological Warfares
- Chinese strategic culture, especially Sun-tzu's “Art of War”, emphasizes:
  - “All Warfare is Based on Deception”
  - “Winning without Fighting”
- “Unrestricted Warfare”, “Three Warfares”



# Strategies of China's Strategic Communication

- “Borrow a Boat”
  - Co-opt the Gatekeeper
  - Exploit Asymmetries
    - Asymmetry of Knowledge: “Best information about China must come from China”
    - Asymmetry of Size & Access: Leverage China's market & population to force self-censorship
    - Asymmetry of Control: Exploit freedoms & openness of foreign societies
- 



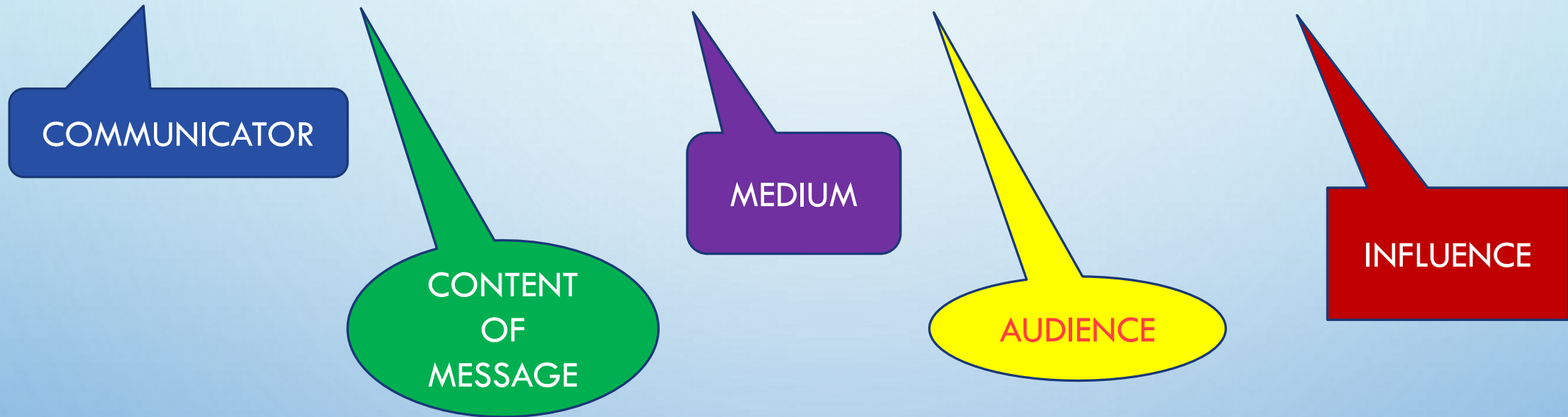


# Effects of China's Strategic Communication

- Shaping Opinions, Building Reputations, Setting Norms
- “Discourse Power”: Control Others’ Thoughts by Inculcating Rules of the Mind & Preferred Narratives
  - Careful Not to “Hurt the Feelings of the Chinese People”
  - Singing along Narratives that Benefits China
- Free, Open & Cooperation-leaning Societies Are Inherently Vulnerable to China’s Deception

# THE COMMUNICATION PROCESS

“WHO, SAYS WHAT, IN WHICH CHANNEL, TO WHOM, WITH WHAT EFFECT” (H. LASSWELL)



Where are we in this process?



# GOOD STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION

- THE RIGHT MESSAGE
  - THROUGH THE RIGHT MEDIA
    - TO THE RIGHT AUDIENCE
      - AT THE RIGHT TIME
        - WITH THE RIGHT EFFECT

## EXERCISE: WHAT SHOULD YOU CARE

- If you are the target audience (primary audience)
- If you are a hidden audience (secondary audience)
- If you are a medium (transmitter of the message)
- If you are involved in the message
- If you are at the receiving end of the strategic communication's effect

# FUNDAMENTAL LAWS OF STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION

**EVERYTHING IS A SIGNAL.**

Find something that is not a signal.

Find a message that cannot be interpreted differently by different audiences.

**THE AUDIENCE IS KING.**

**AUDIENCES READ SIGNALS WITH THEIR BELIEFS,  
CULTURE, EMOTIONS, AND BIASES.**

# CREATING A NARRATIVE

An **easily expressed** story that:

- **Resonates with the audience**
  - **Taps into their deep identities**
  - **Includes or evokes emotional symbolic imagery**
  - **Has credibility**

(adapted from David Kilcullen)

(From President Biden's speech explaining why he withdrew from the 2024 presidential race)



**Joe Biden** ✓

@JoeBiden

Follow



The great thing about America is that here, kings and dictators do not rule.

The people do.

History is in your hands.

The power is in your hands.

The idea of America lies in your hands.

2:24 PM · Jul 24, 2024 · **2.6M** Views



8.8K



12K



64K



666



## EXERCISE: IF YOU WERE PRESIDENT BIDEN

Democratic voters: So do "the people" have the power to choose the Democratic candidate, or do we have to choose Kamala Harris?



**Clown World**™ 🤡 ✓ @ClownWorld\_ · Jul 24 ...

Kings and dictators don't rule, but career politicians like you do. Time to put real power back in the people's hands.

53

73

2.6K

54K



**DC\_Draino** ✓ @DC\_Draino · Jul 24 ...

Kamala got literally zero votes in the primary

91

219

5.8K

57K





# CREDIBILITY IS KEY

- Problem for both the communicator and the audience
- Honesty can be enforced by
  - The production costs, opportunity costs, and risk costs associated with producing costly signals that are prohibitively expensive to fake
  - A third party's presence or absence that provides incentives for honesty and disincentives for deception
  - Monitoring, probing, punishment, and social norms, which keep conventional signals, such as language, reliable



# HOW TO MAKE A STRONG MESSAGE?

- Costly signals
- Consistency
- Repetition

# AMBIGUITY AS STRATEGY

- When clarity is dangerous
- When the communicator needs to keep the audience guessing
- When confusion is an intended effect
- When the communicator pursues mutually conflicting goals
- When only a specific audience with the right additional information should be able to decipher the message