



Linking Communication & Governance: Public Opinion and Communication Influence

Sina Odugbemi and Caby Verzosa
The World Bank

*Summer Institute in Communication and Governance
Reform*

Los Angeles, May 28 – June 7, 2013



Overview

- Tools of Governance
- Constructing Problems
- Political Will
- Middle Managers
- Public Will
- Table Exercise





The
Iron
Fist
?





Tahir Square

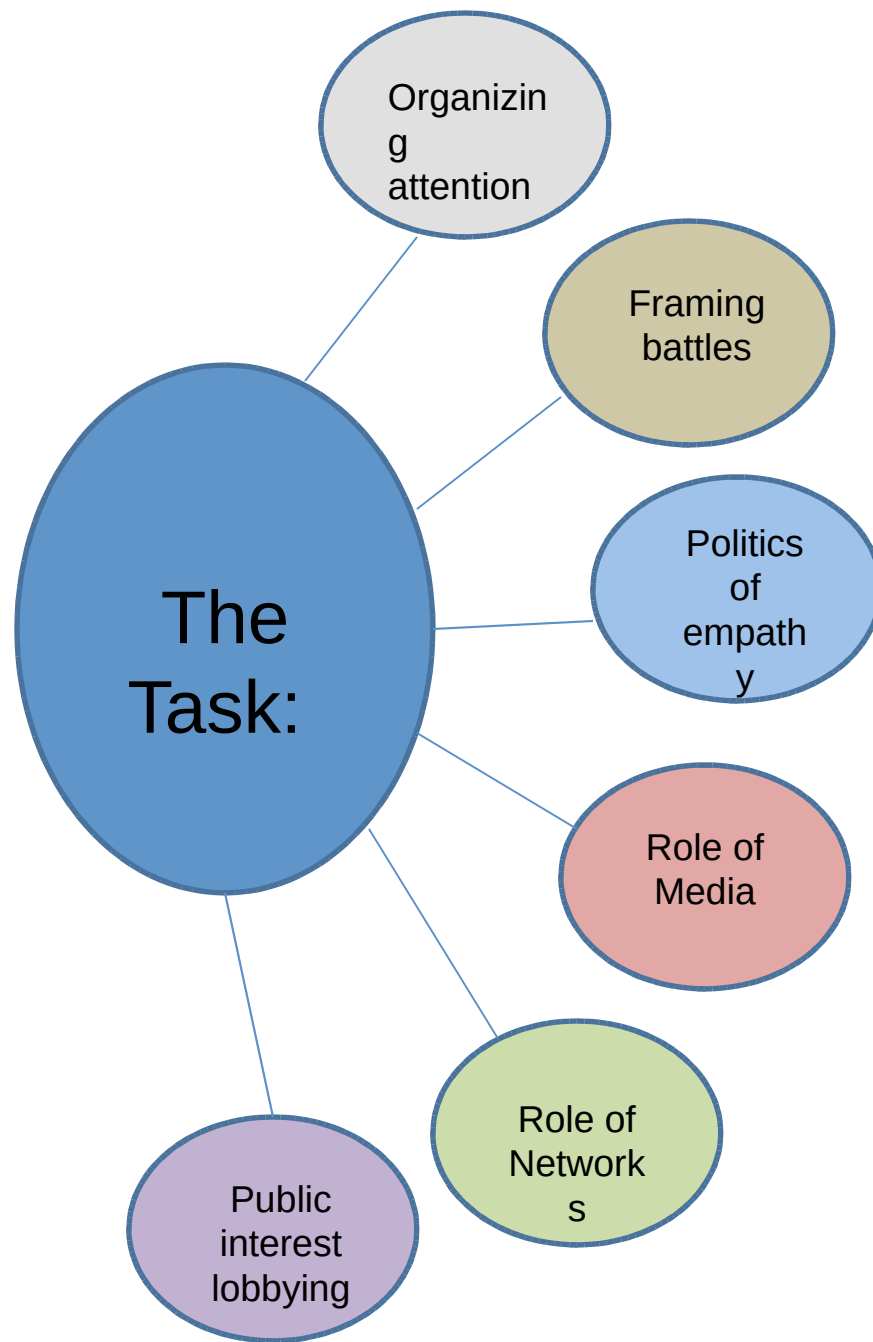
...the Agora is
everywhere





Problem
?
Says who?



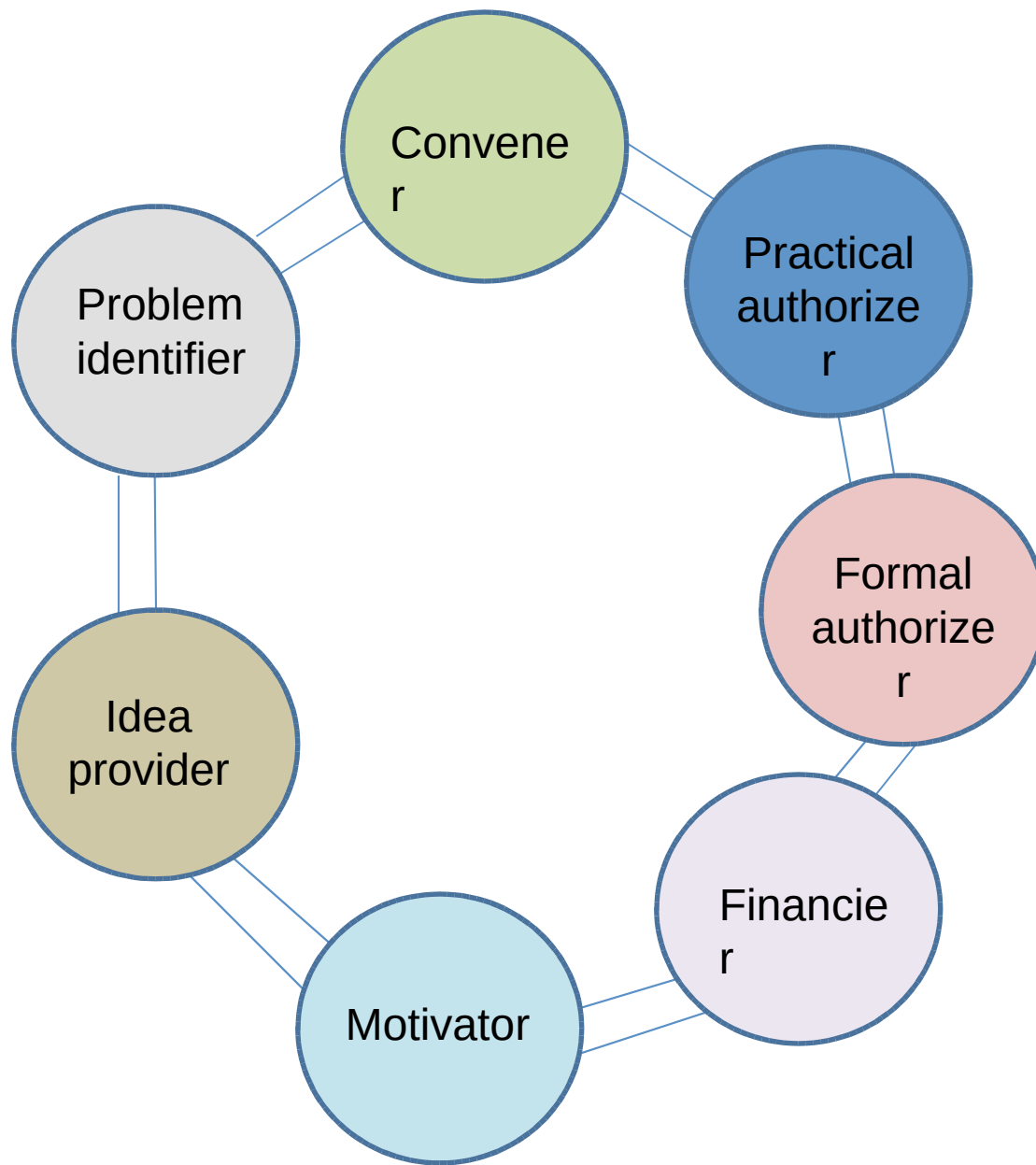




A task for Hercules ?

...political
will





From *The Limits of Institutional Reform in Development*, by Matt



Layer of Clay?



Public Will: The Problem

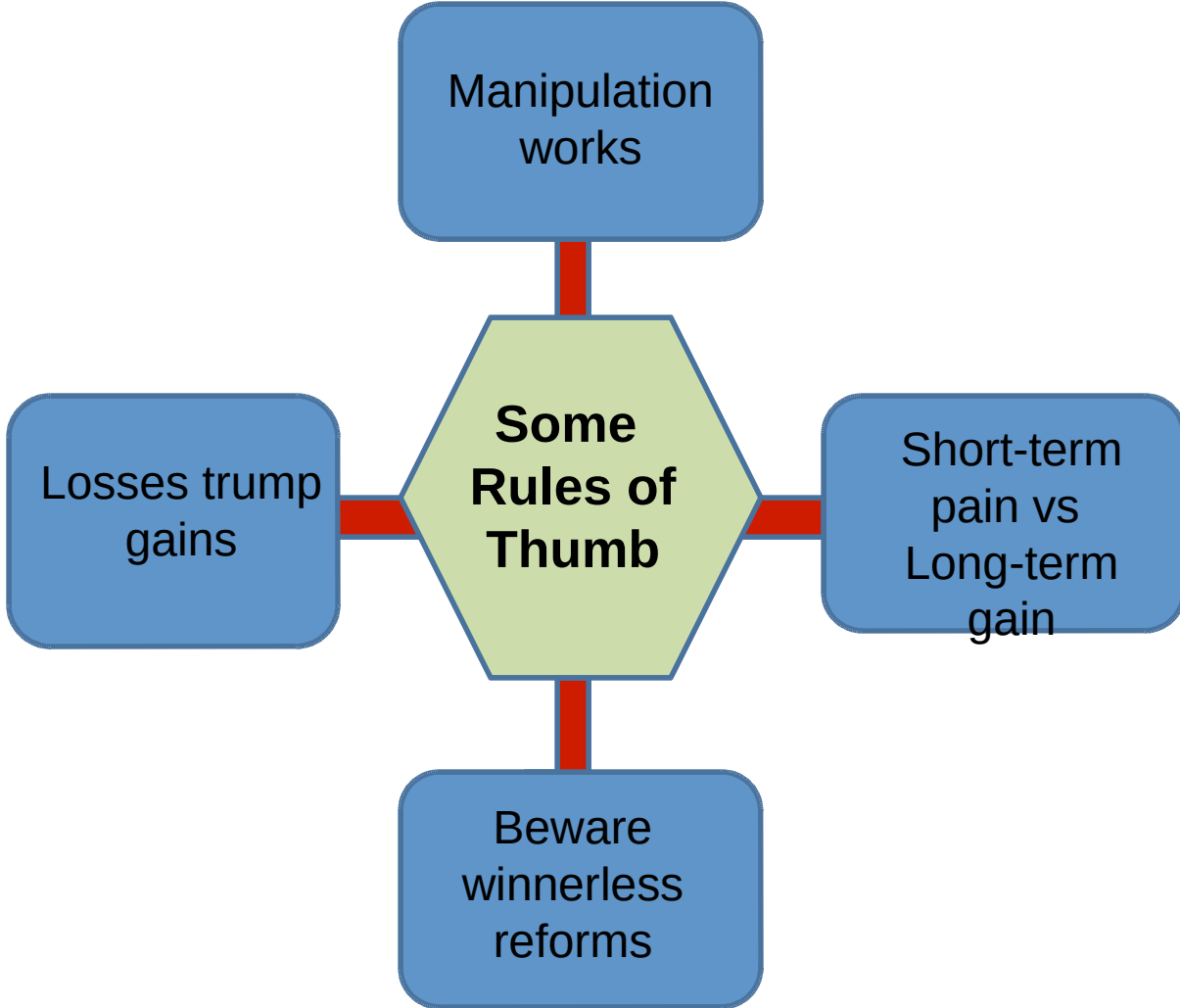
Machiaveli: *The Prince*

“And it should be realized that **taking the initiative in introducing a new form of government is very difficult and dangerous, and unlikely to succeed.** The reason is that all those who profit from the old order will be opposed to the innovator, whereas all those who might benefit from the new order are, at best, tepid supporters of him. This lukewarmness arises partly ... from the skeptical temper of men, who do not really believe in new things unless they have been seen to work well. **The result is that whenever those who are opposed to change have the chance to attack the innovator, they do it with much vigour, whereas his supporters act only half-heartedly;** so that the innovator and his supporters find themselves in great danger.”

Machiavelli, 1988, p. 20/21



Public Will = Public support that results in policy changes and reform



Why won't Babu Move?



- Why me?
- Can I make a difference?
- Will the system respond?



Political Efficacy: Michael Delli Carpini

“Research on political participation has identified a number of deep-seated norms and values that are positively associated with the amount and quality of democratic engagement. One of the most central of these is political efficacy, or the sense that one’s participation can actually make a difference (internal efficacy) and that the political system would be responsive to this participation (external efficacy). Efficacy is strongly correlated with political and civic participation.”

Source: *Handbook of Political Communication Research*

Yes, we can?

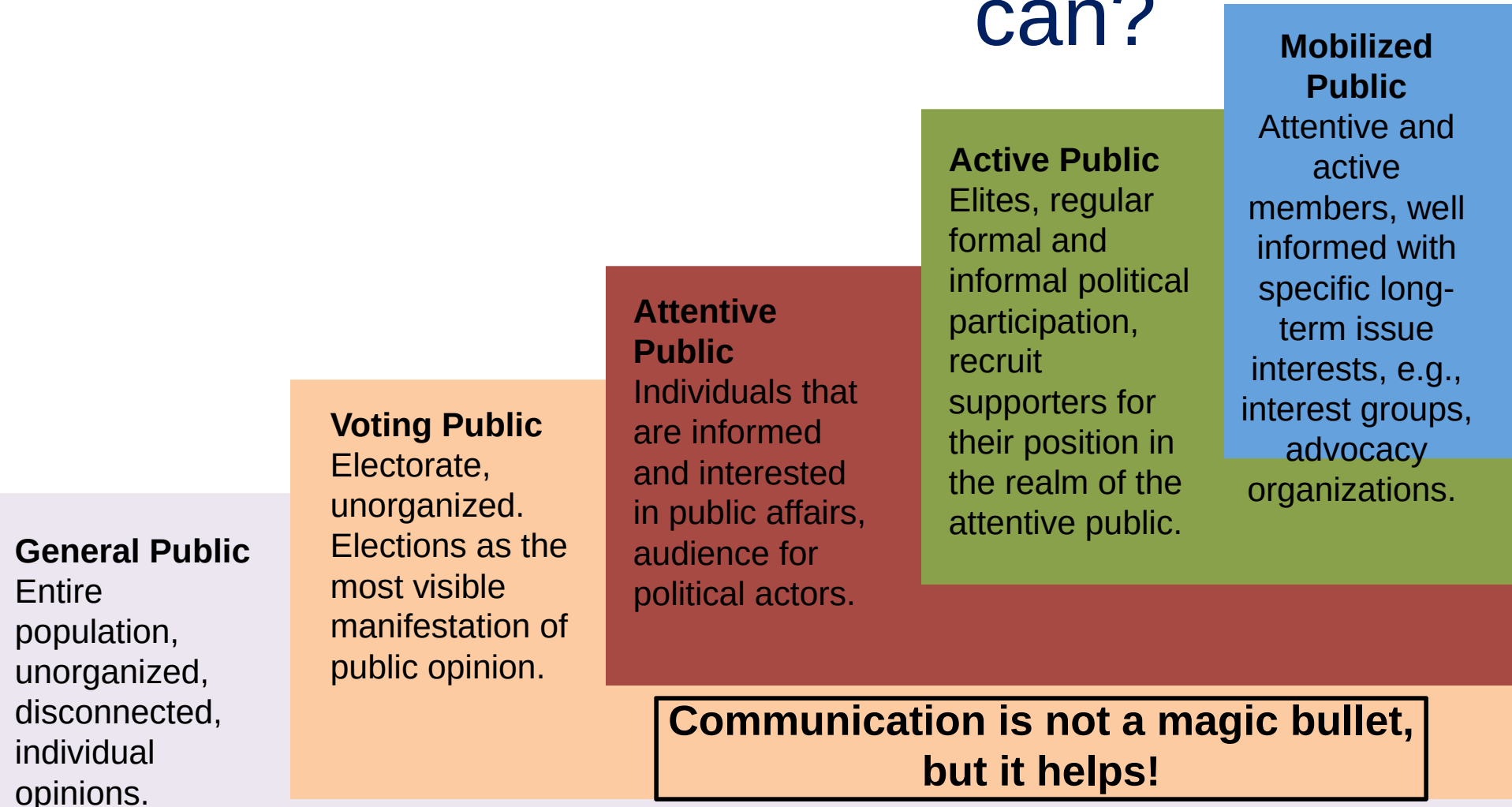


Table Exercise: Communication-Based Solutions

Political, organizational, or public will?

What's communication's contribution?

Examples:

- *Orissa, India: Public Enterprise Reform*
- *Bulgaria: Tax Administration Reform*
- *Wenling City, China: Infrastructure Reform*



Orissa, India: Public Enterprise Reform

Orissa is one of India's poorer states. It is located on the east coast just south of West Bengal and north of Andhra Pradesh. On the eve of the new millennium, the state government's financial woes and the condition of its public enterprises were sources of great concern. The new chief minister, Naveen Patnaik, inherited a political machine that lacked discipline. Even among Orissa state legislators and many senior civil servants, there was neither an appreciation of the size and scope of the public enterprise problem nor the resolve to confront it. Yet the new chief minister, together with a small group of senior civil servants, championed needed reforms, took the debate to the people, and built a statewide consensus.

Orissa published white papers on state finances in 1999 and 2001, which admitted that government's indiscriminate borrowing had not yielded expected results in terms of development, growth, and poverty alleviation. Instead, the state was in a debt trap and at a crisis point. The papers called for immediate and drastic steps to turn the fiscal situation around and proposed public debate on the issue. The need for enterprise reform, part of a much broader government drive toward solvency, began to resonate inside and outside government. One Indian economist commented: "The fact that Naveen Patnaik is among the few chief ministers to be returned to power after a state election is a testament to the fact that the people supported the tough approach taken by his government in its previous tenure". That success was, first and foremost, the result of competent communication.

Masty (2008), *Governance Reform...*



Bulgaria: Tax Reform

The Bulgarian government decided to unify and modernize its tax collection facilities by combining the revenue-collection function (NSSI) and the General Tax Directorate (GTD) into a new, single tax authority: the National Revenue Agency (NRA). The need for change was enormous. Bulgaria's tax system deterred foreign investors and citizen-taxpayers alike.

Initially, technocratic and bureaucratic reluctance to internal and external communication was high. To address this challenge, the NRA devised an internal communication strategy. In a span of three months, the NRA held 25 half-day meetings, each with 100 to 300 participants from NSSI and GDT. All local agency employees were invited to the meetings. Senior NRA officials, together with participants from the two merging agencies, made presentations summarizing public opinion survey data on attitudes about taxes, discussed the need for enhanced revenue collection, and sketched out how the government planned to unite the two agencies. Time was also spent discussing opportunities for career advancement and benefits for the small number of employees who would lose their jobs in the merger. New procedures for answering employee questions via the newly created NRA Intranet were also announced. Follow-up letters were sent to all 8,000 employees of both agencies, recapping information disseminated during the meetings, highlighting issues raised by employees, and restating the intranet system through which queries would be answered. Internal transparency and dialogue have been credited for building support among the people on whom rigorous and unfamiliar demands would soon be placed.

CommGAP (2008), *Governance Reform...*



Wenling City, China: Infrastructure Reform

In Zeguo township, Wenling City, about 300 km south of Shanghai, citizen deliberation was used to help select 10 infrastructure projects from a list of 30 possible options. For local officials, the deliberative method used -- Deliberative Polls, developed at Stanford University -- offered a transparent, balanced, and representative way to provide public input into the decision-making process. Like many other municipalities, they had previously held *Kentan*, or “heart to heart,” discussion meetings as a form of local consultation. But these open meetings were dominated by the intensely interested, the self-selected, and the local notables, and they lacked a decision process. The Deliberative Poll, which draws on a random sample of the population, added to perceptions of transparency and legitimacy. As local party leader Jiang Zhaugua observed, “I gave up some power and found that I had more.”

During the Deliberative Polls, all the possible infrastructure projects were represented by experts on panels, and the briefing materials, which provided the agenda for discussion, had arguments for and against each project. When the resulting preferred projects were classified in terms of their contribution to the entire city rather than just one village or another, there was a clear pattern of increasing support for projects of wider collective benefit. In addition, the results have actually been implemented; the public’s preference for sewage treatment plants rather than for more highways and for a people’s park for recreation rather than for a fancy town square have changed the city’s priorities of development.

Fishkin et al. (2008), *Governance Reform...*

