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Intro

In this election year, it has been fascinating to observe the ways in which politicians choose to relay their messages, especially in such a turbulent and divisive political climate. In analyzing acceptance speeches for the presidential nomination, it is interesting to notice the strategies that are utilized in order to create a memorable and effective speech. This paper will discuss Joe Biden's acceptance speech for the Democratic presidential nomination, and the reasons why his message is effective. By using all six strategies highlighted in *Political Campaign Communication*, Biden successfully communicates his plans to the audience and secures the faith of his voters. I will discuss background information regarding these six strategies, analyze the messages in Biden's speech, discuss the implications of these ideas, and evaluate the effectiveness of this acceptance speech.

Background

These are six strategies laid out in *Political Campaign Communication* that are used in acceptance speeches. First off, politicians use simplified partisan statements- basically claiming that they are in the right and the opponent is wrong. They purposefully do not leave open-endedness, and emphasize that there is no real choice, and that the answer is clear who should be in power. Secondly, lamenting about the present and celebrating the future- the politician claims that the opponent/opposing party and ideals are the one causing America's

problems, and offers a solution... their leadership. They discuss fundamental values and ideas that they claim will resolve problems and bring a bright future. If the politician is currently holding the office, they may discuss how bad things were before they held office, how much they've accomplished, and that their work is not yet done. The third strategy utilized is emphasizing the crucial nature of the election. This is pretty self explanatory; the politician stresses how important their campaign is to better the nation and that they urgently need support in order to win. The fourth strategy involves a call to unity, which serves to bring people together to fight for the bigger cause, often acknowledging their opponents that have also fought for the candidacy and unifies people to come together. The fifth strategy, use of biography, has become more important in recent years, as voters have trended towards voting based on candidates, not party affiliation. This involves the politician talking about their strengths and abilities, often citing their past successes and experiences. Lastly, the strategy of using biography to go negative involves contrasting themselves with their opponents, and often entails attacks on opponents or the opposing parties. All of these strategies, when utilized correctly, can make for an effective acceptance speech.

Analysis

In Joe Biden's nomination acceptance speech, all of these strategies are applied. I will discuss examples used in every category to highlight upon his effective use of all of these different modes.

Since Biden very much disagrees with the leadership style of his political opponent Donald Trump, he does not shy away from the use of simplified partisan statements. For example, he starts off with saying that "the current president has cloaked america in darkness for

much too long. Too much anger. Too much fear. Too much division”. In this claim, he paints his opponent as an enemy of good, who brings all of these unwanted evils into play. Immediately thereafter, he claims that “If you entrust me with the presidency, I will draw on the best of us, not the worst. I will be an ally of the light, not of the darkness”. He then takes his analogy of darkness and negativity associated with Trump, and turns it around on himself, and associates himself with light, and betterment. He goes on to discuss how character, compassion, decency, democracy, and what the nation stands for is all on the ballot. He then says that “the choice could not be clearer”. These definitive statements demonstrate his use of partisanship to show that he is the only good option.

Biden clearly laments about the present along with celebrating the future. He is quick to tack the blame onto Trump, discussing all of his failures, especially surrounding the handling of the coronavirus and his insufficient response. He talks about the current state of the world and how he recognizes that the country is hurting, and then moves on to talk about how “America's history tells us that it has been in our darkest moments that we've made our greatest progress. That we've found the light. And in this dark moment, I believe we are poised to make great progress again. That we can find the light once more”. Again, his analogy of darkness and light shows how he paints the present as being in the dark, and how when he is in power, everything will work out and that he will restore the light in the future. He discusses all of his plans for improvements in sectors such as healthcare, education, climate change, and many more. Following this, he states “In times as challenging as these, I believe there is only one way forward. As a united America”. Once again, he discusses moving forward from present challenges and how uniting and looking toward the future will be what moves us away from the current strife.

Biden puts an extreme amount of emphasis on the crucial nature of this election. He talks about how “all elections are important. But we know in our bones this one is more consequential”, and that “this is a life-changing election that will determine America's future for a very long time”. He asserts that it is imperative for Americans to participate in this election and make their voices heard. He acknowledges that these are troubling times, saying that “history has delivered us to one of the most difficult moments America has ever faced”. Essentially, he really hammers this strategy in, and makes sure to appeal to voters who are stressed out with the high stakes of this election.

Because of these high stakes, he makes a call for unity. Biden discusses how he does not want the country to remain divided, as is the current state of America, but that instead “It's time for us, for We the People, to come together”. He emphasizes that he wants to focus on healing the country and work towards ending the extreme polarization. He promises that “while I will be a Democratic candidate, I will be an American president. I will work as hard for those who didn't support me as I will for those who did”. He goes on to say that “America isn't just a collection of clashing interests of Red States or Blue States. We're so much bigger than that. We're so much better than that”. By showing his faith in the people to come together and overcome differences, he is calling to unify those who disagree with one another and appeals to those who don't necessarily share his beliefs and promises that he will look out for all.

Biden uses biography to appeal to his voters and humanize himself. He discusses his plans and promises of what his presidency will look like. He promises that “I will be a president who will stand with our allies and friends”. He displays his commitment to creating positive relational ties and that he will be a cooperative presence. He uses language that holds him accountable, saying “as president, I will make you this promise: I will protect America. I will defend us from every

attack. Seen. And unseen. Always. Without exception. Every time”. This show of obligation allows voters to feel secure in his leadership. He also brings a very personal tie into his speech, discussing his deceased family, saying “I know how it feels to lose someone you love. I know that deep black hole that opens up in your chest. That you feel your whole being is sucked into it. I know how mean and cruel and unfair life can be sometimes”. This vulnerability shows that he is human and that he is ‘just like you’, and allows voters to feel a personal connection.

Finally, Biden utilizes the strategy of using biography to go negative quite a bit. He very strongly contrasts himself with Trump, and launches attacks against him. He discusses the coronavirus and Trump’s ill-preparedness. “After all this time, the president still does not have a plan. Well, I do”. He talks about how the current president did not act accordingly and that “he failed to protect us. He failed to protect America”, while also promising that he, on the other hand, does have a plan and will protect America and right Trump’s wrongs. He also discusses how Trump failed to handle race relations and instead made things worse, saying “remember the violent clash that ensued between those spreading hate and those with the courage to stand against it? Remember what the president said? There were quote, ‘very fine people on both sides’”. Biden condemns this, and says that he was called to action, and that he will work towards healing the nation and stopping the spread of hate.

Discussion

Biden’s presidential nomination acceptance speech is indeed effective, as it brings about a lot of hope, and desire for betterment of the current state of affairs. He successfully incorporated all of the different strategies into his speech in a way that focused on the American people and how they would benefit from his presidency, and focused on moving away from negativity and

towards positivity. I believe that although there was a lot of examples presented of where the past presidency went awry, it was necessary to discuss them to secure Biden as a good candidate because it is an ethically important duty to acknowledge past failures and discuss how he would not repeat those mistakes, and would instead consciously work toward improvement. The use of call to unity was especially important, as the current political climate is extremely polarized and many people have lost a lot of faith in the political system. Having a figure who claims to be for all Americans as opposed to just their supporters is a great way to garner faith.

Conclusion

In conclusion, an acceptance speech for presidential candidacy has the power and potential to set the tone for how the climate of a country will turn out if the candidate does indeed secure the presidency, which Biden did. Because of the well-utilized strategies in his speech, he was able to create an optimistic future for his leadership and restore faith in the potential for a united country.

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