

## TALK LIKE TRUMP ( Ted video)

Focus of the video: understanding populist speech and how to overcome it.

Before the video it is important to define: **populism** and **demagogue**.

**Populism** → political program or movement that champions the common person, usually by favourable contrast with an elite.

- = you have two opposing forces → 1. The people 2. The elite

→ usually combines elements of the left and the right

- = populist tendencies can come from any side of the political spectrum

**Demagogue** → has 2 definitions

1. a leader who makes use of popular prejudices and false claims and promises in order to gain power
2. a leader championing the cause of the common people in ancient times
  - It's a more historical meaning of this word.
  - The original term ment in Greek: leader (agogos) of the people (demos)

→ In 1838, American author James Fenimore Cooper **listed 4 characteristics of an average demagogue**:

1. they posture as men of the common people; (= they claim they are man of the common people)
2. they trigger waves of powerful emotion; (=they aim to have a powerful emotional impact on the audience)
3. they manipulate this emotion for political benefit;
4. they threaten or break established principles of governance. (with their words or political agenda)

This kind of politicians emphasize the establishment and some accepted ways of doing things and managing a country which are wrong, they've led to no good, they have brought no benefits to the people and so they should be completely overturned.

### TRUTHINESS

Definition → refers to the quality of **seeming to be true** but not necessarily or actually true according to known facts.

Origin of the term → In 2005, Stephen Colbert became the host of the eponymous late-night talk show, *The Colbert Report*. During his first show, Colbert presented the word *truthiness*, using it to express a kind of "truth" that is derived from a visceral feeling rather than from any known facts.

Definition of "Factoids" → something that is untrue or unproven but is presented as fact and believed to be true because of constant repetition.

Definition of "Pundit" → a person who is an expert or authority, or one who is treated as such, or one who is knowledgeable in an area or assumed to be so.

### NOTES ABOUT THE VIDEO "Talk like Trump - understanding populist speech and how to overcome it"

Populism is on the rise. Two recent examples of this is what happened in 2016 with the election of Trump as Us President and with Brexit (the speaker thinks that both of these are misfortunes).

**How** come this can be so **successful**? There are two main reasons:

1. There are real **problems** that our governance model, based largely on nation states, has increasingly been **unable to solve**. (like rise in immigration, or terrorism, or the rise in inequality, or massive tax evasion). **What has happened?** That while the **economy has been globalized, our governance models** have not. They **have stayed national**, and **so** they are increasingly **incapable of** addressing those globalized **problems**. That leads to frustration and anger, and then people fall for demagogues who promise something better.

2. **Communication** → Many successful populists are great communicators. Donald Trump is insulting everyone, from his opponents, to the media, to the courts, to women, to minorities. What does it mean? Is he a good speaker?

It's important to understand what makes Trump, and other populists, an effective speaker, and then use those weapons against them. Like Obama, Trump is a great storyteller. He appeals very effectively to emotions. In order to deal with populism at the level of communication, we first need to understand its narrative. There are three differences of how populists talk, and how liberals or globalists or - "friends of the open society" talk.

1. Populists look very differently at the future
  2. They look very differently at how the world works
  3. They look very differently at how society works
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1. Liberals, globalists, the classic liberal narrative is one that goes like this: "The **future** will always be better than the past, and the present." And it's a narrative that people have believed for a very long time. "You and your kids will be better off in the **future**. And we can all work together to make this happen." So this is kind of the basic vision and the basic promise.
  1. Now, if we look at Trump's campaign slogan, "Make America great **again**", you already see the difference. And if we look at, for example, Marine Le Pen's statement here, the quote: "Only the Front National plans to **give back** to France those essential weapons [such as control of its national budget and borders]"

This basically is the attempt to take us back to the **past**. The vision of the future of the populists is the return to an idealized past. It's a - you could say - a "**nostalgic vision**". "You people have lost something of value, and I'm going to give it back to you."

People are uncertain about the future so they go back to the past.

2. The classic liberal idea is that we should try to get away from short-term thinking, from intuition, from gut feeling and so on, to something larger, like universal values, universal principles maybe, universal human rights, to scientific reasoning. This movement of the liberals is an opening up to the world.
2. The movement of the populists is exactly the opposite: it's a closing down to the world. And they don't believe in universal things, in general, or scientific evidence or reasoning and so on. They say, "We trust only common sense, our gut feeling, and what's important is a good national attitude." We abandon those ideals of liberalism and we go back to something like **truthiness**: when something feels right, it must be right.
3. The liberal narrative is **inclusive**. Everyone can join into the story, into the vision, and become a part of it. And the "**us**" that the liberals define is one that **can grow over time**.
3. Look then at the statements of the populists, what you see is something like this: "When Mexico sends its people, they're not sending their best. They send people that have lots of problems. They bring drugs, they bring crime, they're rapists" and so on. (They see the others as enemies). And the "**us**", it's very **exclusive**, and only the populist determines if you are part of "the people", the "real people", the "hard-working Americans", or not.

**PROBLEM** → Then you come to a point where Erdogan, for example, says, like, "We are the people. Who are you?" **You don't matter.** And there is the true **danger of populism. It's delegitimizing everyone who is not of the same opinion** and who is not part of how they define "the people". So populists want to divide us.

What can we do about it? **How can we fight** the populists effectively? We can use the "Trumple the Trump" approach. This approach has 3 elements:

1. **Tell stories** that are properly framed and worded → People think in stories. We think about abstract things, such as the government, or political leaders, in terms of things we know. Someone may say "we need to build a wall", "we need to ban Muslims from coming to the United States", it's very bad to just negate the frame and to say, like, "No, we shouldn't do this." Because, by negating the frame, you strengthen the frame. What you should do instead is **activate your frame with your own story.**
  - 2 examples:
    - if you talk about climate change, well change might be good even, right? I mean, a bit of change, here and there, and a bit warmer ... might be even nicer in a country like Germany ... So, you should instead talk clearly about "the climate catastrophe". That is a very different image, and a very different effect that those words have.
    - don't talk about "the people". Better: about "some people", "some citizens", or "many citizens"
  
2. **Expose** the flawed logic of populism. → If you are in a debate reveal openly how the populist logic works. So, if they want to take us back to a past that never existed and that will probably never exist, if they want to divide us, and the real enemy is not the Chinese or Mexicans who are taking away our jobs, but actually division itself
  - 1 example
    - Someone who did this remarkably well was Emmanuel **Macron**, now President of France, who in the debate with Marine Le Pen said, "The high priestess of fear is sitting in front of me. Mme Le Pen's idea is that we're going to leave Europe because the others can make it, but we can't. In the face of this spirit of defeat, I am for the spirit of conquest, because France has always succeeded." There you see how **he calls out the logic that the populists live from fear and anger, and moves over to his own project, his own ideas.**
  
3. You have to **have your own project**, your own vision. → Offer a strong, positive vision:
  - Should be inclusive
  - It needs to define new ways of participation in society
  - Outline a positive role for technology → positive effects technology can have on all our lives if it is managed well, implemented well, and if the benefits are spread across the board equally in society.

## Cas Mudde – The Populist Zeitgeist

### DEFINING THE UNDEFINABLE

In the public debate there are **two** dominant **interpretations** of the term populism, both are highly charged and **negative**.

1. highly **emotional** and simplistic discourse that is directed at the **'gut feelings'** of the people.
2. populism is used to describe opportunistic policies with the **aim of (quickly) pleasing** the people/voters – and so **'buying'** their **support** rather than looking (rationally) for the 'best option'. (Examples are lowering taxes just before elections)

According to the author the definition of populism is “ an **ideology** that considers **society** to be ultimately **separated** into **two** antagonistic **groups**, ‘the pure people’ versus ‘the corrupt elite’, and which argues that politics should be an expression of the *volonté générale* (general will) of the people”

- Populism, so defined, has two opposites: elitism and pluralism.

Populism is **moralistic** rather than programmatic. Essential to the discourse of the populist is the normative distinction between ‘the elite’ and ‘the people’, not the empirical difference in behaviour or attitudes. For populists there are only friends and foes. Opponents are not just people with different priorities and values, they are evil! Consequently, **compromise is impossible**, as it ‘corrupts’ the purity

The **people** of the populists are an ‘imagined community’, much like the nation of the nationalists.<sup>23</sup> At the same time, the notion of the heartland does not overcome the main problem of the people, its **vagueness**.

What is often clearer is **who and what populists are against**. In liberal democratic systems, where political parties are the main actors in the process of representation, it comes as no surprise that in the propaganda of populists, anti-party sentiments play a prominent role.

- Populists argue that political parties corrupt the link between leaders and supporters, create artificial divisions within the homogeneous people, and put their own interests above those of the people.
- However, as populists are reformist rather than revolutionary, they do not oppose political parties per se. Rather, they oppose the established parties, call for (or claim to be) a new kind of party; i.e. they express populist anti-party sentiments rather than extremist anti-party sentiments.