

1 What is the topic about?

This topic has two sides:

- Side 1: What are the methods, used by political demagogues?
- Side 2: Why are these methods successful for taking people on the hook? Under which circumstances do people abandon fact guided thinking? What would make people resilient against these methods?

Deliberate political misinformation does not want to convince anyone of the accuracy of the false information. The goals are different. Complaining that misinformation or disinformation are lies, simply misses the point.

2 The Methods of Demagogues (list not complete)

1. Repeat often and firmly the same wrong assertion without trying to justify it by facts.
Normally people would not do so. The firm repetition pushes the question whether the assertion may perhaps be right.
Most prominent example: "The stolen election."
2. Shake trust in facts, in persons, in sources, in reports, in methods, and in science, even when trust is justified.
Most prominent example for mistrust in methods: "Wrong election count"
If people cannot find something anymore which they can trust, then they lose the base for fact guided thinking and their own competence of judgement. The justification of own orientation becomes impossible. Then people tend to follow a leader, who told them whom to trust and whom not. (gaining followers by abandoning fact guided thinking)
3. One method to prevent growing trust, is to appear as very critical (which also is a valid attitude in science). In this context it says: these good reasons are not enough to trust. The main point is to shift the need to verify to the other side and then never find it enough. Demagogues do not want to come into the position to verify, as they do not seriously want to argue in a consequent way based on facts. One should be skeptical if good reasons are looked at too critical.
4. Discredit and demean people, sources, methods and institutions, whose influence demagogues want to destroy. Facts persons and institutions, which may contradict must not have credibility. (example "Lying press"). In this way candidates are labeled as "not credible by definition". The dialogue is interrupted, listening to others is denied. Mutual understanding is not wanted. Followers are shielded against being confronted with facts or being motivated to fact guided thinking. A division-line.
5. Discriminate and demean people, habits, groups, methods, and institutions for which you do not want to show understanding or empathy. They are candidates for bashing along division-boundaries in society. Consequently, beyond these boundaries an increased use of violence will be accepted and will occur.
6. Create anger with wrong allegations and without giving reasons, in order to channel people's energy against your targets, when they become the targets of their anger. E.g. nobody votes for what one is angry about (example: Brexit against EU).
Unjustified anger will prevail, the detail which once created the anger may be forgotten soon.
7. Accuse others of what you intend to do yourself.
The loudest critics of something will not be assumed to do exactly this now or soon.

Methods and Purpose of intended political Disorientation.

8. Deny challenges if they require cooperation which in the end may weaken your influence.
(example: human caused climate change)
9. Corruption and threats are also important means for populist demagogues, in order to prevent contradiction, reminding of a context of organized crime.

3 Under which Conditions do these Methods work?

3.1 The underlying Offers of demagogic Methods

Demagogic methods do not work automatically. They only work with your agreement and cooperation. You must be willing to follow them without checking if they are right or wrong. Instead, you must accept what they offer.

- They offer (but cannot keep the promise) to shield you from complicated problems and related undesired and uncomfortable side effects.
- In any way they offer you that you need not to adapt or change. Others have to adapt.
- They offer isolation from others without needing to care about them or respecting their interests in a compromise. (“anti-wokeness”, instead of cooperating and master a challenge with united forces).
- They offer to identify who is guilty of having caused a problem. When identified “consequences” will be executed.
- They offer to deny, that there is any challenge if an existing challenge is not practical for their politics. Also, in this case they offer, that you need not to change or adapt.
- They offer, that you may be one of those who are guilty if you dare to contradict. Then you could become a traitor.

The before mentioned methods only work in context of these offers. They offer a new (not really qualified) orientation and a (doubtful) perspective to master challenges without the need to understand them and with a strategy “me and my group against all others”. Who can believe that this will work? This can only destroy. Maybe it is better to be resilient against these offers.

3.2 Conditions for flowering Demagogy

Demagogic methods work best in situations of (unavoidable) rapid change, which requires adaptation and restructuring, especially if the reasons for change are multiple and difficult to understand. This causes a loss of orientation, and it causes uncertainty. This is what demagogy needs. What is the challenge?

- The direction in which the change process will go may not be well understood. This causes a **loss of orientation**.
- Also, this change-process will have winners and losers and you may not see on which side you will end up. This creates **uncertainty and fear**.
- The challenge is felt too big to be controlled by yourself. You **feel dependent on uncontrollable factors** and players. Old rules need to be changed. **Old trust disappears. Substitutes are not yet visible**.
- **People are not satisfied with their situation**, independent of their economic position. Being poor does not mean, that you cannot be resilient against demagogues. Being wealthy does not mean that you are resilient. Yet there is a longing for regaining control and stability for your life.
- People are looking for new trust, new reliable orientation for their own action, and a new perspective to reduce fear and the risk of economic hardship. Or they simply do not want to change and adapt at all.
- A trustable leadership is wanted to manage the given situation by providing an acceptable perspective.

The main purposes of demagogue methods are the creation of disorientation, uncertainty, mistrust, anger, dividing society by pitting of one group against the others, and to prevent people from fact guided thinking and to use their own power of judgement. Demagogues want people to follow, undisturbed by facts and not disturbing their government. It will not be a democratic government.