

# Technologization of Discourse: Technologization of American Foreign Policy Discourse in the Middle East in President Donald Trump's Selected Speeches

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## Abstract

Discourse of the powerful is normally characterised as hegemonic since it lacks, whether consciously or unconsciously, familiarity of historical events and intrinsic knowledge of culture. President Trump's disregard for or over-simplification of the complexities of Middle Eastern cultures in particular, their history, politics, and political geography, his belligerent and rapacious entrepreneurial rhetoric, his authoritarian stance on many global issues combined with the superficial allure of his 'common man' persona, and his hegemonising of many of the world's nations make him the antithesis of the conventional politician. The process of technologization of Donald Trump's discourse that has been influencing the discursive practices surrounding Middle East politics and American foreign policy has given rise to a type of discourse that is unprecedented in modern time American presidencies, a discourse rooted in threat, disregard, and humiliation. Trump's disrespect to heads of states entails disrespect of their people, history, and culture, and this is prevalent in almost all his speeches. This paper focuses primarily on Trump's rhetorical styles in his 28th September 2018 address to the UN, the May 14th 2018 address on the U.S. Embassy move from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem, and finally the April 13th 2018 address on the Syrian airstrikes.

**Keywords:** technologization, discourse, hegemony, control, discursive practices, humiliation, culture

## 1. Introduction

Control and hegemony are a powerful discursive tool in the globalisation process of the new world. Technologization of discourse is a means of creating hegemony by consensus. Through this process, discourse technologists (the elites) redesign diverse types of discourses and work processes, turning them into actual representations of consensual praxis. In order for these foreign newly encroached-in discursive practices to find circulation and public support, they require the initiation and the financial and moral support of the powerful people in the society. Language and history are contingent, but wholly human: "Human languages are human creations" (Rorty, 1989, p. 5): "all vocabularies, even those which contain the words which we take most seriously, the ones most essential to our self-descriptions are human creations" (ibid., p. 53). de Man argued that all words and concepts are metaphorical at root. Language is therefore essentially figural or rhetorical rather than intentional, expressive, or referential, and "the paradigm for all texts consists of a figure (or a system of figures) and its deconstruction" (De Man, 1979, p. 205). Disregarding the notions of intention, representation, inference, relevance, context, textual cohesion, mutual assumptions, and so on, de Man argued that there must always be an ironic disparity between meaning and intent. Rhetoric produces a divergence between grammar and referential meaning, which "opens up vertiginous possibilities of referential aberration", wreaks "epistemological damage", and renders the propositional content of utterances undecidable (ibid., p. 10). Here the difference lies between two approaches to language. On the one hand, language is human as it is the creation of humans and their realities. On the other hand, language is inhuman since the conception and understanding of language is not always decisive and accurate. The metaphorical and rhetorical nature of language includes language users' attempts to persuade through manipulation, i.e., influencing the feelings. The world itself and events cannot always be clearly or adequately expressed by language since the world is something and language is something else. This may include but not limited to linguistic structure and linguistic play and tensions. Even feelings, desires, needs, and wishes cannot be expressed adequately by language. Perlocutionary acts done by the use of language, i.e., what is done *by* using language, is so radically unpredicted and out of our control that they cannot

be assimilated to the human at all. This is caused by the difference between the meaning and the intention. Since language is partly inhuman, language users may have subjective purposes to achieve by using language. Do the unhuman properties of language-use give a person the license to be non-human, unethical, peevish, disrespectful, deceptive, officious, and humiliating?

## 2. Technologization of Discourse

The notion ‘technologization’ was coined by Norman Fairclough, who was influenced by Michel Foucault’s ideas about the synthesis of power, knowledge and discourse. Following Foucault’s and Fairclough’s works, we can come to the conclusion that technologization is the process of exercising power and influence over people’s lives and opinions through certain linguistic tools.

Technologization corresponds to the power of an expert/technologist that is effectively realized through the right to generate the discourse, a certain social position from which to address it to the audience, and special knowledge of how to tune the addressees in (Kaplunenko, 2007). The original idea emerged in Swales’ Genre Analysis—the discourse community as a socio-rhetorical network that forms in order to work towards sets of common goals, that produces specific texts and has its own language, and that is open only to those who are able to speak the language (Swales, 1990, pp. 9–10). In linking a certain discourse with a certain expert community, it is not simply a question of a particular group of experts having an ideology (as a common sets of goals) and a language. It is what the experts want and know how to impose on the audience. This allows us to take a perspective on the expert techniques that are used to inculcate ideological ideas unnoticeably for the addressers of the discourse and highlight the linguistic aspect of technologies presented in scientific studies.

In semiotic terms, technologization of discourse could be described as a set procedure of manipulation with signs. When speaking about competent knowledge of signs, it would be logical to suppose that technologization in this sense lies in the syntax as well as rhetorical discourse progression. With regard to technologization, the definition of ‘syntax’-‘formal relations of signs to one another’, could be determined as an order of signs constructed and established by an expert. I relate technologization to manipulation for a reason. Manipulation in western discourse is widely associated with media and the coined term ‘media manipulation’. Although there exist many more terms which describe all different sorts of exertion of social influence to the advantage of the manipulator such as coercive persuasion, brainwashing, re-education, thought-control, mind control, thought reform, indoctrination, propaganda etc., the term ‘manipulation’ serves best to explain the very nature of the persuasion process. The etymological origin of the term ‘manipulation’—skillful handling of objects—prompts that the origin of ‘handling’ of objects as well as minds lies in the expert operations with signs to create specific orders of signs with a view to imposing a certain ‘world view’.

## 3. Discourse in Social Contexts

Society, in general, is a combination of systems that are interacting dynamically, and this interaction forms the basis of society and social change. Fairclough’s (1992) analytic procedures include a three-tiered model that includes description of discourse (intensive research), the formal characteristics of the text. The second stage is interpretation (the actual change), which examines the connections between text and interaction, assuming the text as the product of a process. The last stage is explanation (training staff to put the new discourse into action). This stage focuses mainly on interaction and social context. The societal domain includes the meta-narratives that shape and are shaped by the institutional and local domains. All of which interacting together to form a system of discourse and discursive practices in the society.

In the same perspective, Fairclough and Wodak (1997) consider the social context of language use to be of great importance and view language as a form of social practice. This denotes a dialectical relationship between the discursive practice and the situation it occurs in. Accordingly, the importance of studying discourse and its functions in society is highlighted. The processes of producing discourse, including the production and the distribution of discourse within different social practices have to be examined closely to reveal their role in the discursive practices in society.

## 4. Power

Power is often related to domination. It is a significant theme in different fields especially in politics. Finsen (2016) claims that power plays an important role in international relations and in international politics in addition to its role in the field of linguistics. Finsen (2016, p. 15) states that “Actors in power can use language to exert their influence”. In other words, the powerful has the means of controlling the use of language within their societies using a variety of methods that include language planning. Talbot et al. (2003) have emphasised the

importance of language in articulating, maintaining and undermining relations of power that exist in in society, whether on the local, institutional, national or global levels.

Wright (2000) has argued that language use reveals the changing balances of political power. To explain that, Wright clarifies that many languages have been a *lingua franca* in Europe and possessed great power throughout the continent. Speakers of these languages were conceived as having greater influence in communities. Similarly, Romaine (1994) has argued the ability of the powerful groups in a society to force their language on the less powerful.

Notably, power that is manifested in language is not always clear and obvious. Talbot et al. (2003, p. 2) have pointed out that “hegemony implies a hidden or covert operation of power. It refers to control through consent”. This means that the dominant group is using language that has hidden agenda and interests, which are to be seen as common sense. I do not know to which extent the slogan that “language is powerless unless it is used by powerful people” is valid. Instead, I tend to agree more with “language is both powerful and powerless, and powerful people use powerful language while powerless people use powerless language”.

### 5. Power in Discourse

Tannen (1987, p. 5) suggests that “the notion of power or control is always metaphoric when applied to interaction and discourse”. That implies that discourses display hidden agenda as holding manifestations or embodiments of power within. According to Tannen (1987), people undertake different roles within different discourses and take different kinds of power and different ways of practicing it. Since discourse is socially constructed, power is manifested within it to a large degree.

Mayr (2008) emphasized that CDA views discourse as a form of social practice. Mayr (2008) also well explained Weber’s (1914) point that power is not only present in a political form, but also in other sovereign establishments. This power is communicated in symbols within discourse. Many CDA studies focus on the aspect of language/power relationship, viewing language as a setting for power and dominance, Fairclough (1994, p. 50) argues that power is “implicit within everyday social practices at every level in all domains of life”. In the same way, Chaika (1994, p. 4) stipulates that discourses are “effective ways to maintaining power relations within society”. Most CDA studies are guided by Fairclough’s model which adheres to the way language encrypts power relations in discourse analysis. They deal with discourse as a context for power to be recognised, maintained and preserved. Since discourse is the carrier of ideology, manifestation of power and dominance is totally dependent on the way powerful people word their messages and the progression of discourse in a particular social context.

### 6. Textual Analysis

Though comparatively more guarded and formal than previous speeches, Donald Trump’s address to the UN General Assembly in 2018 displays many of the same rhetorical styles and discursive strategies. Whether intentional or not, strategic or not, Trump replaces the reasoned, diplomatic, and instrumental discourse of more conventional political speeches with the immediate sensual experience of highly emotive rhetoric replete with hyperbole, superlatives, absolutes, and ad hominem. He proselytizes on liberty, individualism, sovereignty, and peace, and presents a quixotic portrait of America as a redeeming, providential force striving valiantly and self-effacingly to rid us of the antagonisms, divisions, and inhumanities of a violent and imperfect world: ‘Thanks to the United States military [...] blood-thirsty killers known as ISIS have now been driven out from the territory’; ‘we have engaged with North Korea to replace the specter of conflict with a bold and new push for peace [...] The missiles and rockets are no longer flying in all directions’; ‘Following my trip to Saudi Arabia last year, the Gulf countries opened a new center to target terrorist financing’; ‘In recognition of every sovereign state to determine its own capital, I moved the U.S. Embassy in Israel to Jerusalem’; and finally, Trump’s idealized narration of U.S. sanctions on Iran and the withdrawal from the 2015 Nuclear Deal in terms of ‘support[ing] Iran’s people as they struggle to reclaim their religious and righteous destiny’. However, his depiction of America is noticeably paradoxical, added to which is the similarly conflicted rhetorical style, which is at times hegemonic and entrepreneurial, and at others sentimental and idealistic. He both lauds and laments America’s valor and victimhood, narrating America as the world’s perennially exploited philanthropic nation, sacrificially good and repeatedly extorted, ‘abuse[d]’, and ‘victimized’: ‘the United States is the world’s largest giver in the world, by far, of foreign aid. But few give anything to us’; ‘we are only going to give foreign aid to those who respect us and, frankly, are our friends’, he remarks, as coldly entrepreneurial as it is comically petulant; and in a plaintive but ultimately revisionist supplication implying America is facing some sort of immediate, existential threat, says ‘we only ask that you honor sovereignty in return.’ At times he bewails the pathos of a beleaguered martyr-state and at times lauds America’s Herculean stature, boasting a ‘military [...]

more powerful than ever before' and an 'economy [...] largest, by far, on Earth'. Likewise, his self-portrayal is riven with the same contradictions: despite his crude nativist and isolationist sentiments—'America is governed by Americans. We reject the ideology of globalism, and we embrace the doctrine of patriotism'—he is keen, and paradoxically (and uncharacteristically) so, to present himself as an internationalist, a left-wing ideologue, the prophet of the idea of liberty and peace for all, and a seer of a utopian future: 'I presented a vision to achieve a brighter future for all of humanity.'

As with many of his speeches, his language is egocentric, paratactic, repetitive, and subjective. He does not speak in logically progressing paragraphs; he does not favour nuanced, diplomatic speech; he does not refrain from self-aggrandisement and absolutes—'my administration has accomplished more than almost any administration in the history of our country'—nor does he refrain from exalted and revisionist depictions of America as the world's veritable saviour and the paragon of peace (despite being in a state of war for 222 years of the country's 239 year history). He does not offer any pragmatic, real-world solutions, but rather a litany of abstract, idealized concepts, invoking God, ideas of righteousness, destiny, and sacrifice. The speech is beset by romanticist ideas of independence, individualism, and sovereignty, of 'the blessings of safety, prosperity, and peace'. Trump's narration of domestic and global politics is not diplomatic, pragmatic, or especially nuanced; he favours emotion over problem-solving, vitriolic over diplomatic speech. He does not offer a conventionally 'presidential' narration on, for example, America's diplomatic relations with Iran, Syria, or North Korea, but instead relies on hyperbole, abstractions, and ad hominem. He speaks not so much in political or diplomatic as existential, metaphysical terms—'mayhem', 'bloodthirsty killers', 'annihilation', 'havoc and slaughter'—against which we see the rather vapid idealizing in words and phrases such as 'belief', 'vision', 'compassion', 'destiny', 'sacrifice', 'the majesty of freedom', 'the dignity of the individual', 'the glory of God', 'the hearts of patriots and the souls of nations'—certainly reminiscent of the French Revolution's *Liberté, égalité, fraternité*, the Trumpian equivalent to which is the alliterative, and far more chauvinistic 'patriotism, prosperity, and pride'.

While Trump's discourse may appear more politically naive and at times hubristic in comparison to more orthodox political styles, it does not necessarily translate into political weakness. He assumes a rather authoritarian stance on morality, taking advantage of this UN address to deliver moral edicts, as if peaching a revealed truth that can admit no dissidence: 'We must pursue peace without fear, hope without despair, and security without apology'; 'we cannot allow the world's leading sponsor of terrorism to possess the planet's most dangerous weapons'; 'we ask all nations to isolate Iran's regime'; 'our shared goals must be the de-escalation of military conflict'; 'we will no longer tolerate such abuse'. His language implies, or demands, the subordination of other nations to America's foreign and economic policy, both of which are narrated instead as absolutist moral imperatives. The subordinate role of other nations is implied in his narration of America's role in quelling the threat from ISIS in which he states: 'thanks to the United States military and our partnership with many of your nations, I am pleased to report that the bloodthirsty killers known as ISIS have been driven out from the territory'. The phraseology 'our partnership with many of your nations' as compared to 'your partnership with the United States', combined with his failure to even name the countries involved, create a vision in which America is, once again, the mythic superhero nation fighting evil of metaphysical proportions against pantomime villains along with the merely peripheral, possibly inconsequential, help of unspecified sidekick nations. 'But rest assured' he continues, as if pacifying traumatized and bewildered children, 'the United States will respond if chemical weapons are deployed by the Assad regime'. This condescending, presumptuous, and messianic rhetoric serves to reiterate Trump's vision of America as the world's moral arbiter, as the world's most dominant nation to which other nations must subordinate themselves. This is repeated on an ideological level also in his clichéd sentiments on individualism, and more gratuitously his application of his own campaign slogan to other countries: 'make their countries great again'. Paradoxically, though Trump's rhetoric is largely isolationist and though he claims to celebrate the 'distinct culture' of every nation and 'the right of every nation in this room to pursue its own customs, beliefs, and traditions', he tends to subsume global problems into America's own domestic problems, and to view other countries through the lens of what is, in reality, a quintessentially 'western' definition of 'freedom'.

Trump's idiosyncratic fixation on and fear of immigration, for example, dominates his portrayal of other countries in which he envisions the selfsame existential threats, hence his demand that they 'make their countries great again'. He speaks of patriotism as if it were an existential necessity, and goes on to insist that the politicians and emissaries present are likewise patriots: 'inside everyone in this great chamber today, and everyone listening all around the globe, there is the heart of a patriot, there is the heart of a patriot that feels the same powerful love for your nation, the same intense loyalty to your homeland.' Similarly, Trump's strident efforts to assert America's ideological orientations and particularisms are contradicted by his desire to subsume

all nations under America's—or his own—vision of being 'great', appealing to all countries to pursue or reflect what he celebrated as America's own unique vision of 'peace, prosperity, and pride'. He does not only take an authoritarian stance on the level of policy, but ideology as well. The modal verbs/phrases, combined with the inclusive 'we' and 'our', throughout this speech serve either to emphasize American hegemony—specifically its economic or military clout—or to reiterate the obligation of other nations to conform to Trump's political and ideological stance on world events: 'our shared goals must be the de-escalation of military conflict'; 'every solution to the humanitarian crisis in Syria must also include a strategy to address the brutal regime'; 'we cannot allow the world's leading sponsor of terrorism to possess the planet's most dangerous weapons'; 'we will not be held hostage to old dogmas'; 'the United States will not be taken advantage of'; 'we will no longer tolerate such abuse. We will not allow our workers to be victimized'; 'we will never surrender'; 'we must pursue' and so forth.

Technologization of discourse necessitate that the subject of discourse is reconstructed in a way that hegemony is put to work. When the personal pronoun '*I*' becomes the center of the subject of discourse, no ideas are produced; instead, discursive practices evolve under the mercy of the experts (elites or powerful). Consequently, the presence of the '*I*' becomes more important than the subject itself. This is prevalent in Trump's discourse where the first-person pronoun '*I*' along with the inclusive pronouns '*we*' and '*our*' are always present, and national and international achievements are always, implicitly or explicitly, attributed to him personally. The ubiquity of the first-person pronoun in almost all Trump's speeches preclude, eclipse, or undermine any involvement—the expression of opinions, the proffering of a response—on the part of the audience. This has become characteristic of a number of Trump's recent press conferences in which, when confronted with comments or questions from journalists he accuses individuals or entire new broadcasters of disseminating 'fake' news, misinformation or outright fabrications. One of the more infamous occasions was Trump's brusque shutting up of CNN journalist Jim Acosta (November, 2018) who subsequently lost accreditation of access to the White House. Trump's monopoly on the truth, which sees him dismissing any unwelcome or critical response, comment, or question as 'fake', and his monopoly on victimhood in which he claims to be unfairly maligned and falsely accused is an old fascist strategy. Again, he places himself, and in quite a personal, occasionally theatrical way, at the center of every political debate, resulting in Trump, as an individual, detracting attention constantly from subject under discussion and in so doing creating, at times, quite a chaotic, carnivalesque atmosphere.

By the same token, his authoritarian stance, subordination of other nations, absolutist imperatives, and individualistic superiority are all important pillars on which Trump's discourse is built and progressed. More often than not, his tweets and remarks show flagrant disrespect and disregard for heads of states and the sovereignty of their countries especially when it comes to Arab countries: 'Saudi Arabia has now agreed to spend the necessary money needed to help rebuild Syria, instead of the United States. See? Isn't it nice when immensely wealthy countries help rebuild their neighbors rather than a Great Country, the U.S., that is 5000 miles away. Thanks to Saudi A!'; Donald Trump has warned Saudi Arabia's King Salman he would not last "two weeks" without the backing of the US military. Speaking at a campaign rally in Mississippi, he said: 'I love the king, King Salman, but I said: 'King, we're protecting you. You might not be there for two weeks without us. You have to pay for your military, you have to pay'; 'let me put it this way—I want to be very blunt with you, Graham told Fox News, 'if it weren't for the United States they'd be speaking Farsi [Iran's national language] in about a week in Saudi Arabia'. His comments echo those of President Donald Trump who has criticized Saudi Arabia for not contributing enough to the 'US defence' of the kingdom; 'during his presidential announcement speech on June 16, 2015, Trump said, 'I will build a great, great wall on our southern border. And I will have Mexico pay for that wall'; 'with Mexico being one of the highest crime Nations in the world, we must have THE WALL. Mexico will pay for it through reimbursement/other.'

Trump's hegemonies and ethnocentrism are clear to see in his habit of invoking the entire world when speaking of America's domestic problems, or when asserting American values. It is also manifest in his penchant for categorical assertions, combined with the plural 'we', and his habit of reducing the world's political, economic, and ideological complexities and antagonisms to a rather simplistic, instrumentalist system of cause and effect. The speech functions as little more than a nativist manifesto, a clichéd, romanticized paean to cultural and national chauvinism in which he regurgitates many of his old campaign promises which he then attempts to give both credence and universality to by sensationalizing global threats and subsuming the entire world under his own political and ideological hang-ups: 'all nations of the world should resist socialism and the misery that it brings to everyone'; 'the ICC claims near-universal jurisdiction over the citizens of every country'; 'around the world, responsible nations must defend against threats to sovereignty not just from global governance but also from other, new forms of coercion and domination'; 'OPEC and OPEC nations are, as usual, ripping off the rest

of the world'; 'nobody should like it'; and speaking of foreign investments and national security, 'you need to do it for your own protection'. Trump's dominance is also manifest in his linguistic choices, namely his penchant for hyperbole, superlatives, vitriol, and absolutes; his tendency to malign or vilify entire nations; to divide the political landscape in terms of 'friends' and undeserving 'enemies', victory and defeat, heroes and terrorists, valour and criminality; and his reductionist portrayals of international relations as either 'good' or 'not good', 'horrible' or 'great'—all of which suggest a naive but ultimately authoritarian and intensely subjective outlook on the world. It is perhaps through his use of hyperbole, subjectivity, and directness that his perceived dominance is expressed and, perhaps more implicitly, his condescension or vilification of other nations. For example, referring to foreign aid, he does not, in a more persuasive or diplomatic vein, appeal to nations for collaboration, but 'expect[s] other countries to pay their fair share', akin to a parent castigating a child, and when alluding to America's efforts to denuclearize North Korea, he labels it, and quite condescendingly, 'a moment that is actually far greater than people would understand'. Other instances where his outlook is as much subjective as absolutist include several linguistic choices that render global politics and international relations somewhat more personalized and unguarded and less formal and erudite than we would conventionally expect: instead of talking of plans or proposals, he speaks of 'vision' and belief; instead of 'allies' he speaks of 'friends'; instead of criticism or opposition he speaks of 'bashing America and its many friends'; instead of maintaining diplomatic relations he speaks of 'standing up for' peoples and nations; instead of adherence to political or economic policies/agreements he speaks of 'play[ing] by the rules'; instead of exploitation he speaks crudely of 'ripping off' or 'tak[ing] advantage of' nations'; and finally, instead of speaking of cooperation, he petitions nations to 'step up, get involved' as if urging recalcitrant children to participate in a charity bike ride. This type of speech is hegemonic in the sense that Trump in effect divests the emissaries present at the UN of any need to infer or interpret since he does not deliberate, debate, imply, or suggest, but rather commands, dictates, states, and proselytizes, leaving little need for those present to infer, deliberate, or interpret. There is no mutuality, reciprocity, or respect implied in his style of speech, and no symbolic exchange between speaker and listener.

Trump's use of more informal, dialogic speech, combined with his penchant for sensation over erudition, vitriol over diplomacy, subjective over impartial speech, undoubtedly contributes to superficial allure of his 'common man' persona—he is, to all extents and purposes, the antithesis of the conventional politician, and revels in reminding people of it. His speech, characteristically hegemonic and ethnocentric, brings an intimacy and incongruous flair to a political forum in which formal, diplomatic, and more nuanced (at times euphemistic) speech is perhaps more conventional. While Trump does sensationalise global threats, his linguistic choices have the paradoxical effect of rendering everything somehow more quotidian and, by extension, relatable. His use of colloquial and idiomatic speech—'play[ing] by the rules', 'pay[ing] their fair share', and 'ripping off' for example—takes international politics from the formal, public domain into the unguarded, private, spontaneous, and often quite personalised sphere of Trump the individual as opposed to Trump the emissary. The spontaneous, emotive, and unabashed quality of many of his speeches contribute not only to his 'common man' persona but his claims to authenticity—which, by extension, functions as an attack on the political orthodoxies of his contemporaries and predecessors as, by contrast, mendacious. The erudition and diplomatic speech of Obama or Clinton, by contrast, are viewed by Trump as nefarious—hence the moniker 'Crooked Hillary'—and to celebrate and justify his particular rhetorical style has labelled the more traditional political discourse as either weak or perfidious. His salacious attacks on political opponents, his division of the world's nations into deserving friends and undeserving enemies, but mostly his reduction of international affairs and world events into clear-cut causalities, underwhelming in their simplicity, function to assert his primacy, his efficacy, his domination on the world stage. He gives little attention to the political, cultural, and historical complexities and sensitivities that, after all, necessitate careful diplomacy. This is overwhelmingly the case in his 2018 announcement of Jerusalem of the capital of Israel. In the context of a region characterised by overwhelming religious significance to three monotheistic religions, overwhelming geopolitical complexities, and centuries of imperial carve-ups and colonial rule, Trump evangelizes on peace and conflict with the definitiveness and self-assurance of one who, to put it crudely, knows little (arguably nothing) about the history of the region and the many factors—religious, political, cultural, and historical—that have contributed to one of the most complex and intractable conflicts of modern history.

Trump's overtures are beset with the same abstractions and reductionist thinking as many of his speeches. He euphemizes the Israel-Palestine conflict as a mere 'disagreement', and trivializes what he views as the tedium and repetitiveness of simply 'old challenges', 'old assumptions', and 'old fights that have become so totally predictable.' By contrast he credits himself with courageous and innovative thinking, with 'fresh thinking', 'open eyes', and 'new approach[es]', as if the complex and protracted nature of the Israel-Palestine conflict were merely the result of former presidents' unimaginative or derivative thought processes. Trump's pejorative

characterisation of the conflict and previous strategies or negotiations as simply 'old' also reaffirms his perception that difference/novelty, in and of itself, is good. This dismissive attitude extends to his portrayal of his predecessors, characterizing their disinclination to relocate the US Embassy and declare Jerusalem the capital of Israel as derivative, unjust, and cowardly: 'some say they lacked courage', he remarks.

Trump ignores the implications of recognizing Jerusalem as Israel's capital, namely that it prejudices and predetermines the status of Jerusalem and infringes upon and undermines the rights of Palestinians to self-determination. Instead uses the moment for self-promotion and self-aggrandizement by equating years of careful deliberation and negotiation to weakness, cowardice, and pointless filibustering, as well as previous presidents' failure to see or understand 'reality' as he terms it. In quite an amateurish vein he describes the situation as a recognition of 'the obvious: that Jerusalem is Israel's capital. This is nothing more, or less, than a recognition of reality'. He presents himself as the harbinger of truth, and alludes to previous presidents' craven abdication of their own moral duty in refusing to 'deliver', portraying the decision simply and conclusively as 'the right thing to do'. On numerous occasions Trump frames his decision against the backdrop of previous US administrations and their perceived failure, or obstinate 'refusal' as he terms it to act definitively: 'for over 20 years, every previous American president has exercised the law's waiver, refusing to move the US embassy'; 'while previous presidents have made this a major campaign promise, they failed to deliver. Today I am delivering'; 'through all of these years, presidents representing the United States have declined to officially recognize Jerusalem as Israel's capital'. Trump speaks condescendingly of those who 'made their best judgments based on facts as they understood them at the time', implying the fault was in their limited comprehension as compared to what Trump continuously terms a 'reality'. It is indeed astonishing that Trump cites 'reality' since his speech flagrantly disregards reality, that is the very real consequences of his decision. Added to this, his speech amounts to little more than a litany of decontextualized, dehistoricised sentiments on the elusive nature of peace in the region. The way in which he portrays the Israeli-Palestinian conflict indeed marks a radical departure from reality as he offers little more than sweeping platitudes, Moralisms, and wistful and ultimately quixotic ideas on rejecting terror, radicalism, and violence in favour of 'a noble quest for peace' and 'inherit[ing] our love, not our conflicts'. The blanket idealities of Trump—repeated almost verbatim in his UN address and which translate into little more than disregard for or disinterest in the historical, complex, and often sensitive nature of political conflicts or unrest—would be all very well were it not for the region's intractable geopolitical complexities and centuries of foreign occupations. Not once does Trump elaborate on such remarks in the context of Israeli and Palestinian history, politics, and political geography, rendering his claims of acting according to some 'obvious' reality, 'fact', or self-evident truth laughably ironic. He implies the conflict in the region is the result of people who have arbitrarily decided not to pursue peace, as seen in one of his more lazily naive statements: 'peace is never beyond the grasp of those willing to reach'. He portrays the problem as one of intolerance and a lack of 'reasoned debate', 'respect', and 'moderate voices', further dissociating his decision and the status of Jerusalem from the devastating political reality of apartheid, occupation, and settler-colonialism.

Trump prioritizes action over deliberation or negotiation, and this is evident in the entrepreneurial rhetoric with which he frames his decision. He speaks in terms of 'delivering' and of securing a 'great deal for the Israelis and a great deal for the Palestinians.' This is not diplomacy, but salesmanship. However, as comic as it is depressing is his suggestion that the elusive notion of peace in the region is somehow attributable to the lack of a US Embassy in Jerusalem and, with it, its symbolic acknowledgement of Jerusalem as Israel's capital. He narrates the move as a catalyst towards resolving the conflict, or what he terms 'necessary condition' for and 'magnificent tribute to peace', which is what concludes his simplistic assessment of the complex political geography of Israel and Palestine.

Trump's apparent disengagement from the political events and conflicts he claims to arbitrate is likewise manifest in his April 2018 address to the UN following Bashar al-Assad's chemical weapons attack against civilians outside Damascus, which does not so much elucidate America's role in preventing such atrocities as reassert American hegemony in typically bombastic and undiplomatic terms. The speech is characterised by pathos and hyperbole, and seemingly scriptural messages on the immemorial battle against evil. His phantasmal and sensationalist narrations of 'evil', 'ghastly specter[s]', 'monster[s]', and 'the darkest places of the human soul' seem to function more to promote an idealised and exalted image of the United States whose 'noble heroes' have once again 'marshaled their righteous power against barbarism and brutality' than it does to highlight the inhumanities of the Assad regime or justify U.S. military intervention. His language has a primarily emotive function as he speaks of 'gruesome suffering', of 'mothers and fathers, infants and children, thrashing in pain and gasping for air', of 'dark path[s]', of 'brutal tyrants and murderous dictators', 'barbarism and brutality',

‘righteous power’, ‘noble warriors’, or sensationalizing the actions of al-Assad as ‘not the actions of a man [but the] crimes of a monster instead’—all of which become the *mise-en-scène* of an extraordinary drama about the valour and unwavering humanity of America and its ‘friends’. Trump does, on occasion, speak formally and pragmatically, citing the lessons of World War I—the first conflict to make use of chemical weapons—as well as elucidating the nature and region of the chemical attacks and the limits of America’s retaliatory response; however, what really characterizes the speech is political bombast and affected moralizing, both of which serve a grandiose and totemic image of America as a salvational, humanizing influence in the world, and to stress America’s immutably powerful mystique. The country has, in his words, ‘a lot to offer, with the greatest and most powerful economy in the history of the world.’ Trump’s chauvinism, combined with his depiction of metaphysical evils and comic-book tyrannies, reflect a level of intellectual or psychological detachment from the realities of which he speaks. He mythologises America’s role in combating human rights abuses, and his linguistic choices have the counter-productive effect of rendering the alleged actions of the al-Assad regime almost semi-fictional. Trump lurches quite unpredictably between demonizing enemies for their human rights abuses and criticizing allies for their craven neglect of their own moral, patriotic, and humanistic duty to more vigorously oppose or fight against the al-Assad regime. Trump uses the chemical weapons attack to admonish and vilify Iran and Russia, accusing both, but primarily Russia, of inhumanity, incivility, and immortality for ‘promoting rogue states, brutal tyrants and murderous dictators.’ He once again uses the moment to promote his puerile and sensationalized division of the world’s nations into good and evil, deserving friends and undeserving enemies. But added to his penchant for hyperbole and alarmism, is the condescending, paternalistic rhetoric with which he narrates the involvement of allied countries. In the opening to the speech he graciously acknowledges the involvement of Britain and France in their retaliatory strikes against the Syrian government in light of the chemical weapons attack, he says: ‘we have asked our partners to take greater responsibility for securing their home region’ and ‘as other nations step up their contribution, we look forward to the day when we can bring our warriors home’, implying those countries’ current efforts are simply insufficient or lackluster by comparison to America’s. This slightly demeaning, paternalistic rhetoric applies to ‘friends’ and ‘enemies’ alike is apparent in his ‘message’ to Russia, in which he says ‘Russia must decide if it will continue down this dark path’, as if cautioning an unruly child. He speaks as if the onus is solely on America to arbitrate and pass judgment on the ‘behaviour’ of nations. He often implies that the world’s nations are unfairly reliant or dependent upon American intervention, as seen in his lamentations on the cost of American actions in the Middle East: ‘we cannot purge the world of evil or act everywhere there is tyranny. No amount of American blood or treasure can produce lasting peace’.

## 7. Conclusion

Technologization of discourse stems from the need for a type of discourse that fits in the discursive practices in a society. This requires a thorough and lengthy research incumbent upon the powerful elites in society. Sudden change of older working discourses may cause disruption or antagonism. As a politically and historically illiterate president, Trump initiated a technologized discourse that made him the antithesis of the conventional politician, but this does not imply his rhetorical strategies were forethought, strategised, or the product of intensive research. Lack of knowledge and disregard of histories and cultures resulted in this comparatively informal, heterodox political rhetoric. The Trump phenomenon may well be a symptom of the growing disaffection with politics and politicians, which Trump was undoubtedly successful, dare we say shrewd, in exploiting. His ‘common man’ persona, his penchant for theatricality and bombast, and his crude and often morally questionable manner of speaking translate into power over his political contemporaries who, in contrast to Trump, seem rather fungible. His willful disregard for political orthodoxy and the sheer incongruity of his presence on the world stage compel attention, and regardless of the nature of that attention—contempt, incredulity, mockery, admiration—he can continue to control and hegemonise other heads of state. His influence, and by extension his power, is commensurate with his relatability. His often spontaneous, unguarded discourse, his heterodox views, and his decision to narrate America’s domestic and foreign policies in colloquial, idiomatic speech take what, for the layperson, may seem like the arcane and complex realm of international politics into the quotidian, unremarkable, and personalized sphere of Trump the ‘common man’ as opposed to Trump the emissary.

Communicative competence entails using the language appropriately in particular social settings. In other words, adequate knowledge and acquaintance of history, culture, and religion is needed to be able to communicate successfully. In addition, knowledge of the type of culture (high-context or low-context) of your interlocutors helps you to interact appropriately and avoid misunderstanding. In the speeches studied, where utopian American ideals and deeds are portrayed and mythologized, Donald Trump does not adopt the more nuanced,



diplomatic, and politically neutral stances that typify more politically orthodox rhetoric. Arguably, one of the dangers inherent in his political discourse is the perception of Trump as disrespectful to or dismissive of other cultural and political histories. All in all, what used to be whispered behind closed doors during former presidencies is now said loud in public without regards to other peoples' way of life or type of culture. Consequently, Trump turned into a social monster rather than a leader of a super power state which is at the forefront of Western diplomacy. With his exaggerated directness in delivering his discourse along with misrepresenting historical events, he is at risk of being perceived as a morally questionable, unreliable, and entrepreneurial leader. The large portion of the American electorate who voted for him may well, in light of his controversial political discourse and divisive foreign policies, be more discerning in their vote in the forthcoming 2020 elections. Furthermore, many Americans, especially those familiar with foreign policies and international relations, may consider him a threat to national security and the credibility of America on the international stage.

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