

تحليل تداولي للغلو في المناظرات الرئاسية الأمريكية

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The Pragmatics of Hyperbole in American Presidential Debates**Prof Dr. Qasim Obayes Al-Azzawi****College of Education for Human Sciences / University of Babylon**guda61@yahoo.com**Asst. Lect. Raghad Kamal Hameed****College of Education for Human Sciences / University of Babylon**raghad.kamal146@gmail.com.**Abstract**

There can be ample reasons why politicians use hyperboles when addressing the populace. One basic reason which brings about an inevitable recourse to the use of hyperboles is for politicians to leave the door open to the addresses so that they themselves work out what possibilities there may be behind uttering them, this is because hyperboles, at the implicature level, tend to suggest information not overtly expressed in the text. Therefore, the following objectives have been put forward:

1. Analyzing hyperbolic expressions pragmatically to prove that they have different significations which are dependent on context.
2. Determining what communicative significances there are behind using them.
3. Examining which type of hyperbole is more characteristic of this type of discourse.
4. Identifying the pragmatic strategies which are utilized by candidates in the aforementioned debates.

The study is limited to the analysis of hyperbolic situations detected in a selection of 2 American presidential debates. The texts chosen are highly polished election campaigns especially those whose written form is available electronically.

Keywords: hyperbolic expressions, politeness, face threatening.

الملخص

هنالك أسباب كثيرة تجعل السياسيين يستخدمون مصطلحات الغلو عند مخاطبة الجماهير. أحد الأسباب الأساسية التي تؤدي إلى اللجوء المحتوم إلى استخدام الغلو هو أن يترك السياسيون الباب مفتوحاً أمام العناوين حتى يتمكنوا هم أنفسهم من تحديد الإمكانيات التي قد تكون وراء نطقها، وذلك لأن الغلو، على مستوى التضمين، يميل إلى اقتراح معلومات لم يتم التعبير عنها بشكل صريح في النص. لذلك، تم طرح الأهداف التالية:

1. تحليل تراكيب الغلو بشكل عملي لإثبات أن لها دلالات مختلفة تعتمد على السياق.
 2. تحديد الدلالات التواصلية وراء استخدامها.
 3. فحص أي نوع من المبالغة هو أكثر ما يميز هذا النوع من الخطاب.
- تقتصر الدراسة على تحليل 2 حالات غلو تم اختيارها في مجموعة مختارة من مناقشات رئاسية أمريكية. النصوص المختارة هي حملات انتخابية تم التحضير لها جيداً وخاصة تلك التي يتوفر شكلها المكتوب إلكترونياً.

1. Introduction

Rhetoric practice has traditionally been associated with the production of persuasive speech, and later with aesthetics and literature; however, only relatively recently has the study of figurative

language been switched into domain of banal, everyday language. Thus, few studies have been addressed to "Hyperbole" whether in in the domain of linguistics, psychology, philosophy or literary criticism.

Language is a vital element for the production and perception of any communicative process including presidential debates. The language of presidential debates is basically directed to change others' attitudes and behaviour, a goal that has always been important to those involved in politics. Political actors usually try hard to persuade people to support politicians' causes. Hence, debates language has become a subject of interest and significance for many researchers especially the linguists who seek to analyse the components from various standpoints.

Hyperbolic expressions help increase an understanding of a piece of discourse since they tend to communicate more implied meanings than what their forms reveal. They occur frequently in everyday language behavior and are not unique to only one type of discourse. One such type in which they are expected to be commonly used is presidential debates which is the focus of the present paper. It is the type of discourse by which politicians verify their opinions by persuading and convincing, exchanging ideas, and finally analyzing events and give solutions to social problems.

This paper is an attempt to identify what role hyperbole can play in I tried to specify how hyperbole may contribute to the presidential candidates ' aims in the argumentation stage of a discussion.

2. Functions of Hyperbole

Hyperbole, which is a highly sophisticated form of language, serves to express the intended meaning of the speaker. But, it is commonly used to exaggerate the meaning that may reach the level of the absurd, counterfactual and incredible to be accepted in the real world. Such instances may prevent the targets from understanding the intended meaning. Therefore, the interpretation or the analysis of hyperbolic statement like, "**It made my blood boil**", causes a remarkable deviation from the bounds of acceptability, because the speaker says something which is untrue and impossible to happen in the real life. Hence, there is an obvious flouting of quality maxim. In this respect, and in order to understand the intended meaning properly, it is convenient to analyse hyperbolic expressions pragmatically by adopting the appropriate pragmatic model which, in its turn, enables the reader to grasp the intended meaning of the whole situation correctly. However, another difficulty may arise here, that is, any poem in relation to hyperbole can be interpreted differently by different readers. Thus, any misunderstanding of interpreting hyperbole creates a meaning different from the intended one and this is another problem.

3. Analysis of Hyperboles at the Pragmatic Level

Like other conversational phenomena, hyperboles are governed by the Cooperative Principle which operates either through the observation of the four conversational maxims (the maxims of Quality, Quantity, Manner, and Relation) or by flouting one or more of these maxims giving rise to particularized conversational implicatures. Mainly at issue here is the maxim of Quantity according to which cooperative speakers do not produce uninformative utterances:

“Make your contribution as informative as is required for current purposes of the exchange and not more informative than is required”.

According to a number of authors including Grice (1975), Levinson (1983), Brown and Levinson (1987); flouting the maxim of Quantity accounts, among other things, for the communicative significance of different types of hyperboles and provide a clear account of how it is not possible to mean what is actually said (Mora, 2009: 1 , Claridge, 2011: 224). Given that hyperboles are necessarily provide no new information, no one would expect such expressions to be uttered in conversation. However, hyperboles are informative; they seem to serve more pragmatic and communicative imports and are widely used in political discourse as the following survey shows. It is worth noting that many of the hyperbolic expressions mentioned in this survey may perform another function in a different context.

Hillary Clinton (D.1/Sit.1)

1. Criteria and kinds of hyperbole : Hillary cooperatively used criteria that are obviously displayed in the situation above, as to assist their hyperbolic intention. Therefore, it is considered that this political situation by no means is hyperbolic.

Pretentious is displayed by Hillary's speech "**If we set those goals and we go together to try to achieve them, there's nothing in my opinion that America can't do**" in achieving American goals means attaining her interests through using overt (and covert) quoting expression of **being together**, which is merely one way of implicitly generating hyperbole.

This kind of delusional hyperbole reveals that the hyperbolists uses two concepts: flouting and relevance indirectly in which the hyperbolist will perpetrate incongruity between expectation and reality via pretended an utterance of politeness.

And the criterion of manipulation is demonstrated in "**if we work together, if we overcome the divisiveness**" in which she manipulates the audience in order to accomplish her aims that is based on the quoted speech of Barack Obama's 2008 speech on race in United States "cannot solve the challenges of our time **unless we solve them together**, unless we ... And **I** confess that **if all that I** knew of Reverend Wright were the snippets of ". As such by means of an indirect manipulation of their language, clever candidates have conventionally been able to effect the presumptions and ambitions of the audiences, to the range of causing them to receive false statements as being true postulates, as to support their interests.

2. Pragma-rhetorical Structure:

Hillary's stance is disturbed via the subsequent three stages:

Opening Stage: This stage encompasses two sub-constituents.

Topical potential:

At this point, Hillary started her speech rationally persuasive to the target through choosing a topic that is relevant to what is regarded to be reasonable, which is done via means of the resulting strategies:

1. Hyperbolic Speech Acts (HSAs): Hillary's speech is incited through expressing her satisfaction to be in this state. Per se, she prescribes a direct HSA to express assertion, "**I want to be the president for all Americans**" which is, if protracted, is to be read as '**I here by state that I want to be the president for all Americans**.'

2. Pragma-Rhetoric Strategies (PRSs): hither, we have Hillary descend to this strategy via using hyperbole as a substitution trope. She hyperbolically overestimates the formality and seriousness of the situation by using an element of exaggeration to resolve the context and empower the message in this statement '**getting the economy to work for everyone**'. It is noticeable that, she resorts to the elements of exaggeration, based on quoting that can be found in Obama's statement "**America's economy is not just better than it was eight years ago -- it is the strongest, most durable economy in the world**" in June 01, 2016, through Remarks by the President on the Economy in Concord Community High School by Elkhart, Indiana.

In a similar vein, one of the most important aspects of argumentative rhetoric is the hyperbolic rhetorical question. It is considered as an indirect speech act that is used to express and expand an emphatic assertion, and in most cases with no expectation of a reply. Based on the represented arguments by Hillary, the question reflects insincerity meanwhile the answer is observable for her; she is promptly responsible for it.

She uses the strategy of relevant and inappropriate as a persuasive hyperbole device that transmits a strong presuppositional statement which, in line, confirms a plane agreement on the part of the target since the indirect reply is understandable.

For this reason, it can be assumed that she alludes to the rhetorical question used in: "But you Can't find much more passion on this issue and not many answers than in my home state,

Wisconsin. ... **Are you a teacher?**" stated by Katy Farber, Special to CNN, in June 19th, 2012, in "My View: Six ways to retain great teachers".

The destabilization trope of **hyperbolic metaphor** which is produced by Sermon in October 11, 2016, in *The Wind at Our Backs* to breach the two maxims of quantity and quality in 'It would be arrogant indeed to deny that there is not a great deal of work to be done to **heal ourselves**, to **heal our country** and to **heal our world** from the scourge of racism', is also resorted to by Hillary as an essential PRAS of altering viewpoints when she says: '**I want us to heal our country** and bring it together because that's, I think, the best way for us to get the future that our children and our grandchildren deserve'.

It is crucial that Hillary metaphorically uses the verb 'heal' and the noun 'country' in specific way that: 'heal' is 'the source domain', whereas 'country', 'the target domain', is (-animate), therefore, it deficiencies the belongings of being healed. In this sense, we may find the conceptual connection between the source and the target domains is recognized by giving a remedy to the country just as giving a remedy to save human's life.

Audience Demands:

For an optimum hyperbolic outcome, Hillary endeavours to adapt to audience demands by means of the following strategies:

1. Politeness Strategies: In her effort to use hyperbole as to manipulate her target, she pretends to be polite via resorting to 'Notice, attend to H's wants', which goes to "claim a common ground" mechanism when she called Obama with his formal title "Mr. Trump and **the President**".

HAS: Hyperbolic Argument:

Here, she offers his hyperbolic argument through using a combination of hyperbolic strategies that are attained by funds of certain AHPRSs to augment her hyperbolic stance, per se, attaining her favorite end. Hillary does so through the subsequent hyperbolic strategies:

Evoking emotions: Hillary's utterance shows self-conscious artificiality, when she gives promises and suggestions with an active voice, i.e. by means of using the first-person singular as the agent, highlights the candidate's role as the one that create the change happen and intends at persuading people that she is the best optimal to be the succeeding president and the one that protects America. In great detail, she describes how the American people can protect each other in working together. This can be done through using the AHPRSs that beneath:

1. Impoliteness Strategies: Hillary alludes to her targets by manipulating and enacting a 'mock or sarcasm politeness', as an impoliteness strategy. By uttering the rhetorical question and answering it, as they are considered effective persuasive devices used to produce hyperbolic ironic effect. As such, the hyperbolic irony, which expands the interpreted meaning, is expressed with the assistance of a rhetorical question, which is frequently explained as any question inquired for intent rather than to attain the information the question asks.

2. Conversational Maxim Breaching: it is clear breaching the maxims of quantity, quality, relevance and manner in this situation. Hillary is regarded uncommunicative via stating untrue, irrelevant besides ambiguous claim in this case.

Manipulation : Ultimately, this strategy, when utilized by Hillary, proposes to evoke emotion in which it may affect the target to agree to take the hyperbolist's argument unconsciously. It is done by the succeeding PRSs:

Persuasion appeals: One of the tripartite rhetorical appeals is pathos, exemplifies the most powerful and influential hyperbolic strategy utilized by politicians in a political debates. It can be improved via observing Hillary's:

"we are going to try to reach out to every boy and girl, as well as every adult, to bring them in to working on behalf of our country".

Accordingly, we may find a very clear variance in the appeals both candidates make. Granted that, Hillary does appeal to ethos just with the use of register and complexity, while during her speech

she frequently appeals to pathos. Hillary, through the use of hyperbole, manipulates on the emotions of the audience by utilizing she will work together for every single class, or group within the nation.

Distortion : All through this strategy of distortion, Hillary reinforces her hyperbolic stance by being more manipulative to augment audience' unawareness and to keep them completely ignorant of the actual political situation in the range:

"If we set those goals and we go together to try to achieve them, there's nothing in my opinion that America can't do".

It is evidently clear here that Hillary, in her attempt to deceive her targets, does so via lying, as one of the CP pragmatic strategies which is counted under 'hyperbole by explicit commission'. In consequence, she **breaches the conversational maxims** when she says that America can do anything for the American people to help them, in spite of the fact that she and everyone know that what she says is not true, since racism in the United States has been widespread. Per se, in Hillary's speech, **fallacy**, explicitly demonstrates itself by ways of violating the truth criterion.

This means that the three pragmatic appeals of **logos, ethos and pathos** are also routed to by Hillary, with the goal of convincing, thus, manipulate her targets through use of hyperbole and gets them reach, with a probable choice, an hyperbolic aim favoured by her.

Evaluational Stage:

In the last stage, it seems that Hillary, in her effort to conclude her hyperbolic argument achieved by the aforesaid PRSs, resorts to the ACPSs of ASAs and PDs:

"I think if we work together, if we overcome the divisiveness that sometimes sets Americans against one another".

The direct **HSAs** signified via the explicit verb '**think**' is obvious in this statement complemented by the **inclusive 'we'** as the last two hyperbolic ways in the concluding stage utilized by Hillary with the purpose of alluding her targets through impressing and manipulating their politics and beliefs by making the hyperbole that they both are elaborated in the identical concern to guarantee their compliant response.

Donald Trump D.1: Situation 2

1-Criteria: In fact, **evocative** criteria can be displayed in this utterance;

'Your husband signed NAFTA, which was one of the worst things that ever happened to the manufacturing industry..... you called it the gold standard'.

Hyperbole in his speech, is more than simply ornamental elements, supports creating an impressive discourse in general and is employed to stimulating action among the audiences through the evocative of the presidential pre-texts. Interestingly, presidential hyperboles offer a way of criticizing the American system from within (i.e. depending on previous presidential speeches).

As for **concealment**, it can be seen very clear in the following utterance;

'But you haven't done it in 30 years or 26 years or any number you want to...'

Concealed and evasive utterances utilized by politicians can be signified as those that are proposed to be pragmatically relevant and semantically irrelevant. Critical comments see Trump's not obeying to queries put to him as intentional evasion, and he identify the deficiency of relevance of his responses.

Contrastingly, the audiences will compare the irrelevance of Trump's speech with the likely relevance of what is left implicit, and that will account for their non hyperbolic expectations of speech and the doubt that Trump was concealing rather than speaking out. In utilizing this utterance "*But you haven't done it in 30 years or 26 years ...*", Trump is metalinguistically accused of concealed attacking his political opponents, so as to gain his aims implicitly.

2. Kinds:

a. Expressive: is achieved hyperbolic ly by means of **blaming:** '*You've been doing this for 30 years.*

Why are you just thinking about these solutions right now'; need & necessity: '*And all you have to do is look at Michigan and look at Ohio and look at all of these places'*.

b. Delusional it is effectuated hyperbolic ly by self-deception advantageous to his ends; *'Our energy policies are a disaster'*.

3. Pragma-rhetoric Structure:

Open Stage:

- *'She talks about solar panels. We invested in a solar company, our country. That was a disaster'*; (**statement**), (**attack**), (**overstatement& pathos**), and (**irony**).

- *'They lost plenty of money on that one'*; (**overstatement**), (**attack & accusation, blame, cause/effect**), (**bald-on record**), and (**seek agreement**).

- *'Now, look, I'm a great believer in all forms of energy, but we're putting a lot of people out of work. Our energy policies are a disaster'*; (**ASA expressing pos. consequences**), (**claim a common ground**), (**statement**), (**overstatement, metaphor, irony**), (**attend to H's interest**), and (**ethos & pathos**).

- *'Our country is losing so much in terms of energy, in terms of paying off our debt. You can't do what you're looking to do with \$20 trillion in debt'*; (**statement**), (**claim a common ground**), (**overstatement**), (**blame/lack of necessity**), (**presupposition hyperbole**), (**metaphor**), (**irony**), (**ASA indicates neg. consequences**), (**rhetorical question**), (**logos**), and (**PD.**).

Topical Potential: Trump makes use of the subsequent TPHRSs to achieve this sub-component:

1. **HSAs:** Trump's hyperbolic initiation point shows the usage of HSAs strategy to convey, **blame** and **statement**.

2. **PRSs:**

a. **PAs:** Trump just seduces to his target's emotions in the sub-component of this starting stage.

Audience Demands: by means of the following ADHPRSs, this sub-component is obtained:

1. **HSAs:** In adapting to Trump's target's preferences and wants through hyperbolic attempt, he intensively recourses to the pragmatic strategy of HSAs to convey **lack of necessity, cause/effect, positive & negative consequences, attack, accusation, blaming** and **statement**.

2. **PSs:** Trump depends on **'attend to H's interest', 'seek agreement' and 'include both the speaker and the hearer in the activity'** politeness strategies with the purpose of hyperbole in this attitudinal stage.

3. **IMSs:** He also forcedly attacks the current government and accuses it of letting their values down. So, he resorts to the **'bald-on record'** impoliteness strategy.

4. **PRSs**

a. **PAs:** Trump uses the three appeals, in order to support his hyperbolic leaving point.

b. **PRTs:** *Irony, metaphor, overstatement* and rhetorical questions are also lucid in Trump's speech.

5. **Personal Deixis:** Here, we can find both inclusive and exclusive personal pronouns are used and introduced via **'I', 'we', 'you', 'our', and 'us'**.

HAS: Hyperbolic Argument:

'He approved NAFTA, which is the single worst trade deal (understatement) ever approved in this country' (confirmation), and (blame & attack).

'But you haven't done it in 30 years or 26 years or any number you want to...', (ASA indicate neg. consequence), (irony).....'You haven't done it. You haven't done it'.....'Excuse me', (bald-on record & mock), (pathos), and (CMB).

'Your husband signed NAFTA, which was one of (metonymy) the worst (understatement) things that ever happened to the manufacturing industry' (confirmation), and (blame & attack).

'You go to New England, (statement) you go to Ohio, Pennsylvania, you go anywhere you want (a want), Secretary Clinton, (attack & blame) and you will see devastation (metaphor), (overstatement) where manufacture is down 30, 40, sometimes (metonymy) 50 percent. NAFTA is the worst trade deal (understatement) maybe ever signed (presupposition hyperbole) anywhere

(pun), but certainly *(confirmation)* ever signed in this country. And now you want to approve Trans-Pacific Partnership *(assertion)*, *(logos, pathos)*, and *(PD.)*'

'You were totally *(pun)* in favour of it. Then you heard what I was saying *(statement)*, *(attend to H's interest)* how bad it is *(metaphor)*, *(rhetorical question)*, and you said, I can't win *(metaphor)* that debate. But you know *(confirmation)* that if you did win *(cause & effect - promising)*, you would approve that *(seek agreement)*, and that will be almost as bad *(metaphor)* as NAFTA *(presupposition hyperbole)*. Nothing will ever top *(metonymy)* NAFTA *(accusation, blame & attack)*, *(ASA indicate neg. consequence)* *(bald-on record)*, *(CMB)*, and *(PA.)*'

'You called it the gold *(metaphor)* standard..... You called it the gold standard *(assertion)* of trade deals. You said it's *(statement)*, *(pos. consequences)* the finest *(metaphor)*, deal you've ever *(understatement)* seen *(Irony & mock)*, *(ASA indicating neg. consequence)*, and *(logos & pathos)*'.

Emotional effect, delusional and manipulation: Trump ples to these strategies so as to manipulate his audiences' attention through using hyperbole to which is satisfied by means of the subsequent ADPRSs strategies:

1. **HSAs:** SAs conveying blame, negative consequences, statement, want, and *presupposition hyperbole* are hyperbolically and recoverably employed by Trump and done with his hyperbolic argument to assist him to have emotional impacting his target on the one hand, and logically fading his opponent's political stance, on the other hand.

2. **PRSs:** they are used via the following pragma-rhetorical strategies:

a. **PAs:** ethos, logos and pathos are utilized by Trump to reinforce his hyperbolic effect.

3. **PSs:** Mostly, Trump's claims by the pragmatic strategies above are submitted politely via means of 'seek agreement', and 'attend to H's interest' politeness strategies.

4. **IMSSs:** Trump attack and blame the other candidate, Hillary, through using 'bald-on record' and 'mock' impoliteness pragmatic strategies.

5. **Personal Deixis:** with the aim of hyperbole, here Trump makes use of exclusive 'I and you'.

6. **CMB:** The quality and relevant maxim breaching is regarded an axiomatic result of using PRTs.

Evaluational Stage:

'And then you heard what I said about it *(rhetorical question)*, and all of a sudden *(metonymy)*, *(Bald-on record and mock politeness)* you were against it *(confirmation)*'.... 'Not' *(ASA expressing neg. consequence)*, and *(CMB)*.

'So is it President Obama's fault?.....Is it President Obama's fault?', *(blame, cause/effect)*, *(rhetorical question)*, *(seek agreement)*, and *(logos)*.

'Secretary, is it President Obama's fault?'.....'Because he's pushing *(metaphor)* it' *(rhetorical questions)*, *(cause/effect)*, *(seek agreement)*, and *(attend to H's interest)*, .

1. **HSAs:** Trump faithlessly uses the HSAs pragmatic strategy to convey his *want, blame*, and to display *negative consequences and cause/effect*.

2. **Personal Deixis:** exclusive 'I' and 'you' are made use of collectively by Trump so as to accomplish his hyperbolic endeavour.

3. **PRSs:**

a. **PAs:** Trump has to hyperbolic ly reaffirm what he has supposed with concluding comments, as the time to end his hyperbolic situation approaches. As such, the pragmatic persuasive appeals of *pathos* and *Logos* are cooperatively engaged for this goal.

4. **PSs:** It is quite clear that Trump here elects to settle his hyperbolic argument politely using *seek agreement* and *attend to H's interest* politeness strategies.

5. **IMSSs:** Though, he unexpectedly attends his polite behaviour with an impolite one using 'bald-on record', as well as 'mock politeness' impoliteness strategies.

6. **CMB:** The quantity and relevant maxim breaking is observed a self-evident consequence of expending PRTs.

4. Conclusions

There are no Statistically Significant differences in the Criteria of hyperbole in American Presidential Debates (Evocative, Concealed, Pretentious, Manipulative), they are all used by Clinton and Trump and the table below displays this, and there is Statistically Significant differences in the Criteria of hyperbole in American Presidential Debates in (Total), as they scores highly in their usage by Trump (56%), than they are used by Clinton (44%). The results also show that the criterion of evocative has the highest (44%) score, as exhibited in the table below:

Table of the Statistics of Hyperbole Criteria in American Presidential Debates

No.	Criteria	Clinton		Trump		Total Number		Chi Square Value
		Freq.	Pct.	Freq.	Pct.	Freq.	Pct.	
1.	Evocative	5	50%	5	39%	10	44%	0.00
2.	Concealed	2	20%	2	15%	4	17%	0.00
3.	Pretentious	1	10%	3	23%	4	17%	2.25
4.	Manipulative	2	20%	3	23%	5	22%	0.80
Total Number		10	44%	13	56%	23	100%	0.40

* Tabulated Chi square Value is (3.84) at (0.05) Level of Significance and (1) degree of freedom.

Moreover, the pragmatic analysis shows that hyperbole in English language sometimes is directly or indirectly expressed through the use of face threatening acts. The politicians vary the employment of these acts according to their own intentions. There are fourteen FTAs used in the English political discourse. The use of "self-praise" and "praise of others" acts as an indicator of hyperbole outnumber the other types of FTAs. This is a distinctive feature in this research as it shows the personality of the American politicians who try to praise oneself as well as others in order to make the addressees trust and, eventually, support them. The least recurrent FTAs used in the English political discourse as an indicator of hyperbole is represented in four acts, namely, "request", "gratitude", "complaint", and "disapproval".

It is believed that American politicians are influenced by the general tendency of topics which they tackle in their speeches, i.e., whenever they talk about war, or its consequences, or ask people to support their decision, they usually tend to use hyperbolic expressions in order to carry out their aims. Moreover, they vary in preference for the use of hyperbole. It is not a personal trait, but it might be rather a tactic universally followed by politicians for achieving their aims like: emphasizing the seriousness of the situation, the urgency of the action, criticizing the political opponent, and praising one's own party or policies. To sum up, hyperbole does not signify the actual state of affairs of reality, but presents the latter through the emotionally coloured perception and rendering of the politician.

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Website Resources

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