

# A Multi- Pragmatic Study of Sarcasm in Political Texts

Zainab Kadim Igaab<sup>1</sup>, & Marwa Jasim Wehail<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> University of Thi-Qar, College of Education for Humanities, Department of English, Iraq

<sup>2</sup> Directorate of Education, Iraq

Correspondence: Prof. Dr. Zainab Kadim Igaab, University of Thi-Qar, College of Education for Humanities, Department of English, Iraq.

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## Abstract

Sarcasm is one of the strategies that people use to attack the listener indirectly or in a way that seems to be kind on the surface. There is a shady relation between sarcasm and irony. Accordingly, this study sets the following aims which are identifying the most frequent type of speech acts that is used to convey the sarcastic meaning; knowing the conversational maxim that is breached by the sarcasm to express sarcasm; shading light on the type of politeness maxim that is violated in the sarcastic messages; specifying the social functions of sarcasm in political texts; and revealing the linguistic mechanisms that are employed to reflect sarcasm. The researcher hypothesizes the following: expressives are the most frequent type of speech acts which are used to reflect sarcasm; sarcasm is the result of breaching quality maxim only; the most common violated politeness maxim in sarcasm is tact maxim; sarcasm mainly serves as a social control tool in the political contexts; and metaphor and explicitation are the most frequent mechanisms of sarcasm in political texts. The researcher adopts an eclectic model which consists of Speech Acts Theory of Searle and Vanderveken (1985), Grice's Conversational Implicature (1989), Leech's Politeness Principle (1983-2014), Ducharme's Functions of Sarcasm (1994), and Tabacaru's Linguistic Mechanisms of Sarcasm (2019). By using this model, the researcher finds that the most frequent type of speech acts is assertives, breaching quality maxim is a basic requirement to reflect sarcasm, the approbation maxim is the most violated maxim in the sarcastic texts, the dominant function of sarcasm in political texts is social control, and metaphor is used more frequent in the political context than other mechanisms.

**Keywords:** functions, implicature, mechanisms, politeness, speech act, sarcasm, political texts

## 1. Introduction

### 1.1 Introduce the Problems

Language is full of indirect messages which form a difficulty even for the native speakers of a language. Sarcasm is closely one of the methods of indirectness in which the speaker can easily deny his or her intention. When a speaker chooses to be sarcastic, there are certain aims to be in mind. For example, to hurt the listener or to show that the speaker has a social control over others and so on. Linguistically, there are several linguistic tools or mechanisms which are employed by the speaker to express sarcasm. These aspects (the social functions of sarcasm and the linguistic mechanisms) have not been tackled before. So, the researcher in this study tries to shed light on the social functions of sarcasm and linguistic mechanisms of sarcasm in the political texts.

Accordingly, the researcher raises the following questions: What are the speech acts which are most frequently employed to reflect the sarcastic meaning in political texts? Which maxim of Grice's conversational maxims is most commonly breached to communicate sarcasm? What type of politeness maxim is frequently violated in the sarcastic political texts? What are the social functions that sarcasm serves? And what are the linguistic mechanisms that are used to express sarcasm? This study aims to identify the most frequent type of speech acts that is used to convey the sarcastic meaning; to know the conversational maxim that is breached by the sarcasm to express sarcasm; to identify the type of politeness maxim that is violated in the sarcastic messages; to specify the social functions of sarcasm, which are frequently expressed in political texts; and to reveal the linguistic mechanisms that are employed to reflect sarcasm. In the light of the aims mentioned earlier, it is hypothesized that: expressive speech acts are the most frequent type of speech acts which are used to reflect sarcasm, sarcasm is the result of breaching quality maxim only, the most common violated politeness maxim in sarcasm is tact maxim, The most common violated politeness maxim in sarcasm is tact maxim, sarcasm mainly serves as a social control tool in the political contexts, metaphor and explicitation are the most frequent mechanisms used in political texts to express sarcasm.

### 1.2 Literature Review

#### 1.2.1 Definition of Sarcasm

According to Attardo (2000), "sarcasm is an overtly aggressive type of irony with clearer markers/ cues and a clear target". Camp objected the common belief that sarcasm means saying "the opposite" of what is intended and insists that sarcasm rather enacts meaning "inversion" (Camp, 2011).

Hearer's perception of a specific utterance as being sarcastic depends on his recognition of the incongruity between his expectation and the real situation or the real context. The discourse context, the affective prosody, and the semantic content are factors which are involved in any sarcastic utterance. When the hearer recognizes incongruity among these factors, a sarcastic utterance will easily be comprehended (Matsui et al., 2016). Sarcasm is closely related to a special negative effect which is offensive and promotes negative emotions such as irritation, anger, and disgust (Hernández Farias, 2017). Sarcasm is defined as the deliberate generation of a blatant and distinct metamessage (Haiman, 1998). As a social behavior which is manifested through language, sarcasm is addressed in the field of im/politeness but under different terms by different scholars. According to Leech, irony/sarcasm is a special case, which exploits the phenomenon of politeness. He mentioned "Conversational irony (also called sarcasm) is mock politeness". (Leech, 2014).

### 1.2.2 Understanding Sarcasm

There are several competing perspectives that should be considered. Typically, these perspectives can be used to provide a paradigm for understanding verbal irony, and they can also be used to understand sarcasm in a similar way. It is generally accepted that these theories can be divided into three major categories: Gricean theory, echoic mention theory, and pretense theory (Pawlak, 2016).

#### 1.2.2.1 Gricean Theory

Based on Grice's interpretation, the listener perceives the literal interpretation of a sarcastic remark and discovers that it significantly contradicts factual information (violates the maxim of quality or "truth") (McDonald, 1999). Four "conversational maxims" exist in the logical, meaningful communication. These maxims are quantity, quality, relation, and manner. Grice defines irony as the breaching of the first quality maxim. This is issuing a statement that the speaker knows to be incorrect, yet he nevertheless says it anyway (Grice, 1989, p.26-27 and Grundy, 2013).

#### 1.2.2.2 Echoic Mention theory

Gibbs (1984) declared that Sperber and Wilson (1981) provide an alternate explanation of sarcasm and irony that seeks to overcome several of Grice's paradigm's inadequacies. According to their view, irony is characterized by the contrast between use and mention rather than the distinction between literal and nonliteral meaning. Haiman (1998) assumed that sarcasm entails mentioning rather than using words. The sarcastic echoes or duplicates the other person's speech (or sometimes only the words s/he said previously) and attracts the attention of the listeners to one's specific inappropriateness through repetition.

#### 1.2.2.3 Pretense Theory

Clark and Gerrig (1984) presented a pretense explanation of irony. When a speaker is ironic, in terms of the notion, s/he claims to be an ignorant person talking to an inexperienced audience. The speaker expects the recipients of the irony to find the fake and therefore perceive his or her position towards the listeners, the speakers, and the speech. They contend that the pretense theory outperforms the previous two theories (Gricean and echoic accounts).

### 1.2.3 Functions of Sarcasm

Ducharme (1994) proposed five social functions: "social control, declaration of allegiance, establishing social solidarity and social distance, venting frustration, and humorous aggression". The pragmatic functions of sarcasm is discussed by Colston (2007). He calls sarcasm as "ironic criticism" or "verbal irony". As a type of indirect language, sarcasm is used to condemn or criticize someone rather than saying it literally.

### 1.2.4 Linguistic Mechanisms of Sarcasm

Tabacaru (2019) presented a classification of the many linguistic mechanisms that are employed to generate a sarcastic meaning. These linguistic mechanisms are the following: antithesis, repetitive statements, explicitation, metonymy, metaphor, shift of focus, reasoning, and rhetorical questions.

## 2. Method

The model which is adopted in this study is an eclectic one. It consists of five theories. They are Speech Acts Theory of Searle and Vanderveken (1985), Grice's theory of Conversational Implicature (1989), Leech's Politeness Principle (1983-2014), Ducharme's Functions of Sarcasm (1994), and Tabacaru's Linguistic Mechanisms of Sarcasm (2019). According to Searle and Vanderveken (1985) and Weisser (2018), illocutionary acts are the smallest elements of human interaction. Some instances include making a statement, asking a question, giving a command, making a promise, or apologizing. A speaker commits illocutionary acts once he makes a statement with specified objectives. There are simply five types of speech acts; assertives, directives, commissives, declaratives, and expressives (Searle and vanderveken, 1985; Hidayat, 2016, and Mufiah and Rahman, 2019). Leech distinguishes a "superconstraint" which he calls the General Strategy of Politeness (Leech, 2014). He summed it up as follows: "In order to be polite, S expresses or implies meanings that associate a favorable value with what pertains to O or associates an unfavorable value with what pertains to S (S = self, speaker)". Leech (1983) recognized six maxims of politeness: the Maxims of Tact, Generosity, Approbation, Modesty, Agreement, and Sympathy. Then, in Leech (2014), he reformulated his maxims increasing the maxims from six to ten. He adds four maxims. They are Obligation of S to O Maxim, Obligation of O to S Maxim, Opinion-reticence Maxim, and Feeling-reticence Maxim.

2.1 Data and Data Sources

The Data of the study are four political texts which are taken from "The Week" magazine. "The Week" is a weekly news magazine. It has several editions; Indian edition, United States edition, United Kingdom edition, Australian edition, and The Week Junior which is a children's edition. In this study, the researcher employs United States edition and United Kingdom edition.

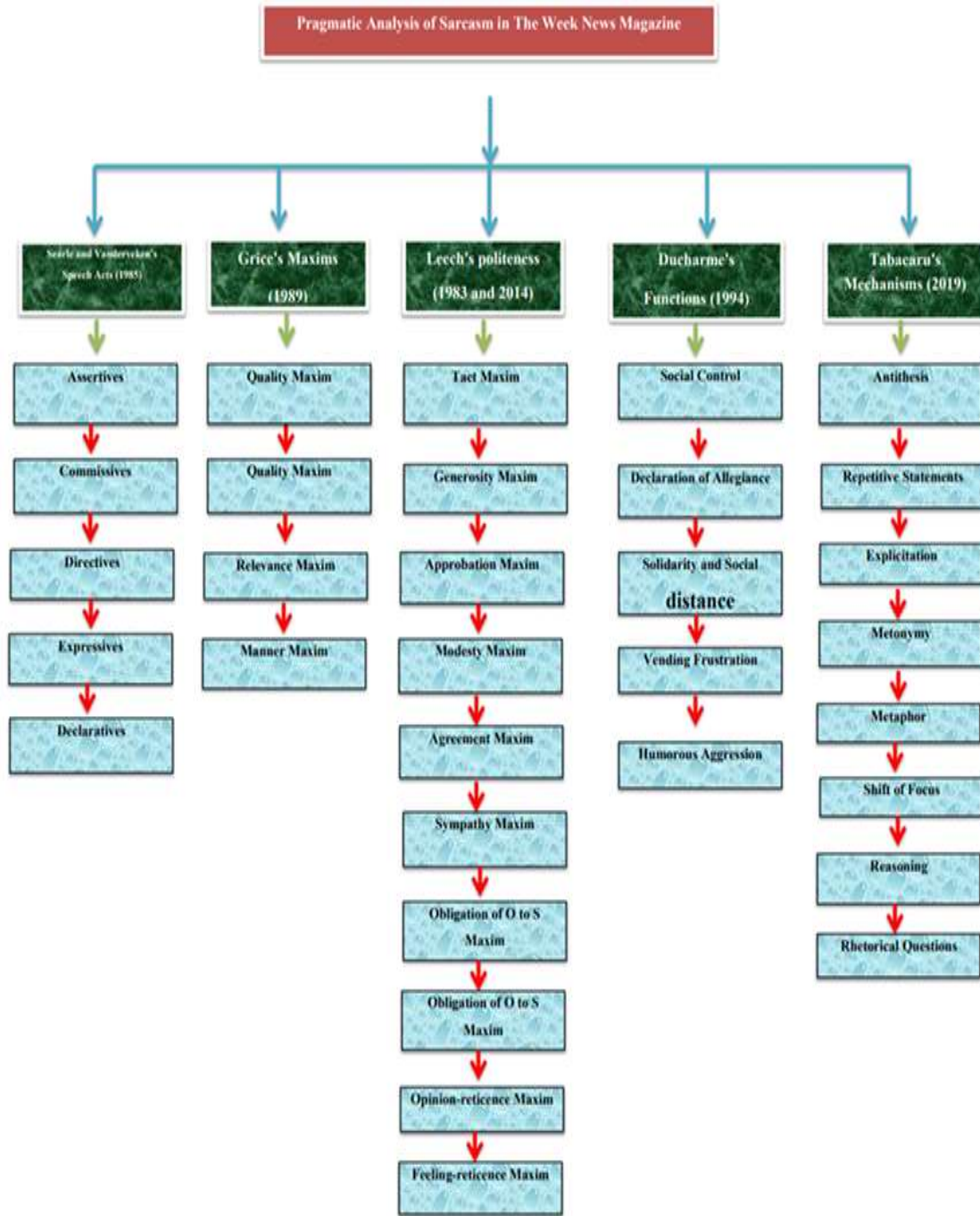


Figure of the adopted model

3. Data Analysis and Discussion

This section is the practical side of this study, which contains four texts analyzed according to the eclectic model.

3.1 Text No. (1)

3.1.1 Background

Sullivan Act was replaced by another act that the writer regarded it worse than Sullivan Act. Therefore, the writer called the Progressives and Conservatives for opposing the new law since it was antithetical to their agendas.

### 3.1.2 Speech Acts

An assertive speech act of saying, which is a direct one, is used when Robert Leider "said" that the situation of the country will be worse "may be worse than the status quo," after overturning a very important ruling by the Supreme Court which is the Sullivan Law. Another speech act which is used by the same speaker is a directive speech act of warning. Robert Leider warns progressives from the new gun legislation and gives the reason of his warning: Progressives should hate it because its provisions "are antithetical to their criminal justice reform agenda". An assertive speech act of predicting is used by the columnist. He predicts the bad consequences of accepting the new legislation by the progressives by saying: "raising the maximum prison sentence for unlawful firearm possession and creating new racial disparities for gun ownership".

In addition to his warning to Progressives, the writer warns Conservatives, too. A directive speech act of warning is used again when the writer warns the Conservatives of the new gun legislation "Conservatives should hate it". Then, the writer uses an assertive speech act of informing that "the law is filled with vague definitions". After that, he uses an assertive speech act of prediction; the writer predicts that these vague definitions will be clarified by "unelected bureaucrats or judges in practice".

When Sidney Fussell said "this legislation focuses on "hardening" campuses with CCTV cameras and armed guards," he uses an assertive speech act by the performative verb "said". Sidney is straightforward in his description of the truth as it is. Another assertive speech act is when Sidney adds that "Turning schools into Orwellian fortresses "won't stop the next mass shooting," but it will inevitably lead to even greater levels of surveillance and harassment of Black and brown students". Here, the assertive speech act is of predicting.

### 3.1.3 Implicature

The writer, Robert Leider, indirectly tells the readers that this gun legislation is very bad by writing: "If anything, the new law may be worse than the status quo. The writer breaches the maxim of manner in this sentence. He is not brief in describing the new law. There is unnecessary prolix which reflects his attitude towards the new law because the writer can say "it is a bad legislation" instead of saying, "If anything, the new law may be worse than the status quo."

The writer gives excessive information about how this legislation is so bad by writing: "Progressives should hate it because its provisions "are antithetical to their criminal justice reform agenda," raising the maximum prison sentence for unlawful firearm possession and creating new racial disparities for gun ownership", he can say "it opposes the progressives agenda" instead. The quantity maxim is breached in this sentence. The writer again mentions more information than is required about the new ruling when he writes: "Conservatives should hate it because the law is filled with vague definitions that "unelected bureaucrats or judges" will clarify in practice".

Quality maxim is breached by the writer when he refers to schools as: "Orwellian fortresses". In his description, the writer uses metaphor which indicates that he is not honest in his speech generating implicature by breaching this maxim.

The text is concluded by: "This is progress?" The writer implied a negative meaning by this sentence. He means that this is not progress. In doing so, the writer breaches the maxim of quality since he is not sincere in revealing what he wants to say. He does not ask whether this is progress or not, but he mockingly criticizes the circumstances.

### 3.1.4 Politeness

The maxim of opinion reticence is violated in this text when Robert Leider said that "the new law may be worse than the status quo." He gives his opinion without any reservation and he did not intend to minimize the effect of his view. The tact maxim is observed by saying: "Progressives should hate it because its provisions are antithetical to their criminal justice reform agenda." The writer directs progressives to reject the new act. He minimizes the expression of beliefs which imply cost to other and maximizes the expression of beliefs which imply benefit to other. The tact maxim is observed again when the writer says: "Conservatives should hate it because the law is filled with vague definitions." By using this maxim, the writer seeks the benefit of conservatives. He minimizes cost to other and maximizes the benefit to other. While Sidney Fussell violates the maxim of approbation when he asked an indirect question (this is progress?). In his speech, he means that this is not progress. So, he minimizes praise of other and maximizes dispraise of other. He devaluates other's qualities.

### 3.1.5 Functions of Sarcasm

This text contains two functions that sarcasm serves, which are:

#### a. Social Control

In this text, the writer is just like a monitor to what happens in the country. Through the use of language that promotes change, the author is attempting to alter something in society. Because of the new law's negative impact on society, he directs his people to oppose it.

#### b. Venting Frustration

Robert Leider expresses his refusal to the new law and invites people to react against it. He says that the new law has very bad consequences which make it worse than the old one. The new law opposes the progressives' criminal agenda. The new legislation tightens control over public places to prevent shootings, increases the sentence for those who unlawfully own a handgun, and expands racial disparities among Americans. The writer is enraged by all these potential negative effects of the new law, so he vents his rage by sarcastically asking: "this is progress?"

### 3.1.6 Mechanism of Expressing Sarcasm

Four linguistic mechanisms are employed in this text to reflect the sarcastic meaning. These are the following:

#### a. Explication

The writer wants American people to reject the new legislation by telling them that this new act is worse than Sullivan act. In this point, he justifies his speech by explaining the negative potential consequences for the new act. He says that the new law will increase the sentence for illegal weapons possession, harden monitoring, and expand racial disparities. All of these explanations are to justify his point of view when he says: "the new law may be worse than the status quo".

#### b. Rhetorical Questions

The writer poses a rhetorical question which is: "This is progress?" There is no need for an answer to such a question. He mentions the negative consequences of the new legislation and describes it as worse than Sullivan Act. The new legislation generates racial differences among people in America. The author believes it will be disastrous if the government attempts to impose even more control over the population, as this contradicts progressive ideas. So by his question, the writer wants to say that this new act is not compatible with progressives' principles and it is not progress.

#### c. Reasoning

By: "Turning schools into Orwellian fortresses won't stop the next mass shooting," the writer deducts a result or a conclusion based on a hypothesis which is that the procedure of monitoring schools by cameras (the hypothesis) will not be beneficial to stop the mass shooting (the conclusion).

#### d. Metaphor

The writer uses metaphor twice in this text. First, when he says: "Orwellian fortresses" to refer to the monitored schools by cameras as a result of overturning Sullivan Act and conducting a new act. Second, when he refers to the bad political and social situation as progress, "This is progress?"

### 3.2 Text No. (2)

#### 3.2.1 Background

On January 7, 2023, Kevin McCarthy became the Speaker of the United States House of Representatives. McCarthy is viewed as a weak and unpopular figure by the Democratic Party, as well as by his Republican opponents. Therefore, the author predicted negative effects from his rule.

#### 3.2.2 Speech Acts

The writer, Jonah Goldberg in the Los Angeles Times, uses an assertive speech act of saying, which is a direct speech act, when he says: "Given the very slim Republican majority in the House, the job of speaker is going to be a nightmare for the next few years." McCarthy's work will be very awful, according to the author, because Republicans have a small majority in the House of Representatives. Then, an assertive speech act of prediction is used when the writer writes: "Washington insiders predicted last week that even if McCarthy secured the post, his tenure would be so fragile and short-lived that he'd likely go down as the American Liz Truss". It is a direct speech act. Experts in Washington predicts that even if McCarthy wins the position, his term will be so weak and brief that he will probably be remembered as the American Liz Truss. When describing McCarthy as a weak leader, the author uses Liz Truss as an example. Truss is a British politician who leads the Conservative party and the UK government from September to October 2022. She resigns on her 50th day in office. Therefore, by referring to McCarthy as the American Liz Truss, the author is making fun of him. After that, an assertive speech act of criticizing is employed when the writer criticizes McCarthy as a weak speaker: "But a weak speaker would be no bad thing." The writer criticizes McCarthy and he means the quite opposite when he sarcastically refers to him as no bad thing.

After that, the writer uses an assertive speech act of stating when he says: "Congress has become too top-down in its operation." An assertive speech act of stating is used again by writing: "Legislative priorities have been worked out almost entirely by the speaker and the senate majority leader and then presented as a fait accompli to legislators, like unimprovable stone tablets". At the end of the text, the writer uses an assertive speech act of criticizing. That is when he says: "A messy, disputatious House where representatives play more of a role in hammering out solutions would be an improvement."

#### 3.2.3 Implicature

The writer, Jonah Goldberg, describes McCarthy's rule as a nightmare, implying that things will get much worse in the future. When he does this, he violates the quality maxim because he has no evidence to back up his prediction. Another implicature is when Goldberg compares McCarthy to Truss. In this aspect, he means that McCarthy's era is going to be so short just like Truss's. By saying this, he breaches the maxim of manner because he is not direct and ambiguous in expressing what he wants to say. Quality maxim is again breached to generate implicature when the writer writes: "But a weak speaker would be no bad thing". He is not sincere in his speech since definitely the weak Speaker of the House is a bad thing. The author violates the quality maxim by disparaging the US Congress and asserting that it employs high-ranking or influential individuals, which contradicts his prior claim that McCarthy is a weak individual. This is by writing "Congress has become too top-down in its operation". The last implicature is generated by mentioning: "A messy,

disputatious House where representatives play more of a role in hammering out solutions would be an improvement". The writer breaches the maxim of quality in this sentence because mess generates a decline in the political situation, not an improvement.

#### 3.2.4 Politeness

When the writer says, "Given the very slim Republican majority in the House, the job of speaker is going to be a nightmare for the next few years, as Jonah Goldberg said in the Los Angeles Times", he minimizes praise of other and maximizes dispraise of other. So, the approbation maxim is violated here. He describes McCarthy's job as a nightmare. Then the writer confirms his condemnation of McCarthy by referring to his era as "fragile and short-lived that he'd likely go down as the American Liz Truss." In this sentence the writer, again, minimizes praise of McCarthy and maximizes dispraise of McCarthy and compares him to Truss since she has the shortest term as a prime minister. So, here, the maxim of approbation is also violated.

Again, when the writer describes McCarthy as a weak speaker by saying: "But a weak speaker would be no bad thing," he mockingly refers to McCarthy as (no bad thing). In fact, he intends to express that a weak speaker is a bad thing. So, he dispraises McCarthy in this comment. Accordingly, the writer violates the maxim of approbation since he minimizes praise of other and maximizes dispraise of other. The approbation is used when the writer says: "Congress has become too top-down in its operation". Here, he maximizes praise of the American Congress that it appoints competent people. The approbation maxim is violated when the writer criticizes the American politicians by describing their legislation as "unimprovable stone tablets". In doing so, he maximizes dispraise of the American government. In the last sentence of this text, the writer maximizes dispraise of the other by referring to the House of Representatives as "a messy and disputatious." So, this is the maxim of approbation.

#### 3.2.5 Functions of Sarcasm

Sarcasm, in this text, serves only one function which is "social control."

##### a. Social Control

The writer criticizes McCarthy's job by predicting it as a bad job when he says: "the job of speaker is going to be a nightmare for the next few years". According to Duchamre (1994), in some political contexts, sarcasm is used as a social control tool by individuals who use it to make disparaging remarks about the actions of people in positions of the relative power. In this text, the person being mocked has a greater social status than the writer, who is in a lower social position. Sarcasm turns into a social control tool. Through his critical remarks, the author seeks to alter something in the society. The author contrasts McCarthy's rule to Truss's in terms of its brittleness and weakness. Sarcasm is also transformed into a social control mechanism in this situation. Sarcasm is also used to function as a social control tool when the writer criticizes McCarthy in an indirect way and describes him as no bad thing: "But a weak speaker would be no bad thing". After that, the writer mocks the American Congress by writing: "Congress has become too top-down in its operation". The United States' highest court, the Congress, has been criticized for picking unqualified individuals to serve as a president. In the final comment, the writer sarcastically calls the messy situation of the United States an improvement which totally contradicts what he wants to reveal.

##### b. Humorous Aggression

The writer mentions something obvious about McCarthy's weak personality. Everyone knows that McCarthy is weak. The writer humorously attacks him by saying: "But a weak speaker would be no bad thing".

#### 3.2.6 Mechanisms of Expressing Sarcasm

The writer of this text employs seven mechanisms to express the sarcastic message he wants to express. They are the following:

##### a. Metaphor

McCarthy's employment is directly attacked and compared to a nightmare in this text; this word has a bad meaning. It is unpleasant to see a nightmare in real life; thus, McCarthy's work is terrible.

##### b. Metonymy

The writer uses this mechanism when he refers to McCarthy briefly as the speaker instead of mentioning the full name for this position which is "The speaker of the United States House of Representatives". He also uses metonymy when he refers to the American Congress as House.

##### c. Reasoning

The author employs the mechanism of deductive reasoning by assuming that specific circumstances exist in a given context, and then a hypothetical occurrence is used to infer a result or a conclusion that has not happened yet. That is when he says: "Washington insiders predicted last week that even if McCarthy secured the post, his tenure would be so fragile and short-lived that he'd likely go down as the American Liz Truss." In this mechanism, the second and third cases of (if) are more likely used.

##### d. Shift of Focus

After criticizing McCarthy's employment, the author shifts the focus of his speech to Liz Truss. To understand the writer's intended meaning, the reader must first understand Truss' situation. Liz Truss has had the shortest tenure in the United Kingdom. The writer shifts from McCarthy to Truss on purpose, based on the writer and reader's shared knowledge. The readers are reminded of the previous circumstance, and they must determine the sarcastic interpretation.

#### e. Antithesis

In relating a negative connotation to a positive one, the writer produces a sarcastic meaning. This is so clear when he mentions: "But a weak speaker would be no bad thing". The same mechanism is used again when the writer mentions "a messy" and "disputatious" and relates these words which have negative meanings to a word which has a positive meaning; "improvement" that is when he writes "A messy, disputatious House where representatives play more of a role in hammering out solutions would be an improvement". Mess cannot improve the political condition; on the contrary, it will cause political chaos or the breakdown of the political order. Improvement and chaos cannot coexist.

#### f. Explication

After criticizing the American Congress as "too top-down in its operation", the writer, then, explains what he means by "top-down". He clarifies the way the American Congress works by writing: "Legislative priorities have been worked out almost entirely by the speaker and the senate majority leader and then presented as a fait accompli to legislators, like unimprovable stone tablets."

### 3.3 Text No. (3)

#### 3.3.1 Background

Trump promised to do all in his power to disprove the legitimacy of the election after Biden won the presidency. State Attorney, William Barr, gave the Department of Justice the go-ahead to start an inquiry about "the claims of violations, if true, may affect the outcome of the elections".

#### 3.3.2 Speech Acts

Max Boot, a columnist in The Washington Post, uses an assertive speech act of saying when he says: "The Pandora's box Trump opened won't easily be closed." The writer compares Trump's allegations (that Biden's victory comes as a result of his forged elections) to Pandora's Box. The expression "Pandora's box" makes reference to the container that the Greek legendary figure Pandora opened, dispersing all of humanity's evils onto the universe. Another assertive speech act of telling is used by the writer when he comments: "Increasingly a minority party, Republicans have lost the popular vote in seven of the past eight presidential elections". Then a commissive speech act of threatening is employed when the writer says that Republicans: "have already shown their willingness to use any means necessary to exercise power, including Mitch McConnell's stonewalling of Obama Supreme Court nominee Merrick Garland". In this sentence, the writer wants the readers to know that Republicans are ready to exert power by using any means required. More information regarding Trump's attempts to call off the elections is provided by the author by saying: "Trump's blatantly racist campaign to toss out votes in heavily black cities such as Detroit, Philadelphia, and Atlanta came to naught—this time." In this remark, the writer intends to assert that Trump failed in numerous communities with a significant black population. In this case, the writer uses another assertive speech act of asserting. In the conclusion of the text, the author criticizes Republicans for prioritizing maintaining their hold on power over preserving American democracy. That is when he says: "But far too many Republicans have shown they believe that holding onto power is more important than preserving America's democracy." This is an assertive speech act of criticizing.

#### 3.3.3 Implicature

Quality maxim is breached twice in this text. The first one when the writer says: "The Pandora's box Trump opened won't easily be closed." The writer indirectly likens Trump's claims to Pandora's Box to refer to Trump's evils. The second one when the writer mockingly criticizes the Republicans policy to maintain authority by saying: "But far too many Republicans have shown they believe that holding onto power is more important than preserving America's democracy."

#### 3.3.4 Politeness

The only maxim which is violated in this text is the approbation maxim. It is violated five times. First, the approbation maxim is violated when the writer compares Trump's claims to Pandora's Box. In this comment, the writer wants to dispraise Trump since Pandora's Box has a bad connotation. He minimizes praise of other and maximizes dispraise of other. Second, when the writer says: "Increasingly a minority party, Republicans have lost the popular vote in seven of the past eight presidential elections", in this remark, the writer dispraises the Republicans for being losers in the elections. Third, when the writer mentions the Republican's readiness to use any means required to exercise power. That is when he says: "have already shown their willingness to use any means necessary to exercise power, including Mitch McConnell's stonewalling of Obama Supreme Court nominee Merrick Garland". He minimizes praise of Republicans and maximizes dispraise of them. Fourth, the writer criticizes Trump's campaign and describes it as racist by saying: "Trump's blatantly racist campaign." By doing so, the writer violates the approbation maxim since he minimizes praise of other and maximizes dispraise of other. Fifth, in the last comment, the writer dispraises the way Republicans hold the authority by saying: "But far too many Republicans have shown they believe that holding onto power is more important than preserving America's democracy." So, he violates the maxim of approbation again. He minimizes praise of other and maximizes dispraise of other.

#### 3.3.5 Functions of Sarcasm

This text contains two functions that sarcasm serves when the writer of this text uses it. They are:

##### a. Social Control

The author of this text disputes Trump's assertions regarding the illegality of Biden's elections. The author is criticizing a higher authority. As a result, the writer is seen as a social monitor of the political environment. The writer also describes Trump's claims as Pandora's Box.

#### b. Humorous Aggression

In this text, the writer highlights traits or an incident familiar to everyone which is Republicans readiness to use any means to exercise power and criticizes them in a way that saves the other person's face. That is when the writer says: "But far too many Republicans have shown they believe that holding onto power is more important than preserving America's democracy."

#### 3.3.6 Mechanisms of Expressing Sarcasm

In this text, the writer uses two mechanisms to express the sarcastic meaning. They are the following mechanisms:

##### a. Metaphor

The author directly compares Trump's claims to the Pandora's Box in order to highlight the evils that Trump releases while criticizing the election results. Trump threatened to utilize all available resources to attempt to invalidate the elections by demonstrating their illegality.

##### b. Explication

In this text, the writer states the obvious when saying: "But far too many Republicans have shown they believe that holding onto power is more important than preserving America's democracy," to make fun of the Republicans. The writer exaggerates a certain notion which in return transforms the critical remark into a kind of mockery.

#### 3.4 Text No. (4)

##### 3.4.1 Background

The columnist criticized some American politicians for their fake biography or fabricated CV and how they were big liars about certain details of their life. In addition, the columnist criticized the bias of the partisan affiliation of politicians. Santos was under investigation because he was not Democratic like Biden.

##### 3.4.2 Speech Acts

The title of this article is an expressive speech act of greeting: "Hail to the fibber-in-chief, Joe Biden". It is a sarcastic title since there is an obvious contradiction between the word "hail" and "fibber-in-chief" from one side and between the word "hail" and the negative connotation of the sentences of the text. An assertive speech act of saying is used when the writer says: "As political liars go, George Santos is right up there," where he criticizes George Santos. The writer mentions events which occur to Santos. He uses an assertive speech act of emerging when he says that Santos appears in court to face charges of fabricating his CV during the election campaign before winning the elections. Then, the writer mentions some of the lies like "had fabricated much of his life story: his Jewish roots, his prestigious education, his career with Goldman Sachs." In doing so, he uses an assertive speech act of criticizing to criticize Santos. Again, the writer uses an assertive speech act of claiming which is an indirect speech act. He claims that there are some other politicians who are liars in the American government and at the same time they are not under investigation. Then he accuses Joe Biden of being a liar by using an assertive speech act of accusing which is an indirect speech act. He says: "One of the most shameless "fabulists" is the man currently occupying the White House. Joe Biden has lied about his family history". Then the writer uses an assertive speech act of accusing when he accuses Biden of plagiarizing "he not only plagiarized a speech by Neil Kinnock," then the writer also uses an assertive speech act of accusing when he says: "adopted the Labour leader's biography", after that he says: "falsely claiming to be descended from coal miners," the writer uses an assertive speech act of claiming. Then, the writer uses an expressive speech act of boasting when he mentions that Biden is "the first in his family to have gone to college." An assertive speech act is used when the writer says: "Biden has also lied about his education." An assertive speech act of claiming is used: "claiming to have graduated with three degrees." The writer again uses an assertive speech act of stating by saying: "finished in the "top half" of his class at law school, and received a "full academic scholarship" – none of which is true." When saying: "During his 2020 campaign, Biden repeatedly claimed to have been arrested while trying to visit Nelson Mandela in prison", the writer uses an assertive speech act of claiming. Then an expressive speech act is used to express disapproving when the writer says: "Biden's career has been a constant stream of untruths". After that, the writer uses an assertive speech act of stating by saying: "yet Democratic leaders have never suggested this renders him unfit to serve." A directive speech act of advice is used, which is indirect, when the writer says: "Maybe Santos should switch parties and run for president," the writer ironically advises Santos to change his party and to be president.

##### 3.4.3 Implicature

When the columnist says: "As political liars go, George Santos is right up there", he does not want to tell the reader that George Santos goes to a certain place. He implicates that George Santos becomes under investigation because he is a liar. In this sentence, the writer breaches the maxim of manner because there is an ambiguity in his speech. He does not directly tell the reader that he is under investigation just like other liars. Then the writer breaches the maxim of quantity when he overstates in showing Joe Biden as another liar when he writes: "But he's not the only US politician who has made up details about his past. One of the most shameless "fabulists" is the man currently occupying the White House. Joe Biden has lied about his family history". Joe Biden isn't directly mentioned by the author, who instead provides far more details than are required, breaching the quantity maxim. As is widely known, Joe Biden is currently serving as the President of the United States. Then the columnist writes many evidences which can prove that Biden is a liar. Again, the



writer breaches the maxim of quality when he says: "Biden's career has been a constant stream of untruths". The writer does not want to say directly that Joe Biden is a liar, instead, he uses metaphor to express that Biden is a liar. At the end of the article, the writer gives a mock advice for Santos. He advises him to change his party to the Democratic Party. Thus, they won't hold him responsible for his falsehood. In this comment, he breaches the quality maxim because he does not mean that Santos has to change his partisan affiliation instead he wants to convey an idea which is Biden will not face consequences for his lying since he is a Democrat and he is the president.

#### 3.4.4 Politeness

The approbation maxim is violated from the very beginning of the article, i.e., from the title itself: "Hail to the fibber-in-chief, Joe Biden". The author mockingly welcomes the President Joe Biden, calling him "the fibber-in-chief". So, the writer minimizes the praise of Biden and maximizes dispraise of Biden. Then, he violates the maxim of approbation again when he dispraises Santos by describing him as a liar. That is, in the sentence: "As political liars go, George Santos is right up there". He maximizes dispraise of other; minimizes praise of other. The approbation maxim is also violated by the writer when he criticizes Joe Biden by saying: "One of the most shameless "fabulists" is the man currently occupying the White House". He minimizes praise and maximizes dispraise of Biden's qualities. He describes the American president as "one of the most shameless fabulists". Then the writer disparages Joe Biden by recalling some of Biden's lies about his biography and how he fabricates his history during the 1988 Democratic presidential primary. So, in this case, he violates the maxim of approbation because he minimizes praise of other and maximizes dispraise of other. Then during Biden's 2020 campaign, Biden is also accused of lying about certain events to show the public the extent of his struggle for the good of the nation. That is, when the author says: "Biden repeatedly claimed to have been arrested while trying to visit Nelson Mandela in prison". The writer then attacks Biden describing him as: "a constant stream of untruths". By this blatant attack, the writer violates the maxim of approbation since he maximizes dispraise of the president and minimizes praise of him. Finally, the writer boldly and rudely voices his opinion, violating the maxim of opinion-reticence by saying: "Maybe Santos should switch parties and run for president."

#### 3.4.5 Functions of Sarcasm

There are two sarcastic functions in this text:

##### a. Social Control

The writer criticizes Joe Biden aggressively by describing him as a liar and at the same time he greets him: "Hail to the fibber-in-chief, Joe Biden". When the sarcasm has less authority than the person to whom the sarcastic comments are directed, sarcasm serves as a social control tool. In this way, individuals can monitor what is done by politicians to improve the political situation nation of the nation.

##### b. Solidarity and Social Distance

"As political liars go, George Santos is right up there", the writer distances himself from the political liars and puts Santos with them in the same place and the same group, the group of liars.

#### 3.4.6 Mechanisms of Expressing Sarcasm

The author of this text uses certain mechanisms to communicate the sarcastic message he wants to convey. These are the following:

##### a. Metonymy

The writer makes a reference to the House Ethics Committee as a place for political liars. That is when he says: "As political liars go, George Santos is right up there," he indirectly wants to say that Santos is under investigation because he fabricates his CV to win the election. Metonymy is also used when the writer says "the man currently occupying the White House." He refers to the President of America or the American administration as "the White House."

##### b. Antithesis

The title of this article contains an antithesis since there is a clear incongruity between "hail" and "fibber-in-chief." In addition, all of the sentences are critical and express a negative meaning, while "hail" refers to a positive meaning.

##### c. Shift of focus

At the beginning of the article, the writer talks about Santos and how he fabricates his life story, then shifts to Biden to draw some comparisons between the two. The writer bases his criticism on a shared basis. Although both are liars, there is a distinction in their allegiance that has an impact on the outcome. All of Biden's falsehoods are excused because he is a Democrat, but Santos is a Republican. In order to be on the safe side, the author, ironically, offers Santos to change his party allegiance.

At the end of the article, the writer shifts his focus from Biden to Santos by saying: "Biden's career has been "a constant stream of untruths", yet Democratic leaders have never suggested this renders him unfit to serve. Maybe Santos should switch parties and run for president – then all would be forgiven." He slams Biden and labels him a liar before abruptly shifting to Santos. In doing so, he intends to demonstrate the reasons why Biden should not be investigated: first, because he is a Democrat, and second, because he is the President of the United States. These are the distinctions between the two that have set Biden free.

##### d. Metaphor

The writer uses metaphor when he refers to the president Joe Biden as "fibber-in-chief". Then, the same mechanism is employed again when the writer describes Biden's position as "a constant stream of untruths" because of the lies that Biden is accused of.

e. Reasoning

The writer uses deductive thinking to reach a certain conclusion by putting hypotheses. He says: "Maybe Santos should switch parties and run for president – then all would be forgiven." There are two hypotheses in this sentence: if Santos changes his party from Republican to Democratic and if he becomes president. The conclusion, on the other hand, is that all of his lies will be forgiven.

f. Explication

The writer accuses Biden of being a liar, and then he mentions facts to make his accusing clear or to prove it right. He uses this mechanism twice. The first one when the writer talks about Biden's lies about his family history and many other lies "During the 1988 Democratic presidential primary, he not only plagiarized a speech by Neil Kinnock, but adopted the Labour leader's biography, falsely claiming to be descended from coal miners and to have been the first in his family to have gone to college." The second time when he mentions Biden's lies about his education. "Biden has also lied about his education, claiming to have "graduated with three degrees", finished in the "top half" of his class at law school, and received a "full academic scholarship" – none of which is true."

**Overall Analysis of the Texts**

Types of Analytical Model	Subtypes	Frequencies	Total
Speech Acts	Assertives	29	36
	Directives	3	
	Commissives	1	
	Declaratives	0	
	Expressives	3	
Grice's Maxims	Quantity Maxim	3	16
	Quality Maxim	10	
	Relation Maxim	0	
	Manner Maxim	3	
Politeness	Tact Maxim	2	21
	Generosity Maxim	0	
	Approbation Maxim	17	
	Modesty Maxim	0	
	Agreement Maxim	0	
	Sympathy Maxim	0	
	Obligation of S to O Maxim	0	
	Obligation of O to S Maxim	0	
	Opinion-reticence Maxim	2	
	Feeling-reticence Maxim	0	
Functions of Sarcasm	Social Control	7	10
	Declaration of Allegiance	0	
	Solidarity and Social Distance	0	
	Vending Frustration	1	
Mechanisms of Sarcasm	Humorous Aggression	2	26
	Antithesis	4	
	Repetitive Statements	0	
	Explication	5	
	Metonymy	4	
	Metaphor	6	
	Shift of Focus	3	
	Reasoning	3	
	Rhetorical Questions	1	

Assertive speech acts are used twenty nine times which means that the first hypothesis is refuted. Quality is breached ten times in the analysis. So, the second hypothesis is also refuted. The approbation maxim is employed seventeen times. It is a clear indication that the third hypothesis is refuted. Sarcasm most frequently serves the function of social control in the political texts, where it occurs seven times. So, the fourth hypothesis is supported by the analysis. Metaphor is used more than other mechanisms. It is used six times. That refers to the verification of the fifth hypothesis.

**4. Conclusions**

There are some conclusions which are achieved by the researcher. They are theoretical and practical conclusions.

*4.1 Theoretical Conclusions*

The following are the conclusions that the researcher achieves basing on the theoretical background of sarcasm:

- 1- Sarcasm is a type of irony but it is an aggressive type which is used to hurt the listener.
- 2- Irony and sarcasm are closely related to the extent that laypeople use irony and sarcasm interchangeably.
- 3- The common belief about the meaning of sarcastic speech is opposition.

- 4- Incongruity is an essential factor in expressing a sarcastic comment.
- 5- Sarcasm is used to insult or hurt a specific listener in an obvious manner especially in the spoken language.
- 6- The speaker makes a deliberate decision to use sarcasm.
- 7- Instead of employing a hurtful or insulting language, a sarcastic speaker prefers using vocabulary that is more favourable and positive.
- 8- Sarcasm always has a hidden meaning beneath its seemingly harmless words.
- 9- The greater the contradiction between what is being stated and what is really happening, the clearer the sarcasm will be.
- 10- It is a common practice to use sarcasm as a method for saving face in the social situations.
- 11- Sarcasm can be achieved verbally and nonverbally.
- 12- The ironic attitude of sarcasm is often conveyed through the use of the positive language.
- 13- Because sarcasm is primarily conveyed phonologically, it can be challenging to identify in the written language.

#### 4.2 Practical Conclusions

This section contains the practical conclusions that the researcher achieves by utilizing an eclectic model to analyze the political texts in "The Week" magazine. They are as follows:

- 1- Assertive speech acts like stating, informing, criticizing, and other types of assertives are utilized more than other types of speech acts.
- 2- Declarative speech acts are not used in the employed texts.
- 3- The nature of commissives make them the least used speech acts because they demand honesty of the speaker which contradicts with the nature of sarcasm.
- 4- Direct and indirect speech acts can express sarcasm.
- 5- The most frequent breached type of Grice's maxims is the quality maxim. It is a basic requirement to breach Grice's maxims to express sarcasm. Yet, the relation maxim is not breached in the analyzed texts.
- 6- The sarcasm breaches the quality maxim more than other maxims to make fun of others which is done by using the insincere language.
- 7- Politeness principle is utilized when expressing sarcasm. The speaker can violate the maxims of politeness to convey a mock politeness. That means the speaker can be sarcastic by breaching the maxims of politeness.
- 8- An approbation maxim is the most violated maxim in the political texts to express sarcasm.
- 9- Some of the politeness maxims (modesty maxim, agreement maxim, sympathy maxim, obligation of S to O maxim, obligation of O to S maxim, and generosity maxim) are not used in the political text to express sarcasm.
- 10- Since the authors of the political texts attempt to act as observers of the situation in the country, they frequently mirror the negative aspects of the political events in an effort to draw attention to them and find a workable solution. As a result, the primary function of irony in political texts is social control.
- 11- In the chosen data, sarcasm does not serve the functions of declaration of the allegiance and solidarity and social distance.
- 12- Metaphor is used more commonly than other mechanisms of expressing sarcasm in the political texts.
- 13- Antithesis is done through using contradicted vocabularies or contradicted situations.
- 14- No repetitive statements are used in the data of the study.
- 15- Metonymy is the least used mechanism in the political texts.
- 16- Rhetorical questions are used to convey negative evaluations by the sarcasms.

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## Appendix

### Text No. (1): Talking points - Gun legislation: Will it change anything? (July 8/July 15, 2022 p.17)

If anything, the new law “may be worse than the status quo,” said Robert Leider in The Wall Street Journal. Progressives should hate it because its provisions “are antithetical to their criminal justice reform agenda,” raising the maximum prison sentence for unlawful firearm possession and creating new racial disparities for gun ownership. Conservatives should hate it because the law is filled with vague definitions that “unelected bureaucrats or judges” will clarify in practice. Rather than provide “robust gun-control measures,” said Sidney Fussell in the New Republic, this legislation focuses on “hardening” campuses with CCTV cameras and armed guards. Turning schools into Orwellian fortresses “won’t stop the next mass shooting,” but it will inevitably lead to even greater levels of surveillance and harassment of Black and brown students. This is progress?

### Text No. (2) Best of the American columnists. "Chaos in congress: the “arsonists” on the Republican Right" (14 January 2023 | issue 1418 p. 13 The British edition)

Given the very slim Republican majority in the House, the job of speaker is going to be a nightmare for the next few years, said Jonah Goldberg in the Los Angeles Times. Washington insiders predicted last week that even if McCarthy secured the post, his tenure would be so fragile and short-lived that he’d likely “go down as the American Liz Truss”. But a weak speaker would be no bad thing. Congress has become too top-down in its operation. Legislative priorities have been “worked out almost entirely by the speaker and the senate majority leader and then presented as a fait accompli to legislators, like unimprovable stone tablets”. A messy, disputatious House where representatives play more of a role in hammering out solutions would be an improvement.

### Text No. (3) The main stories... Trump’s failed attempt to overturn the election (December 4, 2020 p.4)

The Pandora’s box Trump opened won’t easily be closed, said Max Boot in The Washington Post. Increasingly a minority party, Republicans have lost the popular vote in seven of the past eight presidential elections and have already shown “their willingness to use any means necessary to exercise power,” including Mitch McConnell’s stonewalling of Obama Supreme Court nominee Merrick Garland. Trump’s blatantly racist campaign to toss out votes in heavily black cities such as Detroit, Philadelphia, and Atlanta came to naught—this

time. But far too many Republicans have shown they believe that holding onto power “is more important than preserving America’s democracy.”

**Text No. (4) Best of the American columnists (14 January 2023 | issue 1418 p. 13 The British edition)**

**Hail to the fibber-in-chief, Joe Biden:**

As political liars go, George Santos is right up there, says Marc A. Thiessen. It has emerged that the recently elected New York Republican representative had fabricated much of his life story: his Jewish roots, his prestigious education, his career with Goldman Sachs. But he’s not the only US politician who has made up details about his past. One of the most shameless “fabulists” is the man currently occupying the White House. Joe Biden has lied about his family history. During the 1988 Democratic presidential primary, he not only plagiarized a speech by Neil Kinnock, but adopted the Labour leader’s biography, falsely claiming to be descended from coal miners and to have been the first in his family to have gone to college. Biden has also lied about his education, claiming to have “graduated with three degrees”, finished in the “top half” of his class at law school, and received a “full academic scholarship” – none of which is true. During his 2020 campaign, Biden repeatedly claimed to have been arrested while trying to visit Nelson Mandela in prison. Didn’t happen. Biden’s career has been “a constant stream of untruths”, yet Democratic leaders have never suggested this renders him unfit to serve. “Maybe Santos should switch parties and run for president – then all would be forgiven.”

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