

METAPHOR IN POLITICAL LANGUAGE

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INTRODUCTION

This particular research on metaphor in political language has been inspired by George Lakoff's open letter to the Internet titled *Metaphor in Politics* (1991). There he examines the metaphoric language used by the United States officials to justify the war in the Gulf. Having systematised the metaphoric models employed by politicians for diplomatic purposes, he claims that 'Metaphors can kill. The discourse over whether we should go to war in the gulf is panorama of metaphor' ([http://philosophy.uoregon.edu/meta-phor/lakoff-l.htm](http://philosophy.uoregon.edu/meta-<u>phor/lakoff-l.htm</u>)). The pervasiveness and power of metaphor observed by him served as an impulse to investigate the language generally used

in political overviews. Thus the article aims to generalise what metaphors are used by reviewers to talk about various political issues. The attempt is, as Lakoff formulates in one of his books, 'to construct a model of how the mind, using natural cognitive apparatus (such as conceptual metaphors ...), makes sense of some significantly wide range of phenomena, especially puzzling phenomena' (Lakoff, 1996, 156). The analysis also relies on a number of other researches of metaphoric models that serve certain political purposes, which will be presented before the analysis of the linguistic evidence.

THE INTERRELATION BETWEEN LINGUISTICS AND POLITICS

A variety of researches have been carried out on the language of politicians and what techniques they use to be persuasive and credible the main interest being linguistic strategies of being emphatic and trustworthy (Soring, Holly, 1989). Another important topic of great concern for linguists interested in the phenomenon is the analysis of political jargon and its relation to political realities (Wodak, 1989). To illustrate the wide array of such researches, the employment of so-

cio-phonological methods applied to discourse analysis should be mentioned (Moosmüller, 1989). The historical aspect is reflected in such investigations as the language of totalitarianism, e.g. the Nazi ideology (Klein, 1989). Thus all these researches concentrate mainly on the strategies of political manipulation, including 'all the linguistic levels: in the lexicon, in the syntax, on the text-and discourse level and even in the phonology (Wodak, 1989, 140). The present study

comprises only the lexical level indicators of political aspects in language, i.e. metaphoric cases of language use.

Ruth Wodak refers to a number of reasons why politicians have a highly specific language by stating that 'political groups need their own language and portray themselves via this language; they define their territory by means of their language; they signal their ideology through certain slogans and stereotypes; their ideological structure is joined together in a certain way and so is their argumentation...' (Wodak, 1989, 138). She elaborates the point by introducing possible impacts of manipulation-oriented language by stating that 'this use of language may serve to produce provocation, or to incite reflection, or to effect the emergence of a ghetto' (Wodak, 1989, 138). Since politicians have a strong motivation to use specific language, it can be expected that the language used to cover political news and phenomena will tend to be specific too.

Two more fundamental and exhaustive analyses related to the topic are George Lakoff's *Mor-*

al Politics (1996) inspired by Mark Johnson's preceding book *Moral Imagination* (1993). The two authors aim at disclosing what moral systems exist in our society by looking at the existing conceptual metaphors pervasive in our everyday language. Lakoff draws a parallel between Conservatives and Liberals' language and their moral systems. He distinguishes between two models of politicians' morality, i.e. the Strict Father (Conservatives) and the Nurturant Mother (Liberals), the community of the USA being a Family. Some minor categories that he observes in this detailed and neatly structured model will be touched upon in the analysis of the data. What Lakoff's analysis shows is that the analysis of language can disclose the coherent conceptual systems consisting of multiple models used to structure abstract phenomena. Besides, he clearly demonstrates the interrelation between worldview of different parties and 'the topic choice, word choice, and discourse forms' (Lakoff, 1996, 28).

DATA

The relevant data for the analysis have been collected from a political magazine *The Political Quarterly*, vol. 72, (No.2). The metaphors were collected manually from the journal consisting of 130 pages, which does not make a very exhaustive

source. Nevertheless, the number of them is sufficient to make certain generalisations and to notice the most widespread tendencies, as the expressions fall into particular categories some of them being significantly more dominant than others.

METAPHORS IN THE LANGUAGE OF POLITICAL OVERVIEWS

The below provided overview of sample metaphors aims to show that metaphors that generally occur in language prevail in political discourse as well. However, the frequency of certain metaphors indicates a particular treatment

of politics that tends to be rather negative. Thus most expressions highlight the repulsive nature of politics although there is a set of relatively neutral metaphors. The negative attitude to politics, as Werner Holly points out, has a long tra-

dition. The linguist makes an interesting observation that 'there were times when the word *politics* and its related words in European languages seemed to be synonymous with *feigning* or *dissembling*' (Holly, 1989, 115). Naturally, this point of view can be expected in the treatment of politics nowadays as well.

OBJECT metaphors

One of the major groups of metaphors observed in the political articles under investigation is the metaphors conceptualising certain political and economical phenomena as objects. The notions that are metaphorised are italicised in the examples provided in Appendix 1. The sample phrases being rather numerous are presented at the end of the article for the sake of saving space. The pervasiveness of this particular type of metaphor is the reflection of the generally widespread use of OBJECT metaphors in everyday language. Lakoff and Johnson observe that it is common practice to conceptualise abstractions in terms of concrete tangible objects. They group a great variety of metaphors based on representing abstract experiences as substances under the title of ontological metaphors (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980, 25). When abstract things are metaphorically materialised, they acquire shape, become movable entities, have weight and it is possible to perceive them with the help of our five senses, e.g. touching ('*abrasive conservatism*') or seeing ('*welfare system is patch*').

Furthermore, abstractions in the shape of tangible entities are viewed as being valuable. It is especially the case with votes that are systematically ascribed the feature of value as it can be observed in the following examples illustrating the metaphor VOTES ARE VALUABLES:

1. lost the Democrats crucial support
2. accumulate sufficient electoral votes

3. consolidates the Jewish vote for Gore
4. to consolidate his own electorate
5. mobilising core constituencies of the Democratic party.
6. The votes that he inadvertently garnered
7. his share of the vote had been halved
8. the principal parties captured such a large proportion of the votes.
9. Labour would have been rewarded with a majority of seats on a majority of votes
10. it can win enough Labour voters
11. chasing votes
12. Nader's Green party candidacy may have cost the Democrats the presidency.

Thus because voting is the main mechanism or procedure that leads (or not) to the political power, naturally votes are viewed as the primary interest in the political competition or even battle. The latter metaphoric aspect of politics as WAR will be elaborated with relevant metaphors further in this short study, but even at this stage we can notice that the militaristic aspect is inherent in the examples. Reified votes are won or lost as a war, captured as prisoners and mobilised as an army. As a 'scattered' possession that leads to power votes are consolidated, garnered and accumulated.

WAR metaphor

Eventually we come to the major group of metaphors that recurs throughout the whole journal, i.e. the metaphor of WAR. Military concepts are especially frequently employed to refer to political subjects. As it can be seen from the examples in Appendix 2, elections are conceptualised as a war where individual parties, which form opposing camps, have their own territories and may have allies, fight. The examples contain all the typical attributes of a literal war. Politicians 'wage' war, can 'take the White House', 'defeat' each other, become 'veterans' of war, achieve 'victories', carry out '*manoeuvres*' and gain dominance. Be-

sides, political figures or parties 'combat', 'target at' or 'attack' certain social phenomena. Hence, the metaphoric model of politics as WAR is systematic and encompasses a great number of details as numerous examples show. The tendency could be supported by Frank Boers's observation that abstract competition is frequently 'structured in terms of a FIGHT' (Boers, 1999, 47). Thus this prevailing metaphor reveals the general attitude to political competition as a fierce rivalry. It involves enemies that cannot be reconciled but strive to achieve victory. In general, it seems that when there are two participants in some social interaction, they are treated as enemies and the contact between them is structured as a fight if we bear in mind the well-known metaphor ARGUMENT IS WAR.

In relation to the war metaphor, a varied group of other negatively shaded metaphors should be accounted for. These metaphoric cases can hardly be attributed to any of the groups of the metaphors that are distinguished in this analysis, but they all bear a negative shade of meaning. Therefore, because of the attitude, which they express, they can be related to the war metaphor. The first two examples presented below contain the idea of deceptiveness and fakeness ('spurious' and 'fictionalised'), whereas the attributes 'ugly' and 'crooked' indicate physical repulsiveness of politicians or their actions:

13. propagate a spurious peace
14. presenting a fictionalised version of his governorship, to surmount ugly partisanship in the higher interest of the nation
15. most federal officials were 'crooked'
16. the third way was met with frosty hostility
17. hostility towards most of the structures of national government.

Thus politics is a sphere that is associated with a number of negative notions that could have been expected from the general attitude expressed in one of the articles of the journal: 'Politics has

become trivial and vulgar-and increasingly difficult to distinguish from entertainment' (*The Political Quarterly* 2001, 155). The citation sums up very concisely the general metaphoric model of political realities as it accounts for the negative aspect as well as the idea of entertainment. Metaphors referring to the latter notion are not numerous but still occur in political discourse:

18. the party fielded candidates in just sixteen states
19. less powerful European arena
20. take its rightful place on the world stage of nations
21. domestic party arena

In the first example politicians are treated as sports players, whereas in the second one Europe is conceptualised as a place where entertainments or other public events take place. Politics, being the main topic of the article, thus becomes that public event, which is held there. The last two examples are similar as they also view political events as theatrical actions taking place in public on the stage. At first sight POLITICS IS ENTERTAINMENT may not appear as a negative metaphor as, generally speaking, entertainment is a positive domain. However, when politics is structured in terms of it, the two notions can be seen as being incompatible because they are contrastive by their nature, i.e. entertainment is for pleasure whereas politics is related to the responsibility for a country. Because of the juxtaposition of the two domains, politics acquires the feature of the lack of seriousness.

MOTION/ DIRECTION metaphor

Hoyt Alverson in his analysis of universal time metaphors in different cultures points out that metaphors of motion and direction are especially frequent due to our essential experience of spatiality (Alverson, 1994, 34). In relation to this notion he introduces Lyons's term 'localism' and provides Lyons's motivation of the significance

of spatialisation: 'spatial expressions are more basic, grammatically, [syntactically,] and semantically, than various kinds of non-spatial expressions ... [because] spatial organisation is of central importance in human cognition' (quoted from Alverson, 1994, 34–35). We can rely on the explanation to account for the following set of examples containing this particular type of metaphor:

22. freewheeling capitalism
23. state economic steering is out of date.
24. controversy ... was gaining pace
25. Events, however, were soon to take a different turn.
26. Bush is pursuing a two-track strategy.
27. to block final voting
28. existing policies are going in the wrong direction
29. European integration has had a ratchet effect on all parties
30. There has been no backsliding
31. muddle through problems as they emerge

The set of motion metaphors could be treated as neutral or even positive metaphors as motion especially with a direction can be paralleled to progress. However, in this group of expressions most of the metaphors signify some blocking of motion, impediments or improper motion. For example, '*freewheeling*' implies casual movement, the '*steering*' of the state is no longer suitable and voting is blocked. Besides, we find examples of moving '*in the wrong direction*', '*backsliding*' and '*ratchet effect*' the latter of which implies movement just in one direction. Thus this is one more set of metaphors that is common in everyday language as it arises from our experience of ourselves as beings in a certain space. However, what is significant in this study is the attitudinal meaning of the sample phrases that again reveals the negative view of politics.

NATURAL PHENOMENA metaphors

In relation to the negatively shaded metaphors discussed above, one more group of phrases

expressing a similar attitude can be distinguished. These are metaphors based on the domain of natural phenomena:

32. ideological gulf between Nader and ...
33. Serious political conflict... will erupt
34. The international integration ... is thus believed to erode national autonomy
35. gradual erosion of old-style Euro-scepticism
36. eroding extreme left-wing influence

The first example metaphorises opinion differences as a gulf, which implies that the opposing political views cannot be reconciled. The rest of the examples are structured in terms of powerful and destructive phenomena, i.e. a volcano that will erupt and erosion. The latter notion should be dwelt upon more exhaustively. George Lakoff in his book that was presented in the introduction distinguishes a metaphoric model that he calls '*Immortality Is Degeneration*,' the signs of which metaphorically are expressed in terms of '*decay*', '*erosion*' or crumbling foundations (Lakoff, 1996, 91–92). Thus it can be generally assumed that something abstract that degenerates is conceptualised as physical destruction.

POLITICAL ORGANISATION IS A 'WHOLE' (LIMITED) ENTITY/STRUCTURE

George Lakoff in his study of metaphoric structuring of morality refers to the model of Moral Wholeness and points out the significance of the notion of wholeness. Due to this feature entities acquire such features as '*homogeneity*', '*an overall unity of form that makes an entity strong and resistant to pressures*', '*stable and predictable in the way it functions*' and '*naturalness*' (Lakoff, 1996, 90). Consequently, something that is not integral or whole '*is in danger of not holding together and therefore not being able to function*' (Lakoff, 1996, 90). Another cognitive linguist Zoltan Kövesces claims that '*this is the metaphor that underlies our conception*

of various social, legal, psychological, sexual, political, emotional, etc. unities' (Kövesces, 1999, 183). Thus these generalisations about wholeness metaphors, which are really numerous in the political journal under investigation, can be applied to our study. The metaphors of this type are presented below:

37. splintering of the Reform party
38. at the divisions that tore the Reform party apart
39. Nader's politics are structured around leftist populism
40. Ideological limits beyond which he does not venture
41. His campaign remained confined to the political margins.
42. The rifts that eventually tore the Reform party apart.
43. a process of fusion with the NLP so as to create one party.
44. an exactly tied (50–50) Senate
45. structuring an altered policy agenda
46. a serious split was further exacerbated
47. British parties are complex structures
48. The various policies interlock with one another and draw together the Treasury, the Home Office, the Department for Education
49. the importance of joined-up government and strengthen the sense of unity, coherence and purpose in a government that currently appears rather lost.
50. binding Britain further into the EU.

This numerous set of metaphors could be ascribed to the OBJECT metaphor as the structure that is referred to is a physical one. However, it is more than a simple object as the feature that is important here is unity and integration, the lack of which is a disadvantage.

Following from that, we come to a BALANCED STRUCTURE metaphor and an EDIFICE metaphor. They also support the idea of unity, the lack of which causes instability and collapse of different phenomena:

BALANCED STRUCTURE

51. the bringing of 'national life into harmony with natural law'
52. Its (that of a current system) equilibrium becomes more unstable-hence, vulnerable to sudden and explosive overthrow...

EDIFICE

53. dismantlement of social programmes
54. to begin dismantling these arrangements
55. the collapse of the tradition of public education
56. destruction of the Socialist Party
57. build an electoral coalition
58. the complex maze of institutions built up in post-war Scotland were not dismantled
59. party's collapse
60. the fall of communism

Frank Boers calls the EDIFICE metaphor as an ARCHITECTURAL one and notices its systematicity in referring to abstractions (Boers, 1999, 48). No matter how we call it, its frequency in political discourse is evident. The extent to which it underlies the conceptualisation of abstractions can be further supported by the fact that different linguists in different cognitive studies come across this particular model. For example, Zoltan Kövesces is yet another linguist, who analyses it by referring to the metaphor as ORGANIZATION IS PHYSICAL STRUCTURE. Furthermore, he provides a motivation for it by claiming that it is 'motivated by the fact that a physical object with a structure is characterized by logical and causal relations among its parts' (Kövesces, 1999, 180). Therefore, just as different parts of a physical object are interrelated, so are those of an abstract entity.

MEDICAL metaphor

To start the analysis of this metaphor, again we can refer to previous observations made by other linguists concerning this metaphor. Lakoff notices that 'morality is conceptualized as health and

immorality as disease' (Lakoff, 1996, 93). Frank Boers presents an interesting study of the way HEALTH metaphor is distributed in the editorials of *The Economist* according to seasons. His corpus-based approach has revealed that 'the domain of physical health is more likely to be used for metaphorical mapping in winter, i.e. as it tends to become more salient in people's everyday experience' (Boers, 1999, 53). The fact that is important in our investigation is the pervasiveness of the metaphor and its frequent employment to map certain abstractions including politically significant issues. Although the number of them is not immense, they form a distinctive group of metaphoric cases that clearly form a model:

61. The symptoms of recession in the economy to argue for a large-scale tax cut
62. the resolve to block Ashcroft is symptomatic of their present passivity.
63. a syndrome some of them term 'Vendrineisme'
64. Much of the party had atrophied after 1996.
65. the French economy suffers from a structural insufficiency of demand. Given such a diagnosis,
66. the cure inevitably has a Keynesian air...
67. a panacea for society's environmental ills

Political phenomena are conceptualised as diseases and possible solutions of problems are metaphorised as medicine. Again it is based on our natural bodily experience of ailments and bodily malfunctions.

LIVING ORGANISM metaphor

Another relatively frequently occurring metaphor is the metaphor ABSTRACTIONS ARE LIVING BEINGS. Judging from what abstractions can do, they appear to be alive and therefore can die, be revived or revitalised, creep, be mature and compassionate or wither away as it can be demonstrated by the examples below:

68. the demise of the Reform party
69. socialist policies for reviving the British economy
70. denounced Europe for its creeping Euro-federalism
71. revitalising the moribund membership
72. mature and progressive politics
73. 'compassionate conservatism'
74. the state withers away.

This is perhaps the most attitudinally neutral set of metaphors as the expression do not imply any evaluative aspects of the issues discussed.

Solitary cases of metaphors

This short section briefly presents solitary or very rare cases of metaphors that are grouped under headings if they appear more than once:

METAPHOR OF TIES

75. Their opposition to free trade is tied together with their opposition to mass immigration.
76. when Gore espoused their causes he surged ahead in the polls.
77. remaining wedded to the economic criteria

DEPTH ASPECT

78. A deep-seated Euro-scepticism
79. ...pro-European attitudes now run deeper in Britain
80. Political co-operation that may well deepen in years to come.

COLOUR ASPECT

81. the glittering array of new women MP's
82. political spectrum
83. politicians of all hues

LIQUID metaphor

84. policy group will certainly dissolve when it confronts a crisis
85. All these get dissolved into the warm and fluffy notions of family and community

CONTAINER metaphor

86. their investment in offensive weapons systems has been treated as an empty threat
87. wanting to become a much more inclusive party
88. a policy vacuum

Since the occurrences of these cases are very scarce, they will not be analysed in a detailed way. In addition to the very limited sets of the phrases above, it should be mentioned that there are solitary cases of such notions as balance ('*It was these voters who swung the result in the no-one's favour*'), confusion ('*...Conservatism has got tangled*') and the metaphor POWER IS A GRIP ('*the leadership should have a firm grip on policy making*').

Metaphoric political terms

Finally, it should be noticed that in the political articles under investigation there recur several conventional political terms that are metaphorical ('remained above the 5 per cent *threshold*'),

'*Shadow Cabinet*' and '*umbrella organisation*'). The noun '*threshold*' is conventionally used to speak about the necessary percentage of votes that a party needs to get in order to win some seats in the governing structures. Similarly the noun '*shadow*' as an extended meaning of the dark shape on a surface is used as an attribute to refer to the opposition party in Parliament. '*An umbrella organisation*' has become such a frequent lexical unit that it appears as an illustrative example in all the three randomly chosen dictionaries, i.e. *The New Oxford Dictionary of English* (1998), *Longman Dictionary of the English Language* (1991) and *Collins COBUILD English Language Dictionary* (1987).

CONCLUSIONS

It is acknowledged that one domain can be conceived or metaphorised in terms of different metaphoric models. Therefore, as the analysis reveals, there are various types of metaphors based on different domains that are employed in political overviews to refer to various political issues. First, it should be noted that the metaphors employed are prevailing in everyday language, e.g. ontological metaphors, and are observed in a number of other cognitive researches of different phenomena. One more and perhaps the most evident generalization is that mainly attitudinally negative metaphors are used in political discourse. The tendency can be confirmed by a numerous set of metaphors that involve the militaristic aspect. The high recurrence of the WAR metaphor highlights such features of politics as hostility,

tension between opposing parties, fierce competition, struggle for victory by gaining sufficient number of votes that are structured as valuable possessions. Furthermore, certain notions in politics are associated with fakeness and deception. The natural phenomena that are used as a domain to structure political issues have a destructive power. Motion metaphors that usually imply progress are used in political discourse in relation to the wrong direction or stagnation. Two more frequently occurring conceptual metaphors in the articles are ORGANIZATION IS A STRUCTURE and the HEALTH metaphor. Finally, the pervasiveness of metaphor in the language of political reviews can be further illustrated by the conventional metaphoric political terms.

Appendix 1. OBJECT metaphors

abrasive conservatism

a nation in bondage to its historical memories
his politics hardened after he left the White House

forging strategic alliances to equip them better for the global marketplace

forging ever closer links between welfare and work
Coverage under the French welfare system is patchy.
 A role of the active state has been successfully carved out
 in the restructuring of French capitalism and the public sector.
 flexible labour markets
 their policy is shaped and altered
 can help shape political events and issues
 tightening of abortion laws, a clampdown on illegal immigrants
 losing his seat at the general election.
 dynamics ... have to be put into a broader context.
 conserving and preserving the existing order of things
 these institutions still shape much of Scottish public life
 the Executive watered down the committee's proposals, the
 agreement was still a milestone
 shrunken electorate
 income will shrink
 The debate hinges on four questions.
 the fate of social democratic economic policy hinges on 'the
 institutional and political ability to combine...
 Social security reforms appear less pressing
 public reluctance ... to join the euro obviously weighs heavily
 on the Labour government

Appendix 2. WAR metaphors

he (President) waged electoral war
 a vote for him might allow Bush to take the White House.
 the Nader and Buchanan camps.
 Political defeat of the teachers' union
 Bush's main Democratic ally in his project is Senator Lieberman

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was Wilson's great adversary and opposed the League of Nations Treaty
 veterans of the last years of the Cold War
 Israel (with Turkey) is valued as an ally against actual and potential enemies in the Middle East ... as a military client state
 They lost the allegiance of their most prominent public representative a year earlier.
 Perot's aides encouraged Buchanan to defect to the party so that his supporters could act as a counterweight to Ventura and his allies.
 his supporters adopted 'predatory tactics' (extension on p.164)
 there were sweeping Republican congressional victories.
 involving exploration of any room to manoeuvre
 Jospin's 'new alliance'
 'class front' analysis
 the welfare front
 to combat unemployment at the EU level
 an EU that protects and enhances British interests.
 This tactic backfired.
 Conservatives should now attack state meddling in other areas of public life
 Retreating into more traditional Tory territory
 membership recruitment and retention
 a sure-fire recipe for constitutional and political instability
 outmanoeuvred ... these tactical successes
 The battle between Labour and the SNP for the dominance 'targeted' at children in poverty
 the strength of the allegations against council officers

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METAFORA POLITIKOS KALBOJE

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Santrauka

Šio straipsnio tikslas yra apžvelgti metaforų vartojimą politinėje kalboje, t. y. politinių apžvalgų kalboje. Siekiant sudaryti kuo išsamesnį metaforinį modelį, vartojamą aptariant politinius klausimus, buvo surinkti duomenys iš politinių straipsnių žurnalo. Pirmiausia, analizė parodė, jog politinėje kalboje vartojamos tos pačios konceptualiosios metaforos kaip ir kasdienėje kalboje, pav. ontologinės metaforos. Jos yra sutinkamos ir kitų kognityvistų tyrimuose, aprašančiuose skirtingų abstrakcijų metaforizavimą, kas rodo, jog vienas metaforinis modelis yra vartojamas kalbant apie skirtingas abstrakcijas. Didžiausia metaforų dalį sudaro neigiama reikšmės atspalvį turinčios metaforos. Šią tendenciją galima pagrįsti gausiais pavyzdžiais, išreiškiančiais karinį as-

pektą. KARO metafora išryškina tokius politinio pasaulio bruožus kaip priešškumas, įtampa tarp pozicijos ir opozicijos, aršus rungtyniavimas siekiant rinkėjų balsų, kurie metaforizuojami kaip vertinga nuosavybė. Be to, politika asocijuojama su apgaulė ir netikrumu. Neigiama atspalvį įgyja ir politinėse apžvalgose vartojama judėjimo metafora, kuri paprastai žymi progresą, bet čia yra susijusi su klaidinga kryptimi ar judėjimo stoka. Be minėtųjų metaforų, gana dažnai sutinkamos ORGANIZACIJOS KAIP STRUKTŪROS ir SVEIKATOS metaforos. Galiausiai, metaforos paplitimas politinėje kalboje gali būti pailiustruotas nusistovėjusiais metaforiniais politiniais terminais.

Įteikta

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