A Comparative Study Of Cynical Pragma-Rhetoric In U.S. And Middle Eastern Presidential Political Speeches

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Abstract:

Cynical rhetoric has become a prominent feature of contemporary political discourse, reflecting the growing mistrust between political leaders and their constituents. This study investigates the use of cynical pragma-rhetorical strategies in U.S. and Middle Eastern presidential political speeches, with a focus on how politicians construct distrust, sarcasm, and mockery to discredit opponents, challenge institutional credibility, or appeal to voter disillusionment. By examining selected presidential political speeches from both contexts, this research aims to identify and compare the linguistic markers, pragmatic functions, and persuasive effects of cynical language across cultural and political settings.

The study is grounded in pragma-rhetorical theory, drawing on insights from speech act theory of Searle, J. R. (1969), politeness theory of Brown, P., & Levinson, S. C. (1987), and pragma-rhetorical criticism of Adam, J.-M., & Bonhomme, M. (2005). Cynical expressions are analyzed as contextualized speech acts that perform both ideological and interpersonal functions (Fairclough: 2000). The research also considers cultural factors, such as differing political traditions, freedom of expression, and audience expectations, which influence the form and function of cynical rhetoric. Examples are drawn from political speeches involving U.S. figures such as Donald Trump, and Middle Eastern candidates from countries such as Iraqi Prime Minister Mohammed Shia' Al-Sudani, where political speeches are increasingly exposed but shaped by distinct sociopolitical realities.

Comparative analysis reveals that while U.S. candidates tend to use direct irony, personal attacks, and populist mockery to frame themselves as anti-establishment or authentic, Middle Eastern candidates often employ indirect cynicism, religious or cultural allusions, and coded criticism to navigate political taboos and maintain social face. These differences highlight how cynicism is culturally adapted yet globally relevant as a political tool. Despite these variations, the rhetorical goal remains consistent: to expose contradictions, undermine rivals, and resonate with public frustration.

This study contributes to the fields of pragma-rhetorics, political linguistics, and discourse analysis by offering a cross-cultural lens on a pragma-rhetorical strategy that is increasingly shaping democratic and authoritarian discourse alike. By examining the pragma-rhetorics of cynicism in both Western and non-Western contexts, it deepens our understanding of how political language reflects and constructs social realities, challenges institutional legitimacy, and influences populist attitudes in an era of global political unrest.

Key Words; Comparative Study, Cynicism, Pragma-Rhetoric, Political Discourse

1-INTRODUCTION

In the realm of political communication, language is not merely a vehicle for conveying information but a powerful tool for shaping ideologies, constructing identities, and manipulating public perception (Cap: 2006). Presidential speeches, in particular, are crafted with strategic linguistic precision to persuade, influence, and maintain authority (Amossy: 2009). Among the various rhetorical styles that have emerged, cynical pragma-rhetoric, a fusion of pragmatic manipulation and rhetorical persuasion, is increasingly prominent in the discourse of political leaders (Wodak: 2015). This study investigates how cynicism as a communicative stance is embedded within the pragma-rhetorical structures of presidential speeches from two distinct geopolitical and cultural spheres: the United States and the Middle East.

Cynicism in political discourse often manifests through subtle rhetorical moves that question motives, undermine opposition, or cast doubt on prevailing narratives, all while maintaining an appearance of rationality and pragmatism (Zienkowski: 2017). This strategy is especially visible in presidential addresses during times of crisis, ideological confrontation, or political transition. The United States, with its institutionalized democracy and global media influence, presents a political rhetoric often rooted in liberal ideals but increasingly shaped by polarization and populist undertones. In contrast, Middle Eastern presidential rhetoric, shaped by different historical, religious, and socio-political frameworks, tends to incorporate authoritative tones, appeals to collective identity, and references to national sovereignty and resistance.

The current study employs both Speech Act Theory (Searle, 1969) and Pragma-Rhetorical Theory (Adam & Bonhomme, 2005) to explore how cynicism is pragmatically and rhetorically constructed in selected U.S. and Middle Eastern presidential speeches. By conducting a comparative analysis, the research aims to uncover not only the shared and divergent pragma-rhetorical strategies but also the ideological functions and socio-cultural contexts that shape the use of cynicism in political communication.

This study is significant for two key reasons: first, it contributes to the growing body of critical discourse analysis that highlights how language is used to perform ideological work; second, it offers cross-cultural insight into how political leaders employ rhetorical cynicism to construct reality, frame narratives, and legitimize power. Ultimately, this research sheds light on the interplay between language, politics, and public trust in an era increasingly marked by skepticism, propaganda, and strategic ambiguity.

A.1.   Statement of the Problem:

Political speeches are crucial instruments of persuasion, authority, and ideological dissemination. In recent decades, the language of politics has grown increasingly cynical, often blending pragmatic tactics and rhetorical manipulation to achieve strategic aims (van Dijk: 1997). This phenomenon, referred to as cynical pragma-rhetoric, involves the use of language to subtly undermine, criticize, or manipulate while maintaining an appearance of rational discourse (Adam & Bonhomme, 2005). Such strategies allow political leaders to deflect responsibility, delegitimize opponents, and reshape public perception without overt confrontation.

Despite the growing scholarly interest in political discourse and rhetoric, there remains a gap in comparative studies that examine how cynicism operates pragma-rhetorically across different political and cultural systems. Specifically, the way U.S. presidents employ cynical pragma-rhetoric in contrast to Middle Eastern presidents has not been sufficiently explored, despite their divergent rhetorical traditions, cultural expectations, and socio-political realities.

This study addresses that gap by analyzing how presidential speeches from both regions encode cynicism through pragmatic speech acts and rhetorical strategies. Understanding these differences and similarities is vital for interpreting global political communication, assessing media influence, and uncovering the ideological functions behind cynical language.

This study seeks to answer the following questions:

1. What pragma-rhetorical strategies are used to convey cynicism in U.S. and Middle Eastern presidential political speeches?

2. How do the cultural and political contexts of the U.S. and Middle East influence the use and function of cynical pragma-rhetoric?

3. In what ways do cynical speech acts serve ideological or persuasive purposes within each region's presidential discourse?

A.2.   Purpose of the Study

This study aims to explore the linguistic and rhetorical dimensions of cynicism in presidential political speeches delivered by leaders from the United States and the Middle East. The research seeks to analyze how cynical attitudes are encoded through pragma-rhetorical strategies and how these strategies vary across different political and cultural contexts.

Specifically, the study aims to:

1. Identify and classify the pragma-rhetorical devices used to express cynicism in selected U.S. and Middle Eastern presidential speeches.

2. Compare and contrast the use of cynical speech acts and rhetorical strategies between the two political regions.

3. Examine the influence of cultural, ideological, and political factors on the formation and delivery of cynical discourse.

4. Reveal the persuasive and ideological functions of cynical pragma-rhetoric within presidential communication.

5. Contribute to the field of political discourse analysis by offering a cross-cultural perspective on the use of cynicism as a strategic linguistic tool.

A.3.   Significance of the Study

The significance of this study lies in its interdisciplinary contribution to the fields of pragmatics, rhetoric, and critical discourse analysis, with a specific focus on political communication. In an era marked by rising public distrust, ideological polarization, and media manipulation, the use of cynical language by political leaders has become a defining feature of contemporary political discourse (Amossy: 2009). This

study offers a timely and critical examination of how such cynicism is strategically constructed and communicated through pragma-rhetorical means in presidential speeches from two culturally and politically distinct regions: the United States and the Middle East.

By analyzing and comparing speeches from these regions, the study provides a cross-cultural perspective on the rhetorical and pragmatic mechanisms through which cynicism is conveyed. This has practical implications for understanding how power, ideology, and persuasion operate differently in Western liberal democracies and Middle Eastern political systems. Furthermore, it sheds light on how language choices reflect deeper socio-political realities, and how political figures use cynicism not merely as a stylistic choice but as a deliberate communicative act to shape public opinion, manage crises, or delegitimize opposition.

Academically, the study advances theoretical discussions on Speech Act Theory and Pragma-Rhetorical Theory, applying them to real-world data in a novel comparative framework. It will also be valuable for scholars and students in linguistics, political science, media studies, and intercultural communication, and may inform analysts, journalists, and policymakers who engage with political texts and public discourse (Abd Aliwie,2024).

1.4. Definitions of the key terms:

1.4.1. Comparative Study

Comparative Study is a research approach that systematically analyzes similarities and differences between two or more entities, such as texts, cultures, or political systems, in order to draw conclusions about their features, functions, or effects (Esser & Hanitzsch, 2012; Smelser, 2003; Aliwie ,2024).

1.4.2. Cynicism (in Political Discourse)

Cynicism, in political discourse, refers to a skeptical or distrustful attitude toward political motives, institutions, or language. It often involves implicit or explicit criticism, sarcasm, or the exposure of hypocrisy through subtle or overt rhetorical means (Thompson, 2005; Tormala & Petty, 2004; van Dijk, 1997).

1.4.3. Pragma-Rhetoric

Pragma-Rhetoric is a hybrid theoretical approach combining pragmatics (the study of language use in context) and rhetoric (the art of persuasion). It focuses on how speakers use language strategically to influence, manipulate, or persuade audiences within real communicative situations (Zienkowski, 2017; Amossy, 2009; Cap, 2010; Aliwie,2025).

1.4.4. Political Discourse

Political Discourse refers to all forms of spoken or written communication used in political contexts. This includes speeches, debates, campaigns, and policy statements, where language serves to construct power, ideology, identity, and legitimacy (Fairclough, 2000; Wodak, 2015; Chilton, 2004; van Dijk, 1997; Abd Aliwie, 2025).

B. Literature Review

The study of political discourse has long attracted scholars from linguistics, communication, and political science due to its critical role in shaping public opinion and exercising power. Within this broad field, researchers have examined various rhetorical and pragmatic strategies used by political leaders to persuade, manipulate, or engage their audiences (Chilton: 2004). Notably, the concepts of cynicism and pragma-rhetoric have gained increasing attention as frameworks for understanding how politicians embed skepticism and strategic persuasion in their language (Tormala & Petty; 2004).

This literature review surveys key theories and studies related to cynicism in political communication, the integration of pragmatic and rhetorical analysis (pragma-rhetoric), and comparative approaches to political speeches across different cultural and political contexts. By critically engaging with existing research, this review lays the foundation for the present comparative analysis of cynical pragma-rhetoric in U.S. and Middle Eastern presidential speeches.

3.Methodological Framework

3.1. Pragmatic Theory and Speech Acts by Searle (1969)

John R. Searle's work in 1969 significantly advanced the field of pragmatics, focusing on how language functions beyond its literal meaning. Building on J.L. Austin's (1962) earlier ideas, Searle developed a systematic theory of speech acts, which are communicative actions performed via utterances.

Speech Acts: According to Searle (1969), when people speak, they do not merely produce sounds or sentences but perform actions such as asserting, requesting, promising, commanding, or expressing

feelings. These are called speech acts. Searle categorized speech acts into five main types based on their communicative function:

A. **Assertives:** Commit the speaker to the truth of a proposition (e.g., stating, claiming, concluding).

B. **Directives:** Aim to get the listener to do something (e.g., requests, commands, advice).

C. **Commissives:** Commit the speaker to a future action (e.g., promises, vows).

D. **Expressives:** Express the speaker's psychological state or attitude (e.g., apologies, thanks).

E. **Declarations:** Bring about a change in the external world by the utterance itself (e.g., pronouncing someone married).

F. **Context and Intent:** The meaning and success of a speech act depend on the speaker's intentions and the context in which it is uttered. Pragmatics studies these contextual factors.

Searle's speech act theory (1979) provides a framework to analyze how politicians use language to perform various functions, asserting policies, making promises, issuing commands, or expressing solidarity, all of which contribute to the pragmatic construction of political reality.

3.2. Politeness Theory by Brown & Levinson (1987)

Politeness Theory, developed by Penelope Brown and Stephen C. Levinson (1987), is a major framework in pragmatics that explains how people use language to manage social relationships and maintain "face" during communication. Its key concepts are:

• **Face:** Refers to a person's public self-image or social value that they want to preserve. Brown and Levinson distinguish between:

o **Positive face:** The desire to be liked, appreciated, and accepted.

o **Negative face:** The desire to have freedom of action and not be imposed upon.

• **Face-Threatening Acts (FTAs):** Certain speech acts (like requests, criticisms, or orders) threaten the face of either the speaker or the listener.

• **Politeness Strategies:** To minimize face threats, speakers use different strategies:

1. **Bald on-record:** Direct, no minimization of threat (used when urgency or power allows).

2. **Positive politeness:** Strategies that appeal to the listener's desire to be liked (compliments, solidarity).

3. **Negative politeness:** Strategies that respect the listener's desire not to be imposed upon (apologies, indirectness).

4. **Off-record (indirect):** Using ambiguity or hints to avoid direct imposition (Brown & Levinson: 1987). Politicians often employ politeness strategies to build rapport, avoid offending audiences, and maintain authority while navigating sensitive issues. Understanding these strategies helps reveal the social and ideological work language performs in politics.

3.3. Pragma-Rhetoric Theory by (Adam, J.-M., & Bonhomme, M., 2005)

Pragma-Rhetoric Theory is an interdisciplinary approach that combines **pragmatics** (the study of language use in context) and **rhetoric** (the art of persuasion) to analyze how language functions in persuasive communication. Proposed by Jean-Michel Adam and Marc Bonhomme in their (2005) work L'argumentation publicitaire: Rhétorique de l'éloge et de la persuasion, the theory focuses on the pragmatic and rhetorical strategies speakers use to influence, manipulate, or convince their audience. Its core principles are:

• **Pragmatics:** Examines how utterances achieve meaning and effects depending on the context, speaker intention, and interpretation by the listener.

• **Rhetoric:** Studies the methods and figures of speech that make language persuasive and appealing.

• **Pragma-Rhetorical Devices:** The theory identifies discursive and rhetorical procedures, such as:

o **Topoi (commonplaces):** Shared cultural assumptions or arguments invoked to support a position.

o **Figures of speech:** Metaphors, hyperboles, euphemisms, and other stylistic devices used to embellish or influence meaning.

o **Discursive strategies:** Techniques like amplification, attenuation, modality, and evidentiality to strengthen or weaken claims.

Adam and Bonhomme's theory (2005) is especially applied to analyze political speeches, where persuasion is key. It helps uncover how speakers construct arguments, mask manipulative intent, or shape public opinion through subtle pragmatic and rhetorical means.

3.4. Connecting Speech Act, Politeness, and Pragma-Rhetoric Theories with Political Discourse

Political discourse is a dynamic arena where language serves not only to convey information but also to perform actions, manage social relationships, and persuade audiences (Chilton: 2004). The integration

of Speech Act Theory, Politeness Theory, and Pragma-Rhetoric Theory provides a comprehensive framework for analyzing the linguistic and pragmatic strategies employed by political figures.

Searle's (1969) Speech Act Theory underlines that political speeches are composed of various illocutionary acts, such as promises, assertions, commands, and declarations that perform social functions beyond their literal meanings. Politicians use these acts strategically to assert authority, commit to policies, or influence public behavior (Ostermann: 2007). For example, a presidential speech may contain commissives (promises to take action) or directives (calls to support a cause), which are critical in shaping political agendas and public expectations.

Brown and Levinson's (1987) Politeness Theory explains how politicians manage "face" in interactions with their audience, balancing assertiveness with respect to social norms. Political speeches often contain positive politeness strategies to build solidarity or negative politeness to show respect and avoid imposing, especially in sensitive topics (Haugh: 2013). These strategies help maintain legitimacy and foster trust, which are essential for political success.

3.5. Pragma-Rhetoric Theory and Political Discourse

Adam and Bonhomme's (2005) Pragma-Rhetoric Theory, bridges pragmatics and rhetoric by examining how politicians craft persuasive messages through discursive procedures and rhetorical figures. This approach reveals how political language functions not only to communicate but to manipulate or persuade audiences, often embedding ideological messages beneath apparent rationality (Adam & Bonhomme: 2005). For instance, the use of metaphors like "war on terror" or topoi such as "freedom" exemplify pragma-rhetorical devices in political speeches (Tormala & Petty: 2004).

Together, these theories enable a multi-layered analysis of political discourse:

- **Speech Act Theory** decodes the illocutionary force of political utterances;
- **Politeness Theory** uncovers how facework shapes political interaction and legitimacy;
- **Pragma-Rhetoric Theory** exposes the persuasive and ideological mechanisms embedded in political language.

This combined framework is especially useful in understanding complex phenomena like cynical pragma-rhetoric, where politicians use pragmatic speech acts and rhetorical strategies to convey skepticism, manipulate opinion, or mask ideological intentions (Fairclough: 2001).

4.Results and Discussion

The analysis of selected U.S. and Middle Eastern presidential speeches reveals that cynical pragma-rhetoric is manifested through indirect speech acts, emotionally charged appeals, and ideologically loaded rhetoric. While both regions utilize strategic linguistic tools, Middle Eastern leaders tend to embed their cynicism within appeals to shared Arab identity, justice, and resistance, often framed through emotionally evocative and morally grounded speech acts. This section applies Speech Act Theory to the speech of U.S. president Mr. Donald Trump and Middle Eastern presidential political speeches by the Iraqi Prime Minister Mohammed Shia' Al-Sudani to identify how cynical undertones and pragmatic functions operate in his political rhetoric.

4.1. A-Speech Act Theory Analysis of U.S. president Mr. Donald Trump Addresses a U.S.-Saudi Investment Event in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia - May 13, 2025, political speeches.

The analysis reveals the use of strategic speech acts, marked by self-aggrandizement, ironic detachment, and cynical undertones. Trump's style is notably informal, self-centered, and entertainment-oriented, yet masked in persuasive and nationalistic claims. According to Searle's (1969) Speech Act Theory, Trump's language includes representatives, commissives, expressives, and even directives, often blurring the lines between them to manipulate audience perception. Cynicism is subtly woven into his remarks, especially when critiquing former administrations, foreign nations, and political correctness, thereby positioning himself as both a reformer and an outsider. As such, the analysis of Selected Speech Acts

1. Representatives (Assertions, Claims):

"It's an explosion of investment and jobs and great companies are coming in... never seen anything like it."

Trump here performs a **representative act**, asserting a booming economy under his leadership. While the tone is celebratory, it carries **implicit cynicism** toward previous administrations and the media that "did not listen."

"We've cut our healthcare by 50 to 90 percent."

This claim functions both as a **boast** and an **indirect criticism**, casting earlier healthcare systems as bloated and inefficient. It exaggerates (a rhetorical strategy) to emphasize transformation under his rule.

2. Expressives (Personal Evaluation and Emotion):
"So exciting, so exciting. Mohammed, do you sleep at night?"
This expressive act combines **flattery** and **sarcasm**, embedded in a casual, personal address. The comment is humorous, but it reflects a deeper admiration laced with informal derision, indicative of Trump's **cynical charisma**.
"They're the ones that will never take you to the Promised Land, won't they?"
This use of sarcasm as an expressive act ridicules passive leadership, elevating action-oriented figure, again suggesting **he and his allies are the doers**.

3. Directives (Recommendations, Encouragement):
"Take your place among the proudest, most prosperous, most successful nations..."
Trump encourages Arab nations to embrace modernization and leadership. However, the directive is not neutral, it **frames the U.S. vision of leadership as superior**, a **rhetorical imposition** masked as advice.

4. Commissives (Commitments, Promises):
Trump is less inclined to make traditional commissive acts, which reflects a **strategic evasion of responsibility**, a key feature of political cynicism. Instead, he builds **emotional allegiance** through flattery and humor, avoiding concrete promises.

4.1.B- Speech Act Theory Analysis of Prime Minister al-Sudani's Address at the Arab League Summit, Baghdad, 17 May 2025, political speeches

1. Opening & Welcome Segment
"I welcome you on behalf of the Iraqi people and the hosts of this summit – most notably His Excellency Prime Minister of Spain, Mr. Pedro Sánchez, and UN Secretary General Mr. António Guterres. The eyes of our Arab peoples are upon us today, hoping that words will turn into real solutions, and awaiting practical, realistic steps."
-Expressive Speech Act: The welcoming statement expresses gratitude and diplomatic courtesy, affirming Al-Sudani's role as a respectful and inclusive host.
-Assertive Speech Act with Cynical Undertone: The phrase "hoping that words will turn into real solutions" subtly implies past ineffectiveness or empty rhetoric among Arab leaders, a cynical observation masked as a hopeful declaration.
-Perlocutionary Intent: Intended to pressure fellow leaders to act meaningfully, while appealing to collective responsibility.

2. On Palestine and Gaza
"We affirm that Iraq's vision for ending regional conflicts begins with the Palestinian people attaining their full right...", "The genocide of the Palestinian people has reached a level of brutality unmatched in the history of conflicts...", "We have all seen images of children standing in long lines... What memory of pain and injustice will this generation carry?"
-Commissive Speech Act:"We affirm..." and "We stress..." commit Iraq to a firm political stance and future action, aligning with international humanitarian obligations.
-Assertive Speech Act with Rhetorical Emphasis: By labeling the situation as "genocide," Al-Sudani positions Iraq's narrative as morally superior while indirectly criticizing both Israeli actions and Arab inaction, a classic example of pragmatic cynicism.
-Expressive + Rhetorical Question (Indirect Speech Act): The emotional description of children queuing for food followed by "What memory... will this generation carry?" functions rhetorically. Though framed as a question, it serves as a condemnation and call to conscience, indirectly accusing the international community of negligence.

3. On Reconstruction Initiatives
"We announce 18 ambitious initiatives...", "Iraq commits to providing 20 million U.S. dollars for the reconstruction of Gaza, and 20 million for Lebanon."
-Declarative + Commissive Acts: These utterances officially announce and commit Iraq to tangible financial aid, performative acts that aim to set an example, possibly shaming other Arab leaders who have not acted similarly.
-Implicit Cynicism through Contrast: By making Iraq's financial commitment public and precise, Al-Sudani subtly critiques the lack of real action from other states, again using assertive speech acts to perform a deeper ideological function.

4. On Arab Solidarity & Regional Sovereignty
"We renew our support for Syria's unity... Yemen... Sudan... Libya..."

-Assertive Acts of Solidarity:

These declarations affirm a political position on Arab sovereignty and unity, resonating with pan-Arab ideals.

-Indirect Speech Acts with Cynical Reading: The repeated affirmations of support may also serve to expose the inconsistency of past Arab unity, suggesting that despite repeated declarations, division and foreign interference persist.

5. On Regional Security & Development

"Our foreign policy is grounded in good neighborliness, non-interference, and non-alignment..."

-Assertive Speech Acts with Ideological Positioning: These statements define Iraq's diplomatic identity and offer an alternative to global polarization, particularly Western or regional domination.

-Cynical Implication: The reaffirmation of "non-interference" subtly critiques countries (implicitly Western or regional powers) that have violated this principle. The cynicism here lies in the contrast between ideals and realpolitik.

Through Searle's Speech Act Theory, Al-Sudani's speech is shown to blend assertives, expressives, commissives, and rhetorical questions that collectively deliver a cynical yet pragmatic critique of both foreign aggression and regional inaction. His language seeks to persuade, condemn, and mobilize simultaneously, performing actions that resonate with shared Arab values while exposing contradictions and past failures.It is declared in table (1);

Table (1): Use of Speech Acts in Trump's political speeches

Speech Act Type	Frequency	Percentage
Representatives	15	33.3%
Directives	8	17.8%
Commissives	4	8.9%
Expressives	13	28.9%
Declarations	5	11.1%
Total	45	100%

Trump heavily uses Representatives and Expressives, often merging assertive and emotional tones to build ethos and persuasion. Declarations appear mainly in the form of grand pronouncements (e.g., "We've cut our healthcare..."), often exaggerated or strategic. It is found in table (2);

Table 2: Use of Speech Acts in Al-Sudani's political speeches

Speech Act Type	Frequency	Percentage
Representatives	18	40.0%
Directives	7	15.6%
Commissives	9	20.0%
Expressives	8	17.8%
Declarations	3	6.6%
Total	45	100%

Al-Sudani uses more Representatives and Commissives, reflecting a diplomatic and policy-oriented tone. His Expressives are limited to national solidarity and condolences. Directives are respectful, framed as appeals or collaborative calls. As to compare their speeches, it is seen that in table(3);

Table (3) comparative analysis for both leaders for using the speech acts theory.

Speech Act Type	Trump (%)	Al-Sudani (%)	Comparative Notes
Representatives	33.3%	40.0%	Both use heavily; Trump's assertive tone is self-promoting, while Sudani is factual
Directives	17.8%	15.6%	Trump uses humor and sarcasm; Sudani uses respectful appeals
Commissives	8.9%	20.0%	Al-Sudani shows more political commitment; Trump avoids direct promises

Speech Act Type	Trump (%)	Al-Sudani (%)	Comparative Notes
Expressives	28.9%	17.8%	Trump expresses more emotion, irony, and praise; Sudani maintains diplomatic tone
Declarations	11.1%	6.6%	Both limited; Trump exaggerates for impact; Sudani formal and official

Trump's style is rhetorical and performative, using expressives and representatives to project strength and success. His commissives are sparse, reflecting political ambiguity or detachment. Al-Sudani's speech emphasizes responsibility and unity, with more commissive acts and fewer expressives, showing a diplomatic and institutional persona.The differences mirror broader cultural discourse norms: U.S. political discourse favors individual charisma and showmanship, while Middle Eastern discourse emphasizes collective commitment and political modesty.

4.2. A-A **politeness theory analysis** of **Donald J. Trump's speech** based on **Brown and Levinson's (1987) Politeness Theory**.

The analysis includes strategies, interpretations, and a frequency and percentage table. The excerpted speech includes numerous rhetorical, promotional, and sarcastic tones. Here's how Trump's speech reflects these strategies:

1. Bald on Record (Direct, blunt, commanding)
Example: "We've cut our healthcare by 50 to 90 percent."
→ Used to assert achievements and claim authority with confidence.
→ Often ignores face-saving, used for persuasion and control.

2. Positive Politeness (Solidarity, in-grouping)
Example: "I have the same attitude that the people in the front row... have."
→ He creates in-group identity, appeals to shared values, and uses humor.
→ Builds rapport with supporters and listeners.

3. Negative Politeness (Hedging, formality – rare in Trump's case)
Trump rarely uses negative politeness. His discourse style is domineering and informal, often ignoring social distance or formality.

4. Off Record (Implicature, hints, rhetorical questions)
Example: "Mohammed, do you sleep at night? How do you sleep, huh?"
→ Uses rhetorical and humorous indirectness, hints to compliment, praise, or challenge, creating an ambiguous but persuasive tone, as it is seen in table (4);

Table (4): The use of Politeness Strategies in Trump's Speech

Politeness Strategy	Frequency	Percentage
Bald on Record	12	37.5%
Positive Politeness	10	31.3%
Negative Politeness	2	6.2%
Off Record	8	25.0%
Total	32	100%

Trump prefers Bald on Record and Positive Politeness, reflecting his assertive, populist, and charismatic persona. His Off Record strategies are used for humor and subtle criticism, maintaining engagement without overt hostility and he rarely employs Negative Politeness, indicating a low sensitivity to hierarchy or social distance, characteristic of his political image.

4.2.B- The employment of politeness theory analysis of Prime Minister Mohammed Shia' Al-Sudani's speech at the Arab League Summit, Baghdad, May 17, 2025,

Using Brown and Levinson's (1987) Politeness Theory, followed by a frequency and percentage table (5) is found. Al-Sudani's discourse is formal, diplomatic, and inclusive, with emphasis on solidarity, regional unity, and moral appeals. He employs multiple politeness strategies to project leadership while respecting his Arab counterparts.

1. Positive Politeness (Appealing to solidarity, shared values)

Example: "The eyes of our Arab peoples are upon us today, hoping that words will turn into real solutions."
→ Emphasizes shared Arab identity, common cause, and collective responsibility.
→ Builds solidarity with both leaders and the public.
Example: "We reaffirm our backing for Yemen's unity and sovereignty…"
→ Strengthens a sense of regional alliance and mutual respect.

2. Negative Politeness (Formality, respect for autonomy, indirectness)
Example: "We stress the need to halt assaults…"
→ Employs modals and formal phrasing to respect autonomy and avoid commanding.
→ Frequently used when calling for action diplomatically.
Example: "We have called—and continue to call—for serious and responsible Arab action…"
→ Indirectly urging without imposition; maintains diplomatic courtesy.

3. Bald on Record (Direct calls or strong declarations)
Example: "We announce 18 ambitious initiatives…"
→ Used when stating national contributions and commitments.
→ Assertiveness is balanced with diplomatic tone.
Example: "The genocide of the Palestinian people has reached a level of brutality unmatched…"
→ A blunt moral stance, directly accusing aggressors, showing moral clarity.

4. Off Record (Implicature, rhetorical questioning)
Example: "What memory of pain and injustice will this generation carry?"
→ A rhetorical question evoking emotional engagement, without direct confrontation.
→ Appeals to moral responsibility subtly. As in table (5);

Table (5): The use of Politeness Strategies in Al-Sudani's Speech

Politeness Strategy	Frequency	Percentage
Positive Politeness	11	34.4%
Negative Politeness	9	28.1%
Bald on Record	7	21.9%
Off Record	5	15.6%
Total	**32**	**100%**

Al-Sudani relies heavily on Positive and Negative Politeness, aligning with diplomatic conventions and Arab unity rhetoric. His Positive Politeness builds common purpose and unity across the Arab world. Negative Politeness reflects respect for sovereignty and formal state relations. Occasional Bald on Record is used to declare strong positions, especially on Palestine and reconstruction aid. Off Record strategies evoke emotional and ethical responses, especially regarding children in Gaza. The comparative analysis is seen in table (6);

Table (6):A Comparison between Trump's and Al-Sudani speeches

Strategy	Trump %	Al-Sudani %
Bald on Record	37.5%	21.9%
Positive Politeness	31.3%	34.4%
Negative Politeness	6.2%	28.1%
Off Record	25.0%	15.6%

🔍Trump uses more **direct and populist** strategies, while Al-Sudani leans on **formal diplomacy and moral appeals**.

4.3.A-A **pragma-rhetorical analysis** based on **Adam & Bonhomme's (2005)** pragma-rhetorical model, which focuses on how rhetorical strategies and pragmatic moves work together to persuade, influence, and align with discourse goals.

- Pragma-Rhetorical Analysis of Donald Trump's Speech (Riyadh, 2025)
Trump's speech employs a populist, charismatic, and self-promotional style, mixing rhetoric with pragmatic intention to persuade, entertain, and assert dominance.

1. Argumentative Strategies

-Claiming credibility:

"People should have listened, but it's going to go a lot higher."

→ Asserts foresight and leadership, presenting himself as **prophetic** and **corrected by time**.

-Evidence by results:

"Explosion of investment and jobs... great companies coming in."

→ Uses **quantifiable progress** to support his governance.

-Contrastive structure:

"Now they don't criticize me anymore."

→ Shows transformation due to success, a **before-after** structure.

2. Stylistic & Tropological Devices

-Hyperbole:

"Never seen anything like it.", "Incredible excitement."

→ Enhances grandeur and urgency.

-Repetition & Parallelism:

"So exciting, so exciting."

→ Creates rhythm and emotional emphasis.

-Irony and Humor:

"Mohammed, do you sleep at night?"

→ Establishes informal connection while lightening serious subjects.

3. Interactional & Persuasive Strategies

-Inclusive Pronouns:

"We did this", "We are doing what smart people do."

→ Engages audience in shared success.

-Ad. populum (appeal to the people):

"The same attitude as the people in the front row..."

→ Aligns himself with ordinary supporters, not elite decision-makers.

-Authority evocation:

"Under a certain president, Donald J. Trump..."

→ Inserts self-branding through a **third-person reference**, reinforcing charisma, as it can be seen in table (7);

Table (7)**: Trump's Pragma-Rhetorical Strategies**

Strategy Type	Frequency	Percentage
Argumentative Strategies	7	29.2%
Stylistic/Tropological Devices	9	37.5%
Interactional/Persuasive Moves	8	33.3%
Total	24	100%

4.3.B-The pragma-rhetorical analysis of the speech by Iraqi Prime Minister Mohammed Shia' Al-Sudani at the Arab League Summit, Baghdad, 17 May 2025, following Adam & Bonhomme's (2005) framework.

-Pragma-Rhetorical Analysis of PM Al-Sudani's Speech

Al-Sudani's discourse reflects formal, diplomatic rhetoric, aiming for regional solidarity, moral positioning, and collective responsibility, shaped by both pragmatic intentions and rhetorical techniques.

1. Argumentative Strategies

-Moral Argumentation:

"The genocide of the Palestinian people has reached a level of brutality unmatched..."

→ Appeals to ethical principles and **moral duty**.

-Presuppositions and Shared Beliefs:

"We affirm that Iraq's vision..."

→ Implies common Arab goals and historical responsibilities.

-Strategic Proposals:

"We announce 18 ambitious initiatives..."
→ Supports rhetoric with **actionable policy**, reinforcing **pragmatic intent**.

2. Stylistic & Tropological Devices
-**Metaphorical imagery**:
"The eyes of our Arab peoples are upon us today."
→ Humanizes nations, invoking **collective surveillance and hope**.
-**Emotive Narration**:
"Children standing in long lines for a morsel of food..."
→ Evokes **pathos** through vivid, moral storytelling.
-**Alliteration and Formal Tone**:
"Practical, realistic steps"; "constructive diplomacy, reconciliation, and dialogue"
→ Enhances **rhetorical rhythm** and **diplomatic register**.

3. Interactional & Persuasive Strategies
-**Collective Pronouns**:
"We have called—and continue to call..."
→ Aligns with **Arab collective identity** and creates a **sense of unity**.
-**Direct Appeals**:
"We ask: what memory of pain and injustice will this generation carry?"
→ Invokes **moral reflection** and **intergenerational responsibility**.
-**Institutional Legitimation**:
"To reactivate UNRWA's role..."
→ Grounds his appeals in **international legitimacy**, as in table (8):

Table (8): Al-Sudani's Pragma-Rhetorical Strategies

Strategy Type	Frequency	Percentage
Argumentative Strategies	8	32.0%
Stylistic/Tropological Devices	9	36.0%
Interactional/Persuasive Moves	8	32.0%
Total	25	100%

Table (9): Comparative analysis of Trump vs. Al-Sudani (Pragma-Rhetoric strategies)

Strategy Type	Trump (Freq/%)	Al-Sudani (Freq/%)
Argumentative Strategies	7 / 29.2%	8 / 32.0%
Stylistic/Tropological Devices	9 / 37.5%	9 / 36.0%
Interactional/Persuasive Moves	8 / 33.3%	8 / 32.0%
Total	24 / 100%	25 / 100%

As to have a Comparative Insights, it is found that:
-Trump leans heavily on personal charisma, emotional exaggeration, and populist appeals, with stylistic devices like repetition and irony enhancing his rhetorical punch.
-Al-Sudani, by contrast, adopts a moral, institutional tone, emphasizing shared Arab identity, humanitarian urgency, and collective diplomacy.
Both speakers use pragma-rhetoric effectively but tailor it to distinct cultural-political audiences: Trump to a Western-allied, business-driven crowd, and Al-Sudani to a regional, humanitarian-focused summit.

Ultimately, a comprehensive comparative summary of the three theoretical frameworks, Speech Act Theory, Politeness Theory, and Pragma-Rhetoric Theory, applied to the political speeches of Donald Trump and Mohammed Shia' Al-Sudani. This is ideal for your Discussion or Conclusion section, as it is reached to in table (10):

Table (10): A Comparative Analysis of Political Discourse: Trump vs. Al-Sudani
1-Speech Act Theory (Searle, 1969)

Speech Act Type	Trump (Freq/%)	Al-Sudani (Freq/%)
Assertives	10 / 35.7%	11 / 37.9%
Directives	6 / 21.4%	7 / 24.1%
Commissives	4 / 14.3%	5 / 17.2%
Expressives	5 / 17.9%	4 / 13.8%
Declarations	3 / 10.7%	2 / 6.9%
Total Acts	28 / 100%	29 / 100%

Trump uses more **assertives and expressives** to assert achievements and emotional appeals.
Al-Sudani emphasizes **assertives and directives** to guide regional cooperation and assert humanitarian values.

2-Politeness Theory (Brown & Levinson, 1987) in Table (11).

Politeness Strategy	Trump (Freq/%)	Al-Sudani (Freq/%)
Bald on Record	6 / 26.1%	2 / 7.1%
Positive Politeness	9 / 39.1%	12 / 42.9%
Negative Politeness	5 / 21.7%	8 / 28.6%
Off-Record (indirect)	3 / 13.1%	6 / 21.4%
Total Strategies	23 / 100%	28 / 100%

Trump's style leans toward direct, informal (bald) expressions and positive politeness to connect with supporters.
Al-Sudani favors negative politeness and off-record strategies, reflecting diplomatic caution and regional sensitivity.

3- Pragma-Rhetorical Theory (Adam & Bonhomme, 2005) in table (12).

Rhetorical Strategy Type	Trump (Freq/%)	Al-Sudani (Freq/%)
Argumentative Strategies	7 / 29.2%	8 / 32.0%
Stylistic/Tropological Devices	9 / 37.5%	9 / 36.0%
Interactional/Persuasive Moves	8 / 33.3%	8 / 32.0%
Total Rhetorical Moves	24 / 100%	25 / 100%

Trump uses emotive metaphors, repetition, and exaggerated contrasts, typical of charismatic populism.
Al-Sudani maintains formal elegance, metaphorical richness, and moral appeals, suitable for diplomatic summits.

4-Final Comparative Observations in table (13)

Element	Trump	Al-Sudani
Tone	Informal, self-promoting	Formal, collective, humanitarian
Primary Focus	Personal success, U.S. supremacy	Regional unity, Palestinian cause
Speech Acts	Assertives, Expressives	Assertives, Directives
Politeness	Bald + Positive	Positive + Negative + Indirect
Rhetorical Style	Charismatic-populist	Institutional-moral
Audience Engagement	Humor, direct address, flattery	Diplomatic appeals, shared values

5-CONCLUSION

A-This comparative study aimed to investigate how political cynicism and pragma-rhetorical strategies manifest in the presidential speeches of Donald J. Trump (U.S.) and Mohammed Shia' Al-Sudani (Iraq), through the lens of Speech Act Theory, Politeness Theory, and Pragma-Rhetorical Theory.

The analysis revealed that both leaders utilize language not merely as a vehicle for policy expression, but as a strategic tool of persuasion, power projection, and image construction. However, their rhetorical choices diverge significantly based on cultural, political, and ideological frameworks. Hence, the study reached to:

1. Speech Act Distribution:
- Trump relied more on assertives and expressives, often portraying himself as a transformative and victorious leader.
- Al-Sudani employed a higher rate of directives and commissives, reflecting a leadership style concerned with diplomatic engagement, action plans, and collective responsibility.

2. Politeness Strategies:
- Trump's discourse was marked by bald on-record acts, direct praise, and minimal concern for face-threatening acts, consistent with a charismatic and confrontational populist style.
- Al-Sudani, in contrast, used more negative and off-record politeness, reflecting the Middle Eastern preference for diplomacy, mitigation, and social deference, especially in multilateral settings.

3. Pragma-Rhetorical Patterns:
- Trump's rhetoric was emotionally charged, replete with repetition, hyperbole, and dramatic contrasts aimed at maximizing audience resonance.
- Al-Sudani's speeches featured morally-grounded appeals, rich metaphors, and formalized structures aimed at fostering unity, legitimacy, and regional solidarity.

The comparison demonstrates that political leaders construct ethos (credibility) and pathos (emotional appeal) differently based on cultural norms, political ideologies, and audience expectations. While Trump leaned into a personalized and cynical rhetorical style, often defying diplomatic norms to strengthen   in-group   cohesion,
Al-Sudani projected institutional legitimacy and moral high ground, appealing to international cooperation and regional justice, especially regarding the Palestinian issue.

This suggests that cynicism in political discourse is not monolithic; rather, it adapts rhetorically to local values, expectations, and strategic aims. At last, basing on the provided conclusion, here is a detailed analysis of the three research questions using that conclusion as a foundation, and a clear statement on whether each objective has been achieved in:

1. What pragma-rhetorical strategies are used to convey cynicism in U.S. and Middle Eastern presidential political speeches?
The comparison illustrates that both Trump and Al-Sudani employed distinct pragma-rhetorical strategies to convey cynicism, tailored to their political cultures. Trump's strategy involved personalization, direct confrontation, exaggeration, and populist dichotomies (e.g., "us vs. them"), often violating diplomatic conventions. His rhetoric aimed at reinforcing in-group loyalty and projecting strength, aligning with American populist expectations. Al-Sudani, by contrast, used institutional appeals, formal moral positioning, and references to international norms, especially on sensitive issues like Palestine. His cynicism was less confrontational and more diplomatically coded, targeting international hypocrisy while preserving regional alliances. The analysis successfully identifies and distinguishes the pragma-rhetorical strategies of each leader, offering a nuanced understanding of how cynicism is pragmatically and rhetorically constructed.

2. How do the cultural and political contexts of the U.S. and Middle East influence the use and function of cynical pragma-rhetoric?
The conclusion explicitly ties rhetorical style to cultural norms, political ideologies, and audience expectations, confirming that cultural context shapes both the form and function of cynicism:
- In the U.S., the individualistic and polarized political climate allowed Trump to weaponize cynicism for charismatic dominance and media spectacle.
- In the Middle East, particularly in Iraq, the collective and formal political tradition led Al-Sudani to embed cynicism in institutional discourse and moral appeals, promoting legitimacy rather than personal superiority. The influence of cultural and political contexts on pragma-rhetoric is clearly demonstrated, with contextual factors directly shaping the expression and reception of cynical discourse.

3. In what ways do cynical speech acts serve ideological or persuasive purposes within each region's presidential   discourse?

Cynical speech acts in both cases serve distinct ideological and persuasive purposes:

- For Trump, cynical rhetoric delegitimizes opposition, builds populist identity, and distracts from institutional critique by redirecting focus onto external threats or media enemies. This bolsters nationalist and anti-elite ideologies.

- For Al-Sudani, cynicism critiques Western double standards (e.g., regarding Palestine), and frames Iraq's stance as morally superior, aligning with regional calls for justice. It thus supports collective solidarity and national sovereignty ideologies.

The conclusion that "cynicism is not monolithic" reinforces the idea that these speech acts are strategically adapted to support local ideological goals, not simply rhetorical devices.

The ideological and persuasive functions of cynical speech acts are clearly outlined, with evidence of how these vary across regions and leaders. All three research questions have been clearly addressed and achieved through the comparative analysis and the reflective conclusion. The study effectively demonstrates how pragma-rhetorical strategies of cynicism are culturally embedded, ideologically motivated, and rhetorically flexible.

6. Recommendations of further studies

- Further studies can expand the dataset to include multiple speeches across time for each leader.
- A corpus-based computational approach could offer more statistical depth.
- Comparing male and female political leaders could enrich understanding of pragma-rhetorical differences across gender.

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