



Dissecting Sociopolitical Paradigms: A Social Semiotic Scrutiny of Pakistani Political Caricatures within a Curated Corpus of English Newspaper Editorial Content

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the socio-semiotic evaluation of political illustrations which portray political and social themes within the editorials of Pakistani English newspapers. Political cartoons have ability to say about crucial facts that could be much difficult to say in words due to some political pressure. A political cartoon is a cartoon that makes a point about a political issue or event. In order to evaluate the significance of cartooning in mass media and the relationship between cartoons and politics in the perspective of the Press. Three newspapers were selected for this research due their higher circulation in Pakistan. The newspapers were, The Dawn, The Nation and Daily Times. All the selected cartoons were analyzed qualitatively under the umbrella of Barthes approach. This research takes a semiotic approach. This research will help to find out that how a cartoonist uses color technique in Pakistani Perspective? Which is the most highlighted issue and how a cartoonist use different tools to portray his specific character with implicit words? This study employs to analyses political visual discourse.



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INTRODUCTION

This study investigates the socio-semiotic evaluation of political illustrations, which portray political and social themes within the editorials of Pakistani English newspapers. Print media

discourses can shape and disseminate a specific interpretation of fact to the general audience. Political cartoons are an efficient technique for cartoonists to communicate their thoughts and opinions on current political events, activities, or persons in a smart and aesthetic manner. A political cartoon uses a graphic, image, or sketch to convey a message, information, or ideas, whereas a standard newspaper article uses hundreds of words. As Heitzmann (1998) puts it, "the caricature delivers its intended point quickly, sometimes subtly, sometimes brashly, but it generally reaches more people than editorials". The wide acceptance of political cartoons stems from the fact that even people with limited reading abilities can grasp and relate to the concepts expressed in an effective and entertaining manner. The purpose of this research is to investigate the language and semiotic features of cartoons in the editorial sections of Pakistani English newspaper editorials. More specifically, the study investigates how editorials in Pakistani English newspapers use satirical cartoon art to highlight political and social issues; what political and social issues are projected through cartoons; how the language and semiotic actions within a cartoon art project its drawer's perception; and how such choices indirectly construct public opinion. This investigation will benefit ongoing work in the areas of discourse analysis, discourse criticism, and multimodality.

What is cartoon?

A cartoon, according to the Museum of Graphic Art, is "any whimsical, facetious graphic expression that caricatures any component of human behavior. A caricature, as defined by Joseph Conrad, is "putting the persona of an absurdity on the body of a truth. "A good caricature, like any piece of art, is more accurate to life than reality itself (Annibale Carracci.)

Famous Cartoonists of Pakistan:

Nigar Nazar (born 1953) is a female Pakistani cartoonist. Gogi, her most well-known character, is a young urban Pakistani lady battling with her flaws in the face of oppressive social conventions. She is the president and CEO of Gogi Studios. Nazar's famous cartoon persona, Gogi, has appeared in publications all around the world. Gogi is a contemporary Pakistani Muslim woman having short hair, long lashes, and a polka dot clothing. Nazar published five "awareness drawings on major political problems such as violent extremism, nepotism, sectarian violence, girl's education, and women's rights" in 2009. Three collections of her cartoons, as well as calendars, pamphlets, diaries, and posters, have been produced. She has written three children's books about hygiene.

Feica Feica is a cartoonist from Pakistan who mocks Pakistani politics. Since 1979, he has worked in national publications and newspapers while also displaying his work both a painter and artist. He is now retired and works as an analyst and consultant for a variety of organizations both locally and globally, as well as providing visiting lectures at colleges and universities. He began working at the Frontier Post in 1987. He departed the nation shortly after serving at Frontier Post to pursue a career with his American peers in New York. He spent some time at Columbia University before travelling to London to start working on a venture with The Jang Group. He joined Dawn in 1992, shortly after return to Pakistan, and served in the position of Editorial Cartoonist until 2017, when he relocated permanently to Karachi and retired from the organization.

Jawed Iqbal Jawed Iqbal born in the Pakistani city of Sialkot, Punjab. He has 38 years of professional experience. Jawed Iqbal is linked with the Urdu daily Daily Jang, which has the

greatest circulation in Pakistan and abroad. Jawed's approach is modern, and his drawings are fresh, which is difficult for a cartoonist to sustain over three decades. Pakistan has harsh blasphemy laws as well as a tradition of political violence. Cartoonists in Pakistan must exercise caution when creating their works. Still, Pakistani cartoonists find methods to mock those in power as well as religious radicals. Jawed Iqbal claims he does not mock religion or sex. Instead, he is concerned with the regular guy and his everyday issues. His drawings are about power outages, petrol crises and current political figures.

Political caricatures:

Political cartooning is a tiny rectangular shape place in newspapers where a cartoonist shapes and encodes the message. The primary goal of a political cartoon is to sway readers, and cartoonists use persuasive techniques to do this. Techniques, as previously stated. These tend to amuse the audience through sarcasm and humor. Their cynical character can have an immense effect on community because sarcasm is not necessarily satirical but can also be unpleasant or bitter.

This is a complex form of mass communication. Political cartoons are a potent instrument for shaping public opinion and can impact public opinion on a variety of issues. These serve as a vehicle for establishing social agendas. Choosing relevant and sensitive problems that have the potential to shape and influence public opinion.

Research questions:

1. How does a cartoonist use color technique in Pakistani Newspapers?
2. How does a cartoonist use signs and symbols to draw an image?
3. Which are the some most highlighted issues in using different tools to portray specific characters in the form of images?

Significance of the study:

The study has significance because it demonstrates how cartoons may be used to convey a politically correct yet humorous version of unpleasant political and social problems in Pakistani culture. The study examines how the cartoonist expertly projects inequality, nepotism, and other social ills in order to educate the general public. The research will educate readers on the different persuasive features found in political cartoons, such as symbolism, analogy, exaggeration, labelling, and irony. Through cartoons, the study would depict the true image of Pakistan's socio-political atmosphere.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Purpose of caricatures:

DeSousa Medhurst (1982), cartoons on politics can make readers laugh at various situations and characters when used for amusement purposes. Second, the use of political cartoons for aggression reduction gives readers a way to let out their displeasure and annoyance with certain events. Thirdly, Political cartoons are often used to set the agenda and do so in a humorous way. Last but not least, political cartoons serve as framing devices by offering particular frames regarding a given problem in constrained dimensions.

Cartoonists are not comedians, they are people who make difference in community (Frank swoboda, 2003).

According to Treanor & Matease (2009) cartoons may have two categories:

1. Social comment cartoons
2. Political cartoons

But both have strong impact on readers. They offer specific frames within which readers can analyze the social and political landscape of a nation (DeSousa & Medhurst, 1982). Coupe (1969) wrote that "like all journalists, the artist is concerned with the emergence and exploitation of public opinion" (p. 82), as cartoons offer a secure forum for criticism of society to air opinions and elevate public voices (Ashfaq, 2008).

Previous studies:

It has an impact on readers' perceptions of politicians. Politicians may or may not benefit from the impact. It is a humorous, lighthearted, and fun kind of communication that can be used to shape public opinion. Political cartoon studies in the past have emphasized the nature and purposes of these images. For instance, Streicher (1965, as referenced in Benoit, Klyukovski, McHale, & Airne, 2001) looked at the communicative role of political cartoons and investigated the impact of political cartoons on public opinion regarding the Clinton-Lewinsky-Starr scandal, which involved President Clinton's impeachment hearings.

Use of Colors:

Color has the power to capture your gaze, calm you down, irritate you, or convey an important message to viewers. Color is important in everyone's lives since it is culturally relevant and has the power to affect our decisions. Color theory and the way to use color in cartoons to communicate a specific concept or idea are generally well understood by animators. However, when animating, it's also crucial to consider color psychology, which may assist you take your visuals to the next level. While making cartoons, color is a crucial visual device to consider. "The Meanings of Colors" from 2012, Cerrato, H., explains how the proper use of color may improve the running of a business. He discussed the uses of many colors in business and their both good and bad connotations.

Types of meanings:

Conceptual meaning- This types of meaning sometimes is also known as denotative or cognitive meaning. It is the literal, dictionary, just straightforward meaning of the any form of sign.

Connotative meaning- Connotative meaning is the implied or hidden meaning of the sign. Connotative meaning may differ from culture to culture, person to person, may change from time to time or sometimes universally standardized. These meaning can negative or positive.

Social meaning- Social meaning refers to make use of language for the regulation and establishment of social relations. It is an official way of expressing the meanings. Social meaning is used to express in a formal way including condolences, good wishes, blessing or confessions. For example, —domicile, residence, abode, homel, these four words have same meaning. _Residence's a formal word and _Domicile' is more formal word than _residence' and even more official. _Abode 'word has poetic meaning and _home 'contains affective meaning.

Affective or Emotive meaning- Emotive meaning is arisen from emotions or personal feeling of speaker or writer. The meaning refers to affective association created in the speech or writings and evoked in reader by the writer or speaker, simply speaker or writer to persuade and to engage the reader's or listener's emotions. For example, using *_home_* instead of *_house_*. Non-emotive sentence- A girl was begging in the rain. Emotive Sentence- An innocent girl was begging in the heavy rain having no umbrella.

Reflected meaning- When a word or sign has more than one conceptual meaning or multiple conceptual meanings, then the meaning is said to be reflected meaning. Reflected meaning always creates ambiguities.

Collocative meaning- Collocation means adjacence of two words or sounds. Collocative meaning is arisen by the collocative associations of two adjacent words. These words always appear together and communicate meaning by their adjacence. A collocation makes the language interesting and beautifies it. For example, *_heavy rain_* instead of saying strong rain or powerful rain. Similarly, *_strong smell_*, *_opinion poll_* instead of *_view poll_*.

Thematic meaning- Thematic meaning is communicated when the speaker speaks or organizes or portrays the message through the selection of words, focusing of words and stressing the words. For example: (i) only I was waiting in the hall for you I was the only girl there, who was waiting for you in the hall. (ii) She wears expensive cloths always.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study employs qualitative methods to analyze political and social visual discourse. Kress and Leeuwen's (1996) visual communication approach rely on Halliday's (1978) socio-semantic discourse theory. Two critical components can be employed to analyze visual images in this model: (1) the participants and (2) the relations. Multimodal discourse refers to communication that occurs on various modes when humans communicate through texts and in real time. These various modes have varied affordances and limits, and we explain how certain 'cultural instruments' make some activities easier and others more difficult. The researcher has determined that Ronaldo Barthes' technique is the best appropriate one for this particular research project. It provides an explanation of every term and concept using both connotative and denotative definitions.

Three newspapers were selected for data collection. Images during the year of January 2023 to September 2023 were collected. This was not possible to discuss all social issues that's why most popular issues of this year picked up like inflation, electricity prices, joblessness. 7 images are selected from The Dawn newspaper, 5 from Daily Times, 6 from The Nation.

A set of presumptions and ideas from semiotics, or the study of signs, enable the systemic study of symbolic systems. Semiotics was founded by the Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure (1857–1913), (Culler, 1977). The main origins of the theory, underlying semiotics are the works of American philosopher Charles Peirce (1931), Charles Morris, and Saussure (1915/1966). Language is only one of several sign systems with differing degrees of unity, application, and complexity, even though semiotics is founded on language. Semiotic systems include Morse code, etiquette, arithmetic, music, and even road signs.

The relationships within sign systems tend to be diverse, ranging from homological to analogous to metaphoric, and they can be articulated or connected in a free or tight way. Social semioticians

view language's structural units as functionally analogous to social interactions, group dynamics, beliefs, behaviors, and social life.

There are numerous types of relationships that occur between expression and its contents because all of these connections are social and arbitrary. These connections are usually communal and shared, and they provide as a significant source of the concepts, norms, customs, traditions, and culinary expertise referred to as "culture" (Barley, 1983; Culler, 1975). Culture serves as a point of reference and a tool for forming beliefs about the veracity of speech (Eco, 1979, p. 71–72). Sometimes referred to as paradigms, these relationships exist between groups of signs. When multiple paradigms or meaning domains are gathered together, they form an area (Bourdieu, 1977, p. 47).

Peirce defines signals broadly, focusing on how they are either conceptually or semiotically tied to their objects. In the sign system, he establishes a triadic link between the signifier, the symbol, and the interpretant. These two philosophers influenced other semioticians, who added to the science of semiotics by their investigation and analysis of sign development. One of those semioticians is Roland Barthes. Barthes considers the sign in light of both figurative and connotative meanings in his writings (1957, 1964, 1972, 1977). He separates the signification system into three parts: linguistic message (text), non-coded iconic message (literal/denoted image), and coded iconic message (symbolic/connoted image). This study applies Barthes' notions of both denotation and connotation by relying on all three messages. Because Barthes' method may be used to identify and clarify the connotative and denotative meanings of caricatures, it is appropriate for this research.

Data collection

Three newspapers were selected for this research due their higher circulation in Pakistan. The newspapers were, The Dawn, The Nation, and Daily Times. All the selected cartoons were analyzed qualitatively. Semiotic analysis was conducted to understand their perception. The important points about these newspapers are below.

The Dawn

An English-language daily from Pakistan named Dawn was first published around British India in 1941. It is the biggest English newspaper of Pakistan and also the official record of the nation. The Dawn Media Group, that additionally owns the regional radio station CityFM89 and marketing and media journal Aurora, has Dawn as its flagship journal. On October 26, 1941, Pakistan's founding father Muhammad Ali Jinnah founded the newspaper in Delhi with the intention of turning it into a spokesperson for the All-India Muslim League. On October 12, 1942, Latifi Press issued the first edition. It is headquartered in Karachi and has offices in Lahore, Peshawar, Quetta, and Islamabad's capital city in addition to having correspondents abroad. Its weekday circulation as of 2010 was above 109,000. Zaffar Abbas is the newspaper's current editor-in-chief.

The Nation

The Nation is an English-language newspaper that is published in Lahore, Pakistan, and is owned by the Majid Nizami Trust. The Nation's Executive Editor is Rameeza Nizami. She is the adoptive child of the late Majid Nizami, a well-known journalist from Pakistan (3 April 1928 – 26 July 2014). Leading daily newspaper The Nation is situated in Lahore, Pakistan. For more

than three decades, the newspaper has been in the forefront of Pakistan's media scene. It sets the bar for influencing public discourse and opinion on important topics while giving its readers dependable, trustworthy news coverage.

Daily Times

The Daily Times (DT) serves as a Pakistani daily that is printed in English. It was founded on April 9, 2002, and is published simultaneously in Lahore and Islamabad. Salmaan Taseer, a member of the Pakistan People's Party and the governor of Punjab, owned the newspaper. The Daily Times is a publication that supports secular and liberal ideologies. The Federation of Pakistan Media Society website lists The Daily Times as one of its member publications.

Content analysis

A strategy, method, or research instrument for examining or compiling every facet of material in any format is content analysis. In content analysis, every single element of the content is coded. For the purpose of analyzing every political cartoon that was gathered, a code book was created, and codes were assigned to each of the research's variables and sub-variables. Political cartoon images are used to clarify the majority of the phrases. Each image has been selected based on the data gathered for the study to enhance comprehension of the variable.

Data analysis

These images have collected from the newspapers during the year of 2023. The data chosen for analysis is on the base of similar issues like inflation, joblessness, electricity prices and bills. All three newspapers represented the social issues in their own way.

The Dawn:

Theme: Due to inflation and high prices of fuel and electricity, people are worried and they choose unfair means to meet up their basic needs. People use illegal means to run their electronic appliances. They put wires directly on transformers or on main wires which is too much dangerous. That's why police take strict reaction against electricity theft.



***Image 1:** (Inflation) 8 September, 2023*

Denotation: This image has taken from the newspaper 'THE DAWN'. This cartoon is a depiction of that time when electricity theft was on its peak. Many people use illegal ways to use electricity, due to high price of a single unite of electricity.

Connotation:

Text: The textual part of this image ‘crackdown on power theft’ is giving a clear meaning that police is taking strict action against the people who are using electricity by illegal means.

Characters: There are two characters in this image. A police officer and a thief. A policeman running behind the thief, who is not literally a thief of money but electricity.

Signs: A stick, which means a strict reaction, his apart legs showing the action of running

Symbols: An electricity bulb in thief’s hand is a symbol of electricity. The mask of this character is a symbol of thief.

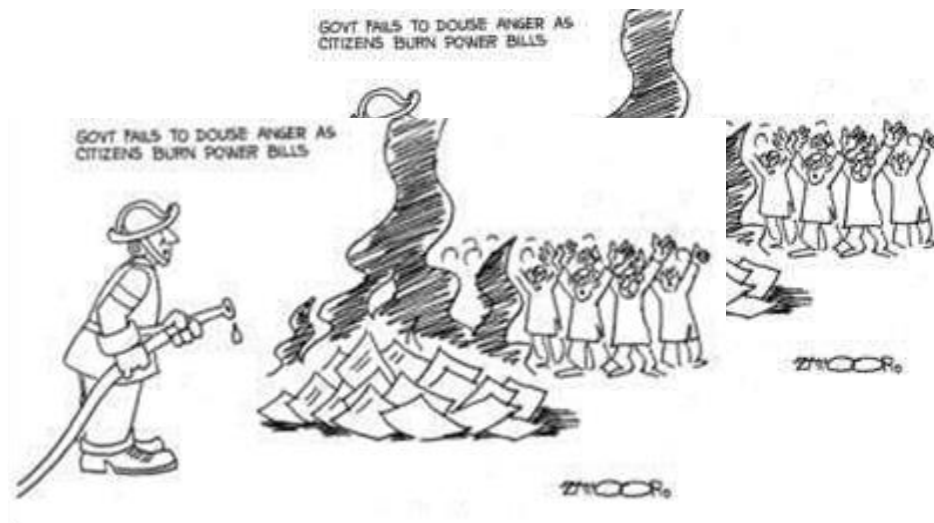


Image 2: (Price hike in electricity bills) 31Aug, 2023, *The Dawn*

Denotation: This image has taken from the newspaper ‘THE DAWN’. This cartoon is a depiction of that time when price hike in electricity bills was on its peak in summers. Many people refused to pay the bill and burned their electricity bills as a sign of protest.

Connotation:

Text: The textual part of this image ‘government fails to douse anger as citizens burn power bills’ is giving a clear meaning that people burning their electricity bills and protesting against government policy of price hike in electricity bills, on the other hand, government seems to be failing in mitigating their anger.

The Nation:

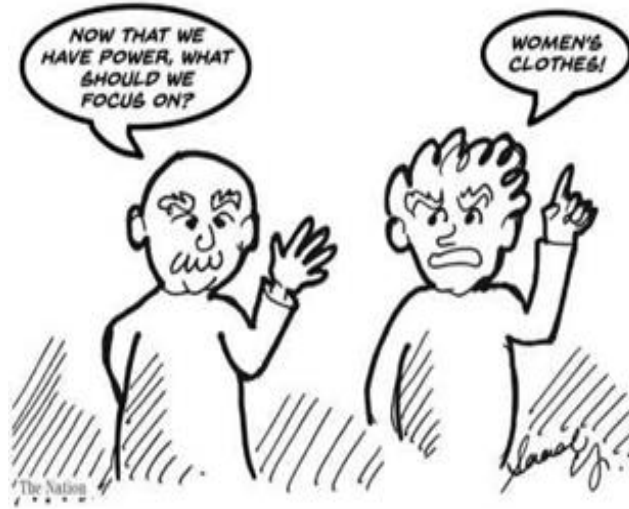


Image 3: (*Objectification of a woman*) April, 11, 2023

Denotation: This image has taken from the newspaper 'THE NATION'. This cartoon depicts the nature of men who even after getting power think of women's clothes.

Connotation:

Text: The textual part of this image 'now that we have power what should we focus on' and the other answering 'women's clothes' showing the typical mentality of men who have strict stance regarding women dressing style and their clothes.

Characters: There are two characters in this image. One asking a question and the other giving the answer. The 1st one asks about what they should be focusing on after getting power. The other one replies women's clothes which shows the typical mentality of men when it comes to women in terms of their clothing style etc.

Signs: The man raising finger shows his attitude towards women who only focuses on their dresses etc.

Symbols: No such symbol is used.



Image 4: (Leadership Problem) 14 Feb, 2023

Denotation: This image has taken from the newspaper ‘THE NATION’. This cartoon is a depiction of a man following his leader. While the second person is walking ahead of him holding a placard with a crossed heart on it.

Connotation:

Text: The textual part of this image ‘where are you going?’ is giving a clear meaning that people follow their leaders blindly wherever they go. The other text ‘valentines day’ show that man seems to be manipulating his follower and is going somewhere else.

Characters: There are two characters in this image. A man who seems to be a follower of a leader walking behind him asking where was he going to. And the other character who seems to be his leader walking ahead of him seems to be fooling him to lead him somewhere for his own interest.

Signs: The sign of a crossed heart on the placard shows his stance who is against love and his his answer shows the double standards of the man walking ahead of his follower as his placard shows differently.

Symbols: A heart is a symbol of love and the cross on it speaks against it. Whereas, man walking behind shows the blind faith on his leader who is asking the question surprisingly and still following him.

Denotation: This image has taken from the newspaper ‘THE NATION’. This cartoon is a depiction of the costly education system of foreign countries. It further depicts that getting a good education is getting quite difficult for poor people and cost their whole life-time savings.

Connotation:

Text: The textual part of this image of a boy saying, ‘abut I have got admission at a very good university abroad’ is showing his happiness over getting admission and when his father asks about the cost he replies, ‘all your savings’ which gives a clear meaning that education is very expensive these days and it cost a lot of money of their parents.

Characters: There are two characters in this image. A boy telling his father about his admission at a foreign university and his father asking about the cost of it. The boy replies your life time savings.



Image 5: (Educational System) 21 Feb, 2023

Signs: The wide-open eyes of father's reaction on his son's reply your life savings show his shock and grief.

Symbols: The overall image symbolizes the fact that education system is quite costly these days and a poor man is hardly able to afford it.

Daily Times

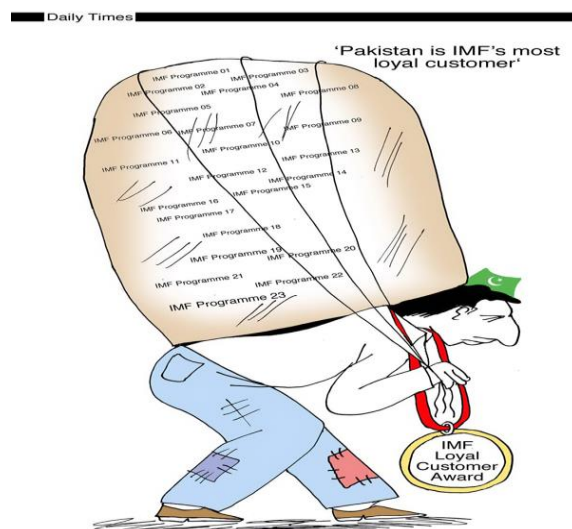


Image 6: (IMF Loan) 19 Feb, 2023

Denotation: This image has taken from the newspaper 'DAILY TIMES'. This cartoon is a depiction of current situation in the country where inflation is increasing day by day and employment has also curbed the people.

Connotation:

Text: The textual part of this image 'inflation' written on the tree is giving a clear meaning that inflation is increasing day by day making people unable to reach the food items especially fruits and besides that unemployment has also made the situation worse by chaining them from getting there.

Characters: There are three characters in this image watching inflation being increased day by day and one of them is chained and unable to reach the fruits.

Signs: The tree shows the inflation of fruits and the chain of unemployment curbing the people making the situation even worse.

Symbols: The torn clothes of people show that they are poor and helpless in front of this increasing inflation and unemployment has also chained them making the situation worse for them.

CONCLUSION

At the end of this study is based on selective images. The data is based on the most prominent concerns, such as politics, electricity, unemployment, and inflation. The majority of the photographs have the publishing date and month indicated. The discussed caricatures depicted about inflation and genuine problems of Pakistani people who are anxious, unhappy, and going through a period of poverty. The current study comes to the conclusion that cartooning has a significant role in newspapers. Female caricatures are avoided by all newspapers since women's issues are among the most delicate ones in our nation, which means that there are fewer female characters in the media and the rhetorical tactics are employed to make veiled comments and influence readers. Rhetorical devices are employed in both spoken and visual forms. Political cartoons effectively employ vocabulary, humor, and rhetoric to heighten their impact. The examination shows how words, capital letters, and boldface are used in the political cartoon's text. Words like this are intentionally employed to draw the reader in and highlight key points. Caricatures undoubtedly accurately portray the news, sometimes in a denotative and sometimes in a connotative sense. A cartoonist's pen may depict any circumstance in a unique way. Political caricatures are a type of visual satire in which political personalities, events, or beliefs are parodied through the use of exaggerated features and symbols. The power of political cartoons to influence public opinion is one of their main effects. The study contributed a fantastic job in promoting root causes of Pakistani people. However, as the data above makes abundantly evident, 75% of caricatures are in black and white, whereas just 25% of photos are colorful, according to this study. By integrating backdrop and color, images could be made to look more appealing. Given that colors have distinct meanings of their own, they can add colors to convey some message. Additionally, there are no discernible facial expressions.

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