

CARTOONING POLITICAL IDEOLOGIES: A SEMIOTIC ANALYSIS OF POLITICAL CARTOONS ON PAKISTANI SOCIAL MEDIA

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ABSTRACT

In this research article we will examine how images used in political cartoons shared on social media and digital media convey political ideology through the use of semiotics. Using Barthes' model of semiotic analysis from 1957, we will look at how different visual signs, captions, caricatures, spatial relationships, and objects are used to create denotatives, connotative, and mythic meanings. The cartoons that were selected for analysis addressed key ideological issues in the political discourse of Pakistan, including elections and their impact upon society, economic crisis and dependence on the International Monetary Fund (IMF), coalition politics, terrorism, relationships between civil and military authorities, corruption, democratic reforms, struggles for leadership, and conflict with India. The analysis has revealed that the way in which the political events depicted in the cartoons are depicted and communicated by the cartoons is not simply communicated; rather, when portrayed in a humorous, satirical, exaggerated manner, or through the use of irony and visual metaphor, the events become compressed into ideologically charged narratives. In examining how the relationship between signifiers and signifieds makes the power, accountability, nationalism, governance, and public distrust visible to the audience, the analysis reveals how power is accessed through the use of semiotic codes when individuals share meaning with one another. The study also argues that the dynamic relationship between cartoonists and audiences represents a semiotic process whereby political meaning is constructed and negotiated through use of shared cultural codes and intertextual references. In conclusion, this research identifies political cartoons as persuasive visual texts contributing to the shaping of public opinion and sociopolitical discourse within Pakistan.

Keywords: Cartoon, Ideology, Semiotic Analysis, Political Communication, Pakistani Social Media, Barthes, Humor, Satire.

INTRODUCTION

Social networking services around the globe have made sharing, transmitting, and consuming information easier, quicker, more accessible, and available to all people than ever before, creating new forms of communication and expression. In

Pakistan, social networking services have become significant platforms for political discourse, as they have provided individuals with opportunities to express their opinions, engage in debate, and share a variety of media types (including political cartoons). (Forceville, 2008).

This study will employ a semiotic analysis of political cartoons shared on Pakistani social networking services by examining the interconnectedness of visual communication, linguistic expression, and how ideologies are represented. Through analysing the symbolic and discursive features employed within these political cartoons, this study will examine how ideologies are constructed, contested, and negotiated through digitisation.

Semiotics provides a strong theoretical framework for examining the processes of the production, interpretation, and meaning of signs and symbols (Forceville, 2008). By using semiotics as an analytical lens for political cartoons, the visual and textual elements of political cartoons can be examined to understand the social and political messages communicated, along with the ideological features present within these cartoons, have been produced (Forceville, 2008).

Social media is a powerful tool for the democratic spread of various viewpoints by allowing for quick sharing and broad exposure to them. Political cartoons are easily shared and seen on social media because of its friendly format, and both factors affect how people communicate and share ideas about politics, as well as how they form their social identities. By looking specifically at this topic through the lens of Pakistani culture, we can see how these cartoons reflect the political climate of Pakistan and how different ideas are expressed, challenged, and ultimately portrayed in the online realm (El Refaie, 2009). This study will look at both the visual and verbal elements used in political cartoons to provide insight into how Pittsburgh-based political cartoonists are using these tools as a method to portray and challenge political beliefs in digital formats. Researchers have previously studied the relationship between society and language, showing that they are closely connected to each other (Triana, Sukmandari & Lestari, 2023). Each type of visual representation has a distinct meaning in its own right, as well as having individual meanings and associations based upon the creator's subjective experiences and feelings. In the respective fields of linguistics and semiotics, the media acts as a significant mediator of our understanding, beliefs,

sociocultural relationships, and identity forms. Thus, one can see why linguistic and semiotic approaches to examine the representation of reality through the narrative of people and events by way of specific discourses is of interest in the examination of the role of the media as a form of language and the way it is shaped by the surrounding Pakistani social construct.

One of the most important ways that the media provides coverage for international events is through translation. Translation has a direct impact on how certain images, perceptions, and opinions construct the societal view of these events in Pakistan (Baker, 2018). Another example of how translation has an impact on society is in political cartoons. Cartoons have played an important role in conveying social and political messages, through their use of humour, thus providing a unique opportunity for researchers to analyse the translational aspects of cartoons in Pakistan through inter-linguistic and inter-semiotic translation analyses (Al-Jabri, 2017).

While there has been considerable research regarding humour translation in multimodal texts (e.g., comics or films), there is a growing body of scholarly literature on inter-linguistic and inter-semiotic translations in the field of political cartoons in the context of Pakistan. As a result, cartoons facilitate various interpretations, misunderstandings, and difficulties with cultural and ideological translation due to the integration of the visual and verbal elements in a political cartoon in The Pakistani setting. The social nature of language means it is determined by the society in which it is utilized (e.g., formal vs. informal). In this regard, social phenomena of society also influence language (every language act within a particular social context/in Pakistan is an element of the broader linguistic process). Language is used to communicate ideology and use power to connect different viewpoints of an individual and their social actions creating both ideological beliefs in Pakistan and the experience of individuals. Therefore, when attempting to study ideology, a language analysis must be considered, as the meaning created will assist in continuing the existence of dominance in Pakistani society through language. Fairclough (2013) argues that

language and power have a two-way relationship; power behind discourse; this refers to how power and the relations through discourse are represented, and the power in discourse describes how power relations (these can be institutional) shape and construct forms of discourse in social institutions. Similarly, visual signs across digital communication networks do not operate as isolated creative works; rather, they serve as persuasive visual texts that maintain and communicate complex cultural beliefs. According to Riaz et al. (2024), semiotic explorations of visual media are crucial because they lay bare the mythic stories that "influence public awareness" in a world saturated with signs. This dynamic is highly pronounced on Pakistani social media channels. Political cartoonists leverage this exact semiotic architecture to condense volatile structural issues—such as IMF dependence, electoral integrity, and civil-military relations—into highly compressed, ideologically charged visual narratives that directly shape public opinion and ongoing sociopolitical discourse.

While traditional Pakistani literature uses local cultural frameworks to promote harmony and spirituality (Sukhera, Riaz, & Tahir, 2024), digital political cartoons do the opposite. They subvert these shared cultural codes using satire, irony, and exaggeration. By shifting the focus from peaceful literary motifs to highly charged visual illustrations, this study reveals how cartoonists weaponize familiar cultural symbols to expose governance failures, electoral crises, and public distrust. Political cartoons are one of the major sections of newspapers and provide an opportunity for connecting with audiences and understanding socio-political perspectives from around the world, especially in Pakistan. Political cartoons can convey a lot of meaning in a small amount of space and therefore can be very impactful in terms of creating a meaningful message, often accomplishing this through the use of humorous and politically relevant designs. Understanding a political cartoon requires both an understanding of the humor contained in the design, as well as an understanding of the political context that the cartoon is depicting.

This research project is focused on the use of political cartoons as a means of sharing politicized beliefs in social media in Pakistan, while also contributing to the growing body of research in numerous academic areas, including Linguistics, Discourse Analysis, and Semiotic Analysis. This study will provide significant contributions to educators in the area of Urdu language instruction and academics studying ideologies within the discourse of social media in Pakistan. In particular, this research project aims to reveal how Islam has been portrayed in political cartoons on social media in Pakistan, and to showcase the ideology that affects the creation of such representations. The research study will provide semiotic analysis within a qualitative method of investigating political cartoons related to Islam on socio-technical networks in Pakistan. The study's goal is to break down how language, when manipulated, uses visuals (and thus, what people think) to create meanings in relation to the intended impact on someone's cognitive process within the realm of social media in Pakistan. It also focuses on how language, power and ideology, combines to affect the thought process of those using language to communicate through social media in Pakistan.

Social media has changed the way that people communicate with each other and share information. It provides different opportunities to share ideas with each other, participate in discussions about politics, and share political cartoons, among other things. In Pakistan, political cartoons have become an effective way to convey ideology, create opinions, and shape views about society within the context of social media. However, despite the increase in political cartoons available and their effectiveness within Pakistani social media, there has not been enough research conducted that examines the semiotics of these cartoons and how they contribute to the construction and dissemination of ideology. There is limited research on how the visuals and the words in political cartoons published on social media in Pakistan provide representation and negotiation of ideologies. The main objectives of this research are mentioned below,

The objectives of this research are as follows:

1. To investigate how users of social media channels from Pakistan interpret, interact with, and respond to political cartoons which are uploaded to those channels.
2. To assess how the interaction between the users of the social media channels and political cartoons posted to those channels influences the users' development and formation of their ideological beliefs.
3. To evaluate the effect that the political cartoons that have been posted to social media channels in Pakistan have had upon the socio-political environment of Pakistan.

The implications of this study go beyond the immediate nature of social media use in Pakistan to include social and political dynamics in Pakistan related to how political cartoons affect public perceptions, attitudes, and perhaps influence public opinion, social cohesion and political discussions among citizens. This study will provide a greater understanding of cultural and social dynamics in Pakistan through an examination of political cartoons on social media.

LITERATURE REVIEW

While mainstream Pakistani newspapers privilege elite, institutional voices to legitimize state authority during national crises (Hussain et al., 2026), social media cartoons offer a stark ideological counter-narrative. Instead of protecting top-down authority, digital cartoonists use visual satire to subvert this framing, exposing structural weaknesses and giving symbolic form to the public grievances that mainstream, authority-centered reporting often sidelines. The transition to digital spaces in Pakistan has fundamentally changed how audiences decode information. While digital environments offer structural flexibility and new ways to process content, technology must align with clear communication goals to prevent confusion (Bhatti et al., 2024). This shift is highly evident in public political spaces; on social media, political cartoons function as hybrid texts that combine traditional satire with digital imagery. Consequently, active social media users must deploy their digital literacy to decode, contest, and negotiate complex national crises

rather than relying on standard textual commentary.

Cartoons can be traced back to ancient times; however it is only relatively recently (within the last few hundred years) that they have developed into a unique medium for providing social and political commentary. Throughout their development as a unique medium, cartoons have consistently shown their ability to act as a reflection of society, encourage reflection upon current events and facilitate dialogue amongst individuals and groups. According to Kunzle (1973), in "History of the Comic Strip" there is much to be learned about the origins of sequential art including a detailed discussion of the early forms of pictorial representation produced during the period spanning the 14th - 19th centuries within Europe. These early works provided the basis for creating modern cartoons and comic strips. Many people attribute the origins of political cartoons to British artist James Gillray, a cartoonist from the late 18th century (Eppinger, 2020) whose satirical drawings employed visual metaphors and caricature technique(s) for commenting on contemporary politics. He provided an example as well as a reference point for an entire generation of cartoonists that would follow him. Robinson 2011 provides a thorough discussion on the rise of comic strips as a form of entertainment from the late 1800's onward in his book "The Comics: An Illustrated History of Comic Strip Art". The various genres and styles of art over the course of the twentieth century are captured within this publication through its examination of Pakistan's political cartoon history. Political cartoons have become a way for readers to see how different events within Pakistan's history were expressed through print and how they are often treated with less scholarly discourse through a historical perspective. The first political cartoon or cartoons of post-independence (after August 14, 1947) Pakistan are included within the print publications that demonstrate the socio-political climate of a newly independent country through political cartoons, e.g., the assessment and critique of political leadership.

The capacity of media mediums to shape internal public schema is heavily documented within contemporary Pakistani communication studies. Scholars have noted that media acts as a structural cultivator, establishing deep-seated cognitive frameworks that influence how audiences interpret societal ideals. For instance, Tahir et al. (2024) demonstrate how visual and narrative media exposure—such as cartoons and films—gradually "morph" into the minds of audiences, forcing them to conceptualize abstract societal benchmarks in a heavily "programmed manner." This cultivation effect operates on a parallel plane within digital political spaces. Rather than acting as temporary satirical escapes, political cartoons shared on social media function as long-term visual cultivators; they systematically reinforce public distrust, concepts of governance, and regional anxieties by embedding persistent ideological schemas directly into the public's sociopolitical consciousness.

While textual approaches to Pakistani discourse analysis frequently focus on the "lexical choices" and "institutionalized practices" embedded within spoken or written narratives (Riaz et al., 2024), there is a critical need to expand this inquiry into the visual realm. Just as text-based humor codes negative societal attributes into digestible formats to shape public opinion (Riaz et al., 2024), visual humor in the form of political cartoons operates on a parallel semiotic plane. By shifting the analytical lens from the lexical choices of text to the denotative, connotative, and mythic codes of visual caricatures using Barthes' (1957) model, this study bridges the gap between text-based discourse analysis and visual-semiotic political communication in digital spaces. This study reviews how print media has evolved from the use of cartoons as a medium of social commentary to the current use of cartoons as a form of political discourse. Therefore there are no revolutionary or original ways for political cartoons to have evolved in Pakistan through the past 40 years. However, there may be significant changes that have impacted the way Pakistanis view political cartoons in Pakistan, especially since the introduction of technology (the digital age). The introduction of technology along with the

introduction of social media opened up new opportunities for the use of political cartoons in Pakistan; therefore, social media has allowed for changes to the way in which political cartoons are created/disseminated and interacted with by youth throughout Pakistan. Pakistani political cartoons are a reflection of the country's vibrant socio-political environment, encapsulating the diversity and complexity of Pakistani society from many perspectives: its multi-faceted political situation; a variety of social issues; and varying cultural elements. Pakistani political cartoons are a source of incisive commentary and can portray complex political situations in a single image. Pakistani political cartoons are often characterised by their use of satire, humour, and visual metaphors to illustrate and critique political figures, political policies, and socio-political phenomena. They portray the distinctive cultural and political circumstances existing within Pakistan. They typically feature local symbols, language, and imagery to help create an identifiable connection between the audience and the cartoon. For example, the use of Urdu script is a way to "localise" the commentary contained in the cartoon, making it that much more relevant and powerful for a Pakistani audience. Pakistani political cartoons often address serious social issues (e.g., corruption, poverty, terrorism, and the turmoil often associated with political instability) and thus represent an important means of providing a social commentary. Social media has recently had an effect on the methodological and distributional aspects of political cartoons in Pakistan. Digital platforms have not only expanded access to these cartoons but have provided a venue for real time commentary on developing news events (Rehman et al., 2021).

Within Pakistani political communication, discursive texts often face critique for oversimplifying complex sociopolitical realities into homogenized narratives. For instance, Sattar et al. (2021) argue that globalized political rhetoric risks "essentializing and homogenizing" localized domestic struggles by reducing them to singular, binary themes of oppression. In digital media, this type of ideological compression is heavily mirrored in political cartoons; by utilizing Barthesian

mythic codes, digital illustrators similarly essentialize multifaceted national crises—such as economic dependency or civil-military tension—into singular, highly charged visual metaphors that completely bypass nuanced local realities. Critical investigations into Pakistani sociopolitical communication emphasize that ideology is systematically embedded within media texts to govern public perception. While text-based investigations frequently deploy Van Dijk's framework of ideology analysis to unmask how spoken political rhetoric shapes public subjectivities around conflict and national security (Younas & Riaz, 2024), visual texts operate on a parallel ideological axis. By extending this inquiry from verbal discourse to visual media through Roland Barthes' (1957) semiotic model, the present study decodes how shared cultural signs and caricatures compress multi-layered national anxieties—such as terrorism, sovereignty, and foreign dependence—into mythic visual statements that audiences continuously negotiate.

Roland Barthes' semiotic model provides an all-encompassing lens for analysing current ideas around signs, meaning, and cultural ideologies. His model illustrates the immense power of signs in shaping our understanding of the world around us, and also how much social, historical, and ideological significance is built into them. Denotation and connotation are at the theoretical centre of Barthes' work; denotation refers to the basic or "literal" meaning of a sign, while connotation refers to the additional culturally-based associations and symbolic meanings attached to that sign by members of society. Barthes argues that signs are not inherently fixed or constant across time and space; rather, they are open to theorisation through cultural lenses and as such will exhibit layers of meaning beyond their denotation. Barthes also introduces the term "myth", which he describes as a system for signifying and therefore naturalising cultural and social phenomena. Mythology is the second level of signification (Bathurst & Monin, 2010). It is manifested when signs are used to express covert deeper meanings that support dominant ideologies and maintain existing structures of power. Barthes argues that the sign's true nature

becomes distorted through myth; he states that signs are falsely presented as universal and natural, and thus the construction of signs is obscured. By critically analysing the cultural codes and discourses surrounding signs, Barthes hopes to reveal the ideologically coercive nature of the messages they communicate and to challenge the prevailing narratives. Barthes performs a semiotic analysis; the analysis is a process of deconstruction. Deconstruction comprises examining the connotations associated with a sign, investigating the social/historical context within which the sign exists, and identifying the power relations that affect the interpretation of a sign.

Political cartoons are not neutral descriptions of reality; they reflect ideological positions and beliefs of their creators, based on their perspective. The act of creating a political cartoon requires the artist to incorporate their own individual biases into depictions of people, places, or issues; this process occurs both knowingly and unknowingly by individual artists. Political cartoonists frame political leaders and their environments in very individual ways based on which symbols, caricatures, or exaggerations they use to depict them; this causes some aspects of these subjects to become more visible or apparent than others. Political cartoons do not merely portray a situation or event; they can frequently evoke a sense of nationalism/patriotism in their readers and support the author's ideological view of the country and its ideals. On the other hand, they can also serve as a form of resistance by questioning authority and providing dissenting viewpoints. Political cartoons also utilize ideology to depict social issues (Ryan, 2016). The way the author depicts gender and race, class, and other social constructs in political cartoons has a significant effect on whether or not the author reinforces the existing social order or critiques that order in an effort to promote social change.

Beyond traditional text, exploring how creators project specific viewpoints is central to digital media analysis. For instance, Riaz et al. (2026) utilized Martin and White's (2005) Appraisal Theory to demonstrate that human authors rely on highly personal, distinct stylistic choices and a wide array of stance expressions to establish

authority in digital landscapes. This strategic projection of voice is equally vital in visual political satire. Just as writers deploy linguistic stance indicators, political cartoonists on Pakistani social media manipulate complex semiotic codes and visual metaphors to project a distinct, ideologically charged stance against state power (Riaz et al., 2026). The impact of social media platforms has greatly changed how political cartoons are created, disseminated, and consumed. The way ideological messages are created, conveyed, and understood has been greatly impacted. Researchers also assessed the capability of social media platforms to allow political cartoons to spread rapidly and virally. In addition to this, researchers noted that making it easier for people to create cartoons has democratized the creation of cartoons in the digital age. For example, researcher(s) have highlighted the impact of user-generated political cartoons on [Chinese] social media platforms as avenues for critiquing government policy and actions (Kapoor et al., 2018).

While postcolonial ecolinguistic studies show how authors use linguistic systems like metaphors, symbols, and narratives to shape ecological identities and ethical worldviews (Hussain et al., 2025), a parallel symbolic mechanism exists in digital spaces. On social media, political cartoonists manipulate a matching toolkit of visual metaphors and signs. Instead of building harmony, however, they weaponize these shared regional codes to dissect reality, exposing governance failures, systemic corruption, and public distrust through sharp satirical illustrations. The aforementioned research supports how social media platforms use political cartoons to shape political discourse; but simultaneously provide another means of resistance to that discourse. As an example of this, a study of the Danish cartoons reported how they provided opportunities for people to democratically participate in creating [democratic] engagement and critically debating. From a semiotic perspective, researchers examined the visual metaphors in political cartoons from Brazil published on Instagram to convey various messages regarding the Brazilian political crisis. Researchers emphasized the need to understand semiotic components when using online

platforms. Researchers have highlighted how social media such as Facebook and Twitter can be used to share and distribute political cartoons that negatively portray the political environment of a country. The cartoons have been an important influence on how people feel about political issues and create discussion. The growing research within this area of study indicates that social media is a critical method for distribution of political cartoons and reinforces the need to examine and understand this form of social media when doing semiotic analysis of political cartoons that appear on Pakistani social media platforms.

The empirical evidence available from recent Pakistani scholarship should be viewed within the context of ideology, multimodality, and political meaning-making. Hussain (2022)'s research on the leaders of the Pakistan Democratic Movement shows how the political language of leaders through critical discourse analysis conveys and organizes perceptions of the public. Language in any form has a specific role and can be used to organize and construct meaning through various lexical choices, types of rhetorical emphasis, and positionality on a particular political ideology. While Hussain's work is primarily verbal rather than visual, it remains relevant when considering political cartoons since cartoons can be considered visual representations of a particular kind of political conflict, condensed into signs, slogans, labels, and symbolic contrasts.

The present research extends this use of spoken political discourse into visual-verbal social media discourse, where ideology can be communicated through the use of caricature, satire, and culturally recognizable symbols.

While Hussain's (2021) research on Imran Khan's address at the 74th Session of the United Nations General Assembly also supports the political persuasion of political actors (legitimate authority), construct legitimacy by using persuasive discourse. This research is beneficial for the current semiotic work because political cartoons often respond in some way to the same persuasive narratives as either reinforcing them or satirically undermining them. Essentially, in the manner outlined by Barthes, both the political language of persuasion as well as political cartoons

participate in the construction of myths by transforming politically produced historical meaning into a natural or common sense interpretation.

Hussain, Ahmad, and Suf (2026) conducted a study of internet memes as forms of political communication and criticism that is closely linked to this research. They used a multimodal approach to examine how digital humour, image-text relations, and the online dissemination of memes transform political criticism into participatory cultural practices. The political cartoons that are circulated on social media in Pakistan also function in a multimodal manner. Both political cartoons and memes make use of compressed signs, exaggeration, intertextuality, and assumptions of the audience's familiarity with current events. As such, their examination gives a compelling argument for examining political cartoons as more than just humorous images; rather, they are multimodal ideological texts that encourage public engagement and political interpretation.

Hussain, Bukhari, and Raza (2026) studied English-language cartoons in relation to ESL learners and their vocabulary barriers, revealing that these may be viable pedagogical tools, but the interpretation of cartoons requires both cultural and linguistic competence. This finding is relevant to this research as political cartoons also rely on the ability of viewers to decode visual symbols, labels, metaphors, and culturally embedded references. The interpretation of a political cartoon on social media, therefore, is not automatic and depends on a viewer's literacy level, level of political awareness, cultural background, and familiarity with the events being depicted.

Research conducted by Hussain, Riaz and Waheed (2025) on rhetorical structure and linguistic patterns in research article abstracts provides insight into the ways in which meaning is formed through patterned language, even though this research occurs within the realm of academic discourse; this is also true of political cartoons, which are constructed using patterned communicative structures (captions, labels, slogans and exaggeration) & visual metaphors. Consequently both studies have justified the

twenty-first century research being undertaken in this article has been based on the assumption that ideology in Pakistan has now been communicated through texts and speeches; digital memes; academic discourse; and in political cartoons. The evolution of digital communication in Pakistan requires a broader view of how visuals generate meaning. While digital icons function as "visual morphemes" that shift semantically based on Urdu structures and South Asian cultural frameworks (Ijaz et al., 2026), a parallel process occurs with complex media. Political cartoons are not passive decorations; they also rely on these regional frameworks to stay intelligible. Shifting the focus from micro-level icons to macro-level illustrations reveals how cartoonists assemble visual signs to compress complex domestic anxieties—like electoral shifts and governance failures—into active codes that digital audiences continuously decode and contest.

The present study adds to the previous two studies, by using Barthes' semiotic model to analyse the political cartoons that are found on various social media sites in Pakistan. The study will show how denotation, connotation, myth, inter-textuality, humour and satire operate together within the visual construction of political ideology.

Hussain, Bukhari, and Raza (2026) also show that cartoons require linguistic, cultural, and contextual competence for accurate interpretation, particularly in educational settings involving ESL learners. This finding is relevant because political cartoons on Pakistani social media are decoded through viewers' political awareness, cultural memory, language knowledge, and familiarity with current events. In addition, Hussain, Riaz, and Waheed's (2025) study of rhetorical structure and linguistic patterns in research article abstracts supports the broader idea that meaning is shaped through patterned communicative choices. In political cartoons, these patterns appear through captions, labels, symbols, visual metaphors, and recurrent satirical structures.

Recent work on digital political memes by Hussain, Ahmad, and Suf (2026) is especially important for the current study because memes and political cartoons share multimodal features

such as humour, exaggeration, intertextuality, image-text relations, and rapid circulation across digital platforms. Their study supports the argument that online visual texts are not merely entertainment; rather, they operate as tools of political communication and criticism. This provides a strong basis for analysing Pakistani social media cartoons as ideological texts that encourage public interpretation, criticism, and participation.

Similarly, Hussain's (2021) study of Imran Khan's address at the 74th Session of the United Nations General Assembly explains how political persuasion operates through rhetorical emphasis, national representation, and legitimacy-building. In the present article, this insight is extended to social media cartoons, where persuasive political meanings are not built through extended speeches but through compressed visual signs, satire, irony, and culturally shared myths. Both political speeches and political cartoons therefore contribute to the construction of ideological narratives, though through different semiotic resources.

The author's earlier scholarship further strengthens the present article's focus on ideology, political communication, and multimodal meaning-making. Hussain (2022) examined Pakistan Democratic Movement leaders' speeches through critical discourse analysis and demonstrated how political actors use language to construct ideological positions, legitimize authority, and influence public perception. This study is directly relevant to political cartoons because cartoons also condense political positions into persuasive signs, labels, caricatures, and symbolic contrasts; however, they shift ideological construction from spoken discourse to a visual-verbal semiotic mode.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This part of the study is where we describe the instruments we used to gather and evaluate data from this study on semiotic analysis of political cartoons on Pakistani social media. To gather a large number of political cartoons across many different social media platforms, we used web scraping tools. These automated tools retrieved

the cartoons from specific websites or social media accounts, based on a previously defined set of criteria, such as keywords, hashtags or dates/time. By using web scraping, we were able to collect data efficiently and provide a complete accounting of all the political cartoons included in the study.

In addition to web scraping, we also used manual selection as a form of research instrument. Through manual selection, we conducted a search for the political cartoons we were interested in. We hand-selected only a limited number of political cartoons based on predetermined criteria, and that were not included through web scraping, or based on specific themes or topics.

In our research instrument, we used a coding scheme to provide a basis for analyzing the semiotic elements identified in the political cartoons. The coding scheme has been defined with certain categories and codes which have been developed to evaluate the visual characteristics, the symbolisms, the ideological meanings, etc. The coding scheme provided a way to analyze the collected data against predetermined categories and codes. Additionally, the Semiotic Analysis Framework was used to assist with the analysis of the Semiotic Elements of Political Cartoons. The Semiotic Analysis Framework provides the researcher with access to relevant theories and concepts within the field of semiotics, visual communications, and culture studies. The Semiotic Analysis Framework provides a systematic way for the researcher to understand the semiotic meanings, signs, and images that are contained within the political cartoons. The Semiotic Analysis Framework also helps researchers define how to interpret the ideological representations that are inherent within the political cartoons. By using the Semiotic Analysis Framework, researchers collect a wide variety of political cartoons, analyze the Semiotic Elements, and draw conclusions on the ideological representations that are evidenced in these examples of visual culture. These instruments provided a detailed and impartial method to examine how political cartoons affect public discourse and reflect ideology in Pakistan's social media.

The research in this paper is based on data from political cartoons as they appeared on social media in Pakistan. The purpose of this study is to analyze those cartoons with semiotic analysis and assess how they represent and construct ideology. By collecting a sample of political cartoons from social media in Pakistan, this research will investigate their semiotic and linguistic elements in order to help develop conclusions about how the visual and textual elements of the cartoons are used to communicate ideologies. To this end, we aim to establish how political cartoons published on social media in Pakistan shape and inform ideology in society as a whole based on our findings.

The analysis of data, which consists of the cartoons from Pakistani social media was performed using Barthes' semiotics (1957). Barthes' semiotics divides cartoons into denotations (the literal/surface meaning of visual and verbal elements) and connotations (the symbolic/ideological meanings contained in visual and verbal elements of the cartoons). By using Barthes' semiotics to identify layers of meaning in political cartoons, the study will reveal the multiple layers of meaning contained in political cartoons and will help to better understand the ideological discourses created by them.

In any research study, ethical considerations must be addressed. This study will also consider ethical considerations, including obtaining participants consent; ensuring participant confidentiality and anonymity; protecting the privacy of participants; and, having participants be fully informed about the study's purpose and nature, providing them with the ability to voluntarily participate in the study without fear of losing their jobs or experiencing negative consequences if they withdraw from using the data to conduct this research. All identifying information will be kept confidential; any identifying information will only be used for the purpose of conducting this research.

DATA ANALYSIS

In this chapter, we primarily analyzed 10 cartoons chosen specifically because of their order to meet the criteria of these categories. We demonstrated

(in this chapter) how we reveal the various layers of meaning that exist within these cartoons — as well as how they communicate and critique the different ideologies that they represent. The analysis was divided into two parts: the first was a deconstruction of the literal aspects of each cartoon (i.e., describing what each cartoon was depicting in terms of its characters, location and action) and this stage served as the foundation for a more thorough deconstruction of the cartoons' symbolic aspects of each cartoon.

Once we completed the deconstruction of the literal components of the cartoons, we proceeded to a deconstruction of the connotative aspects of these components (i.e., what the characters, location, and action in each cartoon might represent or symbolize in the context of Pakistani politics). This stage included some discussion of the cultural, historical and social contexts that could affect a viewer's interpretation of each of the cartoons. Following this, we completed a deconstruction of the "myth" definitions of each cartoon (as defined by Barthes). This included the identification of the overall ideologies or messages that each cartoon was communicating. Each cartoon's underlying beliefs or values had been reviewed with a discussion of how those values relate to, reinforce, or oppose the prevailing social values and norms in Pakistan. The 'codes' or conventions used to interpret and understand the cartoons will be examined and discussed at length.

Analytical Framework

This analysis utilises Barthes' semiotic framework to interpret each of the cartoons on three interdependent levels: the denotative (usually identified by what is seen); the connotative (attached cultural/political meanings); and the mythic (how the cartoon naturalises/challenges/exposes wider ideology) levels of the cartoon. Understanding the interaction of visual symbols, words/labels/captions, exaggerated images/words, irony and intertextual references to events happening elsewhere is important in deriving meaning from the images in these cartoons.

Thematic Overview of the Selected Cartoons

Theme	Figures	Ideological Focus
Electoral competition and coalition politics	Figures 1 and 4	Campaign noise, elite bargaining, alliance anxiety
Economy and external dependence	Figures 2 and 3	Economic blame, IMF influence, state vulnerability
Security and civil-military power	Figures 5, 6, and 7	Terrorism, military authority, democratic contradiction
Corruption and leadership	Figures 8, 9, and 10	Political finance, constitutional symbolism, leadership struggle
Regional hostility	Figure 11	India-Pakistan tension and nationalist risk

Figure 4.1: GB Electioneering and party competition

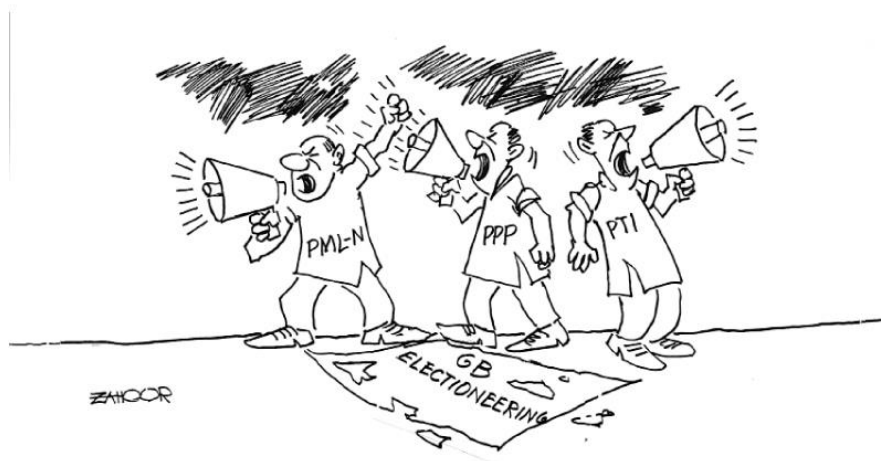


Figure 4.1. GB Electioneering and party competition. Source: <https://www.dawn.com/news/1737619>

Sign	Denotation	Connotation	Myth / Ideological Reading
Megaphone / party campaigners	In the cartoon, three political players identified as PPP, PML-N, and PTI are standing above something titled "GB Electioneering," saying stuff into loudspeakers at a typical election campaign.	The loudspeakers represent competitive political noise, public persuasion, and excessive amounts of rhetoric. The cartoon depicts it not as simply a way of engaging in democracy but as a fight for visibility; each party is trying to "own" public space within the sonic or auditory environment.	The image creates the myth that electoral politics in Pakistan, and particularly Gilgit-Baltistan, is formed more through symbolic performance, party branding, and competition for the public's attention than it is through policy substance.

Intertextuality and codes - the party labels, loudspeakers and the campaign sheet serve as codes of political advertising. The cartoon is constructed using a media discourse around the GB elections (in relation to the stereotype of political parties as performers and the use of sound).

Textual Analysis: With electrical amplification to create the battle of the voices of the parties in electoral politics, the parties' representation in this

cartoon depicts the parties as performers and not as policy-making entities. The depiction of the parties with party labels is the denotative level of analysis; the loudspeaker is the connotative level of analysis, transforming the act of campaigning into symbolic noise. The mythic meaning of this cartoon is that elections often become contests of visibility, slogans, and political party spectacle; this is most evident when viewed via social media where visual images are shared and viewed repeatedly and frequently.

1.1 Figure 4.2: Economic decline and political accountability



Figure 4.2. Economic decline and political accountability. Source: <https://www.dawn.com/news/1763740>

Sign	Denotation	Connotation	Myth / Ideological Reading
Hammer / broken economy	In this graphic, a politician has a hammer he is holding on top of broken pieces of a word that reads "ECONOMY." The caption indicates that the economic collapse, which has occurred under the watch of the PTI Party, will lead to a probe into the party at the time of the election.	The hammer is an indicator of power, intervention, and possibly assigning blame for the failure. The destruction of the economy by the hammer turns an abstract policy failure into a damaged tangible object.	This visual indicates that the failure of the economy can be seen, is a real object, and is assignable to politics. In this case, the image implies that the economy will become a battlefield of accusations through which political figures will charge each other with blame for the economic crisis. Accountability for the failure will be described as a neutral investigation, but in the image will be seen as a representation of hitting, breaking, or revealing.

Codes and Intertextuality: The broken letters represent the phenomenon of economic disintegration in a visual way. The caption grounds the image as part of the broader conversation about PTI's ability to manage the economy while the hammer suggests governmental authority, inquiry and a political reaction and punishment.

Textual Analysis: The cartoon takes the proverbial concept of the decline of an economy and transforms it into a broken piece of material.

1.2 Figure 4.3: IMF contact and political dependence



Figure 4.3. IMF contact and political dependence. Source:
<https://www.instagram.com/p/CujFVQ1t3DW/>

Sign	Denotation	Connotation	Myth / Ideological Reading
Seesaw / IMF	The cartoon shows the International Monetary Fund (IMF) as the middle of a seesaw with the Government of Pakistan (Government) on one side and the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Party on the opposite side, positioned relative to their relationship with the IMF	The seesaw can be interpreted as a symbol of either imbalance, dependency, or competition. In the image, Government and PTI act as adversaries; however, they are also inferior to the IMF, which is the one stabilizing/controlling force that holds them both in check.	The underlying message this cartoon creates is that the factions within Pakistan's government are subordinate to a foreign economic authority and that the IMF is a determinate force, while the differences within Pakistan's domestic political system are secondary.

Intertextuality and codes: The seesaw represents both a code of balance and instability, whilst the IMF's central position represents arbitration. This cartoon makes intertextual references to recurring media debates/coverage regarding IMF negotiations and the economic vulnerability of Pakistan.

Content analysis: The seesaw structure makes up the central conceptual point of this image. It

establishes a controlled framework for determining the conflict between the government and PTI, with the IMF taking a pre-determined controlling role. As such, the seesaw creates a sense of dependence rather than independence. The mythical significance of the seesaw rests on the fact that political actors in Pakistan are considered oppositional yet have the same external economic power structure binding them together.

1.3 Figure 4.4: Dubai Plan and coalition anxiety



Figure 4.4. Dubai Plan and coalition anxiety. Source: Dawn cartoon / political alliance discourse

Sign	Denotation	Connotation	Myth / Ideological Reading
Poster / Maulana Fazal-ur-Rehman	Maulana Fazal-ur-Rehman can be seen with a poster that states "PPP PML-N Dubai Plan" with a caption stating that he is not happy about the PPP-PML-N meeting being held.	The poster represents a political plan now open to view by the public at large. Fazal-ur-Rehman's face looks as though he feels left out, is suspicious of what has been done, and has anxiety about what to do now. The cartoon depicts an emotional response to Coalition Politics.	The ideological myth is that coalitions in Pakistan are fluid, involve transactions, and are based on a common understanding among elite participants. Political partnerships represent negotiations over access to and influence within government institutions.

Intertextuality and codes: The poster acts as a code of revelation; the body language and facial

expressions of the figures in the drawing match the primarily non-verbal signs of disapproval. The

narrative of the cartoon is based on news reports covering meetings held between political leaders, discussion of collaborative efforts and the establishment of political ideologies based on “Dubai Plan” rhetoric.

Textual Analysis: What the image of this cartoon reveals about the nature of coalition politics is

represented within the framework of semiotics by exclusion and distrust through the visual representation by indicating the existence of an alleged tactical arrangement between elite power brokers and not a consistent ideological commitment. The use of satire in this visual representation works to simplify a multi-layered political negotiation into an individual expression and a poster with a word.

1.4 Figure 4.5: Government inattention to terrorism



Figure 4.5. Government inattention to terrorism. Source: <https://chappatte.com/en/images/dangerous-pakistan>

Sign	Denotation	Connotation	Myth / Ideological Reading
Gun / terrorism	The cartoon depicts a "GOVT" figure who looks distraught and distracted while a "TERRORISM" figure moves rapidly with an instrument of violence	The tears indicate grief and public mourning to the citizenry; however, the diverted gaze shows negligence. Terrorism is represented as mobile, armed and out of control, thereby signalling, in contrast with an emotional response, an actual threat.	The state appears to be mourning terrorism or terroristic acts publicly while not taking any concrete steps to address this by way of action; this illustrates how performative sympathy by government officials gaps the emotional disconnect contained with the sentiment of the government, in consideration to the governments lack of genuine action taken in the pursuit of human beings who perpetrate acts of terror.

Textual codes/Intertextuality: The lamp shade on top of the government figure represents both blindness and intentionally not recognizing. The armed terrorists running toward him represent immediacy as well as danger, while the word "terrorist" clarifies and reinforces that the fear is coming from a terrorist act.

Textual Analysis: The tears of the government representative in contrast to the armed terrorist

represent the most powerful message from this cartoon, which is that the state is emotionally responsive to the issue of terrorism, but practically inattentive. The terrorism is mobile; the government cannot be. The mythic symbolism indicates that the public response to loss cannot replace the need for plan-driven action or vigilance toward an act of terror.

1.5 Figure 4.6: Military authority and tribal instability



Figure 4.6. Military authority and tribal instability. Source: <https://www.chappatte.com/en/images/musharraf-will-quit-army-chief>

Sign	Denotation	Connotation	Myth / Ideological Reading
Stick and map	A military officer displays a map labeled Pakistan and points to the area where Tribals reside as being out of control. A political leader analyzes the officer's presentation from his desk.	The officer's pointer and the map represent control, surveillance and strategy. The political leader sits as a dependent of the officer and his ability to interpret the map and the military has objectified national territories as an area of security control and management. security management.	The military's continued dominance as the interpretive authority on matters of national security with a special emphasis on Tribals, has created a myth that civil politics exist only in relation to the semiotic economy that governs matters of security and control..

Codes and Intertextuality: The map is an example of territorial code while the stick is used as codes of instruction and authority. The cartoon draws directly on much older media-storylines around military intervention in the governance and internal security of Pakistan.

Textual Analysis: The map and the pointer provide the framework of control through which the image can be viewed. The position of the

military character in a standing position, using a pointing gesture, implies that he is able to interpret the state of national security. By being seated, the civilian character is shown to have been given limited agency. The cartoon also participates in a wider ideological discussion on civil-military relations with respect to national security; it illustrates how military power supersedes civilian authority on national security matters.

1.6 Figure 4.7: Musharraf and the rhetoric of democracy



Figure 4.7. Musharraf and the rhetoric of democracy. Source: European Academic / political cartoon source

Sign	Denotation	Connotation	Myth / Ideological Reading
Press microphones / uniform	In a military outfit, the country's leader, Pervez Musharraf, appears on numerous media outlets stating that there is "a state of democracy."	This is an ironic use of the term, as it reflects that military uniforms and other symbols of military authority are used to convey the democratic message. While microphones are intended to provide means of official communications, the very military uniform will deny the democratic message.	By using these symbols of military authority, the image creates the illusion of controlled or performative democracy as a part of military rule, thus suggesting that democracy has to be given from above and not as a result of achieving legitimacy and freedom for civilians and democracy through institutions.

The codes of **intertextuality**; are present in similar ways for the institution of coercive authority (uniform codes) and the institution of media spectacle/public address (microphone codes). The satirical element of this contradiction is that the satirical contradiction between military uniform and “state of democracy” is the principal semiotic device for representing this relationship in this image; this is evidenced by the fact that the language used to describe the democratic system is

at odds with the visual evidence that suggests military rule predominates in the same place.

Textual Analysis: This contrast will illustrate the difference between the ideology associated with democratic language and the behaviour associated with authoritarianism. The humour of the cartoon is derived from the irony of the declaration appearing “official,” while there are visual cues to the contrary.

1.7 Figure 4.8: Corruption, finance, and law enforcement



Figure 4.8. Corruption, finance, and law enforcement. Source: <http://pakbee.com/political-cartoon/>

Sign	Denotation	Connotation	Myth / Ideological Reading
Money bag / police salute	An assassin is carrying a big bag full of money. The police officer who is following the assassin salutes the assassin and asks whether he is the finance secretary or finance minister.	The money bag signifies illegal money, and the hidden face suggests shame and concealment. The police salute the assassin out of respect for power, instead of out of the need to enforce accountability.	This is perpetuated by the belief that corruption in political financing has become normalised so much so that law enforcement agencies can identify authority before they can identify illegal acts. In this way, the corrupt use power to expose themselves morally and legally.

Intertextuality and Code: A conventional code of corruption is represented by the money bag, while a conventional code of obedience to institutions is represented by the salute. Visually, the cartoon suggests a number of intertextual relationships between the issues of public finance (the money bag), public officials (the salute) and corruption scandals involving former elected officials.

Textual analysis: In their totality, the money bag, the obscured head, and the police officer's salute create a powerful critique of corruption and deference to institutions. The police officer does not directly confront the person they are questioning, but rather salutes them and asks about their title. The mythopoetic interpretation of this is that political status can convert suspicion

1.8 Figure 4.9: 18th Amendment and democratic complacency

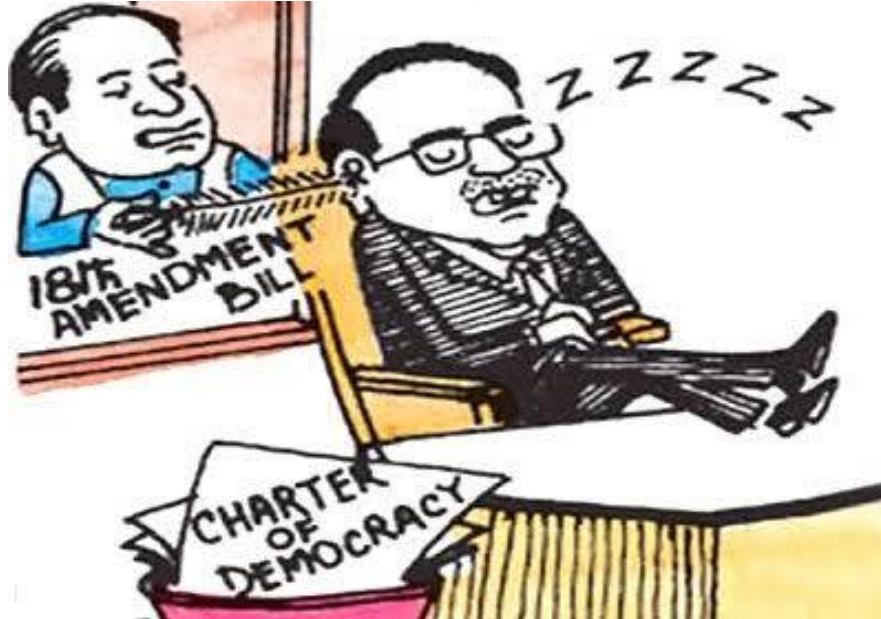


Figure 4.9. 18th Amendment and democratic complacency. Source: <http://pakbee.com/political-cartoon/>

Sign	Denotation	Connotation	Myth / Ideological Reading
Sleeping leader / Charter of Democracy	The cartoon depicts a relaxed and possibly sleeping politician surrounded by the terms “Charter of Democracy” and “18th Amendment Bill.”	His relaxed posture and sleep signify political comfort, detachment or complacency while his sleeping body questions whether constitutional or institutional reform can be converted into active democratic parliamentary accountability.	The myth suggested is that democracy's achievements can become symbolic rather than real (i.e., living). The cartoon suggests that although institutional reform can be celebrated, the individuals responsible for such reform may not take any responsibility in terms of their active participation in the democratic process or are content with the position they currently hold.

Intertextuality and codes: Intertextuality and codes are represented through the “zzz” sign, the posture of the figure in the chair and through the document labels on the cartoon as symbols of institutional passivity and institutional symbols. The cartoon references public discourse regarding the democratic transition and the 18th Amendment.

Textual Analysis: The cartoon illustrates the extent to which the symbols of democratic reform have meaning when political leaders become

disengaged or complacent in their responsibilities to act on behalf of the people as alluded to in the references to the 18th Amendment and the Charter of Democracy; mentioning both of these documents suggests that progress has been made toward constitutional goals; however, because the figure is lying on the floor appearing to be sleeping, it implies a passive state that causes the viewer to question whether these documents alone can support democracy unless those in political leadership positions demonstrate responsibility by remaining awake, engaged and accountable.

1.9 Figure 4.10: PML-Q leadership and symbolic power



Figure 4.10. PML-Q leadership and symbolic power. Source: <http://pakbee.com/political-cartoon/>

Sign	Denotation	Connotation	Myth / Ideological Reading
Chair / leadership	The chair which is associated with PML-Q leadership is positioned as a place of authority, and two individuals are seen either offering the place to sit (or be placed) or contesting who will take the seat. Implicitly, the chair represents legitimacy, office, and authority,	while the interaction around it suggests that political leadership is treated as something to be owned or possessed (through an assertion) rather than something that can be earned through democratic consensus (and hence "earned").	The myth is that political authority is personalised and that the seat itself (i.e., symbolic object) is what political parties (and individuals) seek when bargaining in order to demonstrate legitimacy

Codes and Intertextuality: As far as political power goes, the chair is the ultimate code of political power. The way the figures sit, stand, and wear eyeglasses convey meaning with regards to the transparency or opacity, as well as the hesitation or ambition that leaders will show as they console one another. The cartoon also reflects past intra-party leadership campaigns and how people view their party's leadership as having authority.

Textual Analysis: The chair is the master sign of political authority. When two people are presented with the chair, this makes the leadership role an object to be negotiated between them (or possessed). The ideological message of this cartoon is that political leaders will spend their time trying to take possession of the seat of power, rather than being democratically responsible in how they lead their parties. The cartoon also uses physicality (as in the way the characters in the cartoon are posed and where they are located in relation to the labelled chair) to satirise the idea of leadership as a performance and a means of establishing entitlement.

The cartoons featured utilise condensed visual representations rather than lengthy written explanations to communicate political ideology. Items like loudspeakers, hammers, bags of money, chairs, maps, nooses, and microphones serve as symbols that transform the controversial nature of politics into easily recognisable, familiar forms.

The cartoons illustrate that politics is a contest for power, visibility, accountability and legitimacy. The economic crisis is symbolised by destruction; party competition is symbolised by noise; coalition politics is symbolised by exclusion; corruption is symbolised by hidden wealth; leadership is symbolised by a chair.

Humour and satire are not simply decorative devices in the cartoons; they are the main rhetorical devices. The designers use exaggeration of body parts, gesture and object to highlight inconsistencies between how politicians say things in public and how things actually are with respect to democracy, governance, corruption, security and national identity.

The social media environment adds a semiotic layer to the images. Since the cartoons are very compact visually, they can be shared quickly in

electronic format and encourage audience interaction with the images. As a result, audience members gain knowledge from their own experience with political parties, media coverage, national crises and cultural stereotypes and decode meaning from the cartoons based on this experience. In this way, meaning is created by the interaction of the cartoonist's intent, the visual message, and the audience's interaction with the image.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This research investigates how social media political cartoons shape ideologies in Pakistan. The study looks at multiple aspects of political cartoons including their themes, symbol systems, persuasive methods, and how they relate to society and politics. A major part of the research is determining what common political themes are represented in political cartoons (e.g. war, corruption, etc.). Semiotics provides the theoretical framework used to analyze the signs and symbols in these political cartoons. Through analysis, the researchers were able to identify obvious and hidden meanings of the signs and symbols found in these cartoons. Included in the researchers' analysis were issues such as how the color and layout of the comic elements enhanced ideological delivery. The chapter also considers framing and persuasive methods as used by cartoonists. The researcher examines how cartoonists apply various framing techniques to create a favorable interpretation of an event or character in the cartoons being analyzed. The study also highlights the techniques that are used to make these cartoons a powerful vehicle for expressing and communicating ideology.

This research also focuses on the political implications of these cartoons, including how they reflect and influence public opinion, as well as how they contribute to political discourse. Researcher demonstrates the impact of political cartoons on the ideologies of a society and studies how they create awareness of social issues and catalyze social activism. The researcher also intends to conduct a cross-cultural study of political cartoons from different social media platforms in order to understand how they affect

various audiences. Through comparing the responses and interpretations of political cartoons across cultures, the researcher will gain insight into the universal attributes of political cartoons that cross borders and ideologies. This chapter will investigate the ethics involved when creators and publishers produce and portray political cartoons, with respect to how they portray political figures and people from marginalized communities and highlights the importance of sensitivity when cartooning. This in-depth examination of the role of political cartoons in Pakistani social media provides valuable information regarding how to develop political ideologies, public opinion, and societal discourse. Researcher will use semiotics as a valuable tool to decipher the hidden meanings of these seemingly amusing creations, as he or she attempts to develop a greater appreciation for cartooning as a vehicle for ideology.

The researchers engaged in an exploration of theoretical frameworks to find ways of understanding the complexities of political cartoons posted to social media. The researcher discovered a jewel among many theoretical works by using Roland Barthes' semiotic analysis from 1957, and this framework would provide the guidance throughout their own research into the ethnographical study and analysis of the symbols and signs contained within the political cartoons on social media. The researchers skillfully provided a detailed explanation of how utilising Barthes' semiotic analysis gave them the tools to explore the visual components of the political cartoons in a systematic way. The analysis of the political cartoons would reveal how simplistic sketches could have much more meaning to them than just being a representation of a person or an event but were in fact constructed from many levels of symbols and cultural representation. The researcher was proficient in the presentation of the theoretical concepts of Barthes' semiotic analysis, therefore making it easy for the reader to understand how the researcher utilised Barthes' semiotic analysis to express the true meaning of the political cartoons and to reveal them as reflections of cultural and political ideologies. By guiding the reader through an intellectual journey with Barthes as the trusted guide, the researcher

demonstrated that their analysis was not a surface level observation, but rather a thorough investigation of the depth of the hidden layers of the political cartoons analysed.

The researchers described how they acquired many political cartoons from social media. The way in which researchers selected cartoons was orderly and precise so as to represent not only a broad array of issues surrounding politics but also provide a good foundation for their later statistical analysis. The various political cartoons contained within the researcher's database exemplified the complexity and nuances of the way the socio-political world is understood, and therefore provided an opportunity for researchers to examine the different visual elements within each cartoon as well as the messages associated with each cartoon. Ultimately, the researchers made all aspects of their research methodologically sound in the hope of adding reliability and validity to their findings. One of the most important aspects of establishing reliability and validity was the incredible breadth and depth of the data contained within the researcher's databases.

The researchers were able to explore the visual elements of the cartoons and expose their multifaceted influence on both social and political conversation. The chapters throughout this thesis indicate the researchers' commitment to examining the meaning of the cartoons, as they discovered the subtle and thought-provoking meanings behind the lines and colors of each cartoon. The fact that humor and satire have been shown to serve as catalysts for change shows the ability of the political cartoon as a powerful tool for social commentary. The researcher is summarizing the overall findings of this research, as well as providing an in-depth overview of all of the findings that were discovered from this research. The researchers also concluded that political cartoons on social media in Pakistan are an insightful way to share people's political ideologies and opinions as opposed to just being funny pictures. The researchers thoroughly analyzed the political cartoons found in Pakistani social media and how they have greatly affected people's perceptions of politics and the way people think about politics. Political cartoons are very

powerful tools of influence for both politically and socially motivated individuals through their use of humor and satire.

Conclusion

Digital technologies do more than just reshape learning and user skills through interactive tools (Ali et al., 2023); they also alter how audiences process visual political media. On social media, political cartoons are not just static images, but interactive networks where complex national crises are actively decoded. Shifting the analytical focus to these digital cartoons reveals that the modern interaction between creator and consumer is a dynamic semiotic process where political meaning is actively negotiated rather than passively absorbed.

Evaluating how ideological assumptions resonate in a "more digitally connected and critical world" requires an expanded view of contemporary media text types (Tahir et al., 2025). While standard discourse studies successfully highlight how spoken political texts reflect dominance and authority, the digital transformation of media requires analyzing visual channels. By shifting the analytical focus from verbal hegemonic speeches to the denotative and connotative layers of digital political cartoons, the present study highlights how visual media compresses complex national crises—such as economic instability and structural power struggles—into accessible, negotiable signs for a highly connected public audience. The researchers were able to depict through the analysis of political cartoons that they accurately reflect a variety of cultural beliefs, values and ideas. With this understanding of political cartoons, these individuals will be influenced by political cartoons moving forward in relation to how they will interpret and engage with politics.

As shown by this research's semiotic analysis, the use of images and framing in political cartoons creates narrative structures for the audience that shape their views of political leaders and issues. Therefore, political cartoons are an effective vehicle for conveying a political message and influencing public opinion. The study of political cartoons on social media in Pakistan adds to the database of research from the fields of media

studies, political communication, and semiotics, and provides insight into how political cartoons can be used to shape an ideology and develop public opinion, particularly in light of the continual evolution of public opinion in the digital age. These findings will serve to highlight and enhance awareness about the use of political cartoons as tools for stimulating political dialogue and fostering a more conscious and equitable society, and the researcher intends to disseminate these findings.

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