

**INK AND IDEOLOGY: A COMPARATIVE
MULTIMODAL ANALYSIS OF GAZA
CARTOONS IN BRITISH AND
PAKISTANI PRESS**

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Ink and Ideology: A Comparative Multimodal Analysis of Gaza Cartoons in British and Pakistani Press

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ABSTRACT

Title: Ink and Ideology: A Comparative Multimodal Analysis of Gaza Cartoons in British and Pakistani Press

The Gaza conflict continues to be a focal point of global discourse, with profound regional and international implications. The study focused on the representation of the Gaza conflict in editorial cartoons from *The Dawn* and *The Guardian* newspapers. The objectives were twofold: to explore the portrayal of the conflict by means of semiotic repertoire employed and to identify similarities and differences in ideological depictions of the conflict between British and Pakistani print media. The research methodology involved qualitative analysis of thirty cartoons (fifteen from each newspaper), selected purposively from August 2020 to August 2024. Machin's Multimodal discourse analysis (2007) and Van Dijk's Ideological Square (1998) were leveraged as conceptual frameworks for the analysis. The findings show that cartoons in the British press through the use of devices such as inter-textuality (three wise men) and drawing parallels with the Ukraine conflict provided a relatively objective and comprehensive picture of the conflict. It highlighted not only the wrongs committed by both sides in this fight. On the contrary in the Pakistani newspaper, the Hamas element was avoided altogether which may provide an incomplete and lop-sided view of the conflict. Similarly, when depicting the negative role of the global community, the Dawn newspaper was found to be focusing on the UN or OIC; whereas the Guardian extended it to the role of western leadership as well. This aligns with the region and demography each newspaper basically caters to. The findings align with those of Shreim (2014) and Tasseron (2021), as when it comes to assigning the responsibility for the wide scale chaos, there are nuances and subtle differences in both newspapers' depiction. These differences allow for downplaying the faults of a faction and providing it leeway for possible further aggression. The policy implications of these multimodal representations are significant since they influence how the conflict is perceived by the masses and thereby affect the decision-making at higher government echelons.

Keywords: *Gaza conflict, Editorial Cartoons, Machin, Multimodal Discourse Analysis, Van Dijk, Ideological Square.*

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

IDF	Israel Defense Force
MDA	Multimodal Discourse Analysis
MCDA	Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis
OIC	Organization of Islamic Cooperation
UN	United Nations
UNSC	United Nations Security Council

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DEDICATION

To all the unheard and silenced voices in conflict zones.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

In this study, I conducted a comparative multimodal analysis of ideological depictions of the Gaza conflict cartoons published in the Pakistani newspaper ‘The Dawn’ and the British newspaper ‘The Guardian’. The tussle around Gaza is one of the longest running conflicts in recent human history (Hamida & Jin, 2012). The study highlights how visual media can elevate marginalized voices and subvert hegemonic views. From an ontological perspective, this study investigates the nature of representation, meaning-making, and the media's contribution to the formation of sociopolitical realities. This study primarily examines how political cartoons portray the ontological realities of the Gaza crisis, such as its geopolitical complexity, power imbalances, and human suffering. By analyzing the semiotic resources and ideological techniques employed in cartoons, the study shows how visual media selectively accentuates, distorts, or hides specific aspects of reality. The study examines how cartoons serve as forums for ideological debate and the production and discussion of divergent interpretations of the Gaza conflict.

In modern times, the contest is not limited to the physical battleground, there is information warfare being fought in parallel, with its significance in terms of perception making. While this ability enables the media to serve as a community watchdog to shed light on and keep in check the excesses of those in power. On the flip side, it also empowers them to further certain vested interests by providing a lopsided view of the happenings. The Neanderthal man used to express themselves in the form of crude paintings sketched on cave walls, which are discovered every other day in archaeological explorations. However, with the advent of writing more than five thousand years ago by the Sumerians, individuals were able to provide a detailed account of their subject. But it did not in any way diminish the importance of pictorial representations; rather they beautifully complement each other. As the adage goes, a picture is worth a thousand words, a picture captures the whole scenario in its full essence, by depicting the outer physical realities while also giving a peek into the implicit factors which effectuate the reality.

Political cartoons use an illustration, image, or sketch to convey the same details, concepts, and message that a conventional newspaper narrative does, which requires many words. Cartoonists effectively communicate opinions about political topics, current affairs, and prominent individuals. Ancient Egyptian culture is where political cartoons first appeared, and it was from there that their use expanded to Europe as well as other parts of the globe (Willett, 2011). Cartoons represent the political milieu as well as the leaders' individual and broader national ambitions (Edwards, 1995). The goals of these cartoons are to legitimize, persuade, educate, and establish laws and regulations. These cartoons are reflections of popular culture. They provide light on societal norms and clarify how specific events acquire shared meanings among individuals belonging to certain social strata-(McLuhan, 1964).

Fast forward to today's fast-paced world, people have relatively shorter attention spans (Mills & Mark, 2023) and consequently are more inclined to access the most information about a certain subject in the briefest time possible. This is where editorial cartoons are of great utility since they encapsulate the whole situation in a small pictorial space. They are meticulously constructed to project a certain viewpoint to the audience. As a result of realizing this advantage, modern-day print media employ political cartoons as a discursive strategy to put forth their understanding and opinion about the subject of inquiry.

By utilizing a Multimodal discourse analysis as a general theoretical framework; the present study intends to conduct a comparative study to unravel the manner and the semiotic tools employed in the cartoons published in the British and Pakistani print media vis-à-vis the Gaza conflict.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

The depiction of the Gaza conflict in newspaper cartoons plays a significant role in forming narratives and counter narratives through multimodal elements. Despite their impact, there is limited research on how these cartoons utilize linguistic and semiotic repertoires to portray the conflict. The representation and attribution of virtues and vices to the self and other is the object of this study. By analyzing the particular ways in which the select cartoons depict the conflict, the researcher endeavors to shed light on media representation, enhancing understanding of the multimodal means portraying the conflict.

1.2 Research Objectives

- 1) To explore portrayal of Gaza conflict through semiotic repertoire in cartoons published in the select newspapers
- 2) To uncover the ways in which the ideological square is used in select cartoons to portray conflicting groups' virtues and vices

1.3 Research Questions

- 1) What semiotic repertoire has been employed in cartoons in the selected newspapers for portrayal of the Gaza conflict?
- 2) How is the ideological square used in selected cartoons to portray conflicting groups' virtues and vices?

1.4 Significance & Rationale of the Study

The study advances the understanding of how political cartoons function as epistemic artifacts that reveal, critique, and construct knowledge about sociopolitical realities. It shifts attention from textual media to political cartoons, a medium that straddles the boundaries of art, journalism, and political critique. The focus on spatial arrangements, symbolism, salience, and inter-textuality enriches our understanding of how meaning is constructed across modes. It highlights the potential of visual media to amplify marginalized voices and disrupt hegemonic discourses. Ontologically, this study interrogates the nature of representation, meaning-making, and the construction of sociopolitical realities through media. At its core, this research explores how political cartoons represent the Gaza conflict's ontological realities—its human suffering, power imbalances, and geopolitical complexities. By analyzing the semiotic resources and ideological strategies employed in cartoons, the study reveals how visual media selectively amplifies, distorts, or suppresses certain aspects of reality. The study explores how cartoons serve as sites of ideological struggle, where competing narratives about the Gaza conflict are constructed and contested. It shows how visual media ontologizes human suffering and agency and invites reflection on how cartoons construct moral and political judgments in the context of conflict. The study uses

cartoons as tools of meaning-making, exploring how they mediate public perceptions of the Gaza conflict and influence collective memory, political discourse.

The study's academic significance is multifaceted, contributing to several fields of inquiry, including media studies, conflict representation, multimodal discourse analysis, and critical discourse studies. The Gaza conflict, with its complex interplay of historical, political, and humanitarian dimensions, provides a fertile ground for examining how media constructs narratives and counter narratives. Moreover, this study contributes to documenting how significant global events are represented in regional media, preserving cultural and political narratives for future research.

1.5 Delimitations of the Study

Keeping in view the parameters of the research, the researcher has delimited his study by only selecting fifteen editorial cartoons from each Pakistani English media and the British press. Also, the opted time period of the newspapers, from wherein the cartoons are taken is from 1st August 2020 to 1st August 2024.

1.6 Organization of the Study

The research study consists of five chapters, the first of which is an introduction covering the issue area of examination from a broad to a more detailed perspective. In this chapter, the significance of the study, rationale, and research questions is described. In addition, this part addresses any boundaries the researcher may have set. A succinct but comprehensive review of the pertinent literature is covered in the second chapter, along with insights into previous academic studies in the field and studies that have used a similar research methodology (MDA). After reviewing the relevant literature, the researcher identified and articulated the research gap that the current study is meant to fill. The third chapter provides a thorough explanation regarding the tools and methods employed to collect and then analyze the data. Moreover, the theoretical lens used to evaluate the data is also explicated. In the fourth chapter, the researcher in detail provides the data analysis which is carried out using the tools and theoretical frameworks elucidated in the previous chapter. The fifth chapter gives out the findings and results based on the detailed analyses of the discourse data. Lastly, the conclusion of the study is stated along with recommendations to facilitate future research work on the subject.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This study examines how political cartoons depict the Gaza crisis using theoretical frameworks such as Machin's Multimodal Discourse Analysis (2007) and Van Dijk's Ideological Square (1998). These models aid in the dissection of various multimodal elements in these cartoons that come together to provide a bigger picture. In this chapter, the study is situated in terms of the latest research carried out in this particular domain utilizing similar theoretical models and methodologies. Consequently, the particular niche the present study intends to fill is justified and laid out along with how it adds value to the pertinent literature.

2.2 Political Cartoons as a Medium of Discourse

2.2.1 The Role of Political Cartoons in Conflict Representation

Political cartoons have traditionally served as platforms for social and political critique, using irony, symbolism, and satire to expose injustices and undermine established power structures. Cartoons are a form of "multi-literacies," combining textual and visual elements to engage viewers' attention on an emotional and intellectual level, claims El Refaie (2009). She points out that because cartoons reduce complex themes to readily understood stories, they are particularly effective at illustrating conflicts.

Cartoons serve as "graphic discourse," as defined by Medhurst and De Sousa (1981), who employ both verbal and visual elements to subversively and persuasively frame political issues. Cartoons often serve as counter-narratives that challenge how conflicts are portrayed in the media. For example, cartoons on Gaza typically express opinions that are not often heard in the mainstream media, criticizing the violence or the lack of concern of the world community. However, most of the prior work on

political cartoons has focused on Western contexts, such as American election politics, with little attention to how cartoons portray issues like the Gaza conflict.

2.2.2 Semiotics in Political Cartoons

With its roots in Ferdinand de Saussure's seminal work on the signifier and signified, the study of signs has undergone substantial development over time (Saussure, 1916). The foundation for comprehending the creation and transmission of meaning was established by Saussure's conceptual framework, which has been essential in many areas of semiotic analysis. Through Multimodal Discourse Analysis (MDA), which looks at verbal, visual, auditory, and other semiotic modes, the use of semiotic analysis in media has gained more attention recently (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2001).

Political cartoon semiotic analysis looks at how symbols and signs express meaning. Denotation and connotation were first proposed by Barthes (1977), who maintained that images had several levels of meaning. Visual components like objects, facial expressions, and spatial layouts in political cartoons have connotative connotations that speak to larger ideological concerns. This is elaborated by Eco (1976), who studies the influence of cultural codes on the interpretation of signs. In a cartoon about Gaza, for instance, a wall might represent a physical barrier as well as unfairness, exclusion, and separation. Bounegru and Forceville (2011) examine how metaphor is used in political cartoons and contend that it is an effective way to frame disputes and sway viewers' perspectives. For example, sharks around the island of "Gaza" can represent the dangers from the outside world and the isolation of Gazans.

These works offer useful resources for examining cartoons' semiotic techniques. However, they typically handle semiotics separately, excluding it from more comprehensive frameworks such as MDA or the ideological square. The goal of this book is to give a comprehensive account of how cartoons create narratives about the Gaza crisis through the use of semiotic analysis, MDA, and ideological critique.

2.3 Media Representation of the Gaza Conflict

2.3.1 Visual and Discursive Representations of Gaza

Scholars are challenging the methods used to create and spread narratives, and the media's depiction of Gaza is contentious. Chomsky and Pappe (2015) claim that the portrayal of Gaza as a violent place typically ignores the political and historical circumstances of the conflict. They draw attention to the demeaning and hostile portrayals of Gazans in the media.

Philo and Berry (2011) analyze how the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is portrayed in Western media, exposing biases that silence Palestinian voices and support Israeli narratives. They contend that a skewed perception of the conflict results from this imbalance. Similarly, Douai and Lauricella (2014) study how media representations strengthen sectarian narratives, hence strengthening divisions and stereotypes. Alsaba (2023) offers a comprehensive analysis of how the Abraham Accords impacted Arab media representations of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict through an examination of the visual coverage of the conflict. Alsaba investigates the function of graphic portrayal as a framing mechanism by operationalizing visual frames through the contrasts of peace against conflict and human interest versus technical. Significant disparities in coverage before and after the Accords are revealed by the study's comparative analysis of images from Al Arabiya, Al Jazeera, and Sky News Arabia. By emphasizing how media sources convey geopolitical positions through their visual narratives, it advances our knowledge of conflict framing. In a same vein, Gondwe and Walcott (2024) reveal a widespread anti-war stance, especially in Global South cartoons, in contrast to a dearth in Western media. By deciphering intricate stories and individualized viewpoints that influence audience opinions, the analysis strengthens the editorial cartoons' potency in political conversation.

These studies lay the groundwork for analyzing visual media, including cartoons, even if they concentrate on textual media. By investigating how cartoons create alternative narratives that contradict prevailing views of Gaza, our study builds on previous findings.

2.3.2 Media Bias and Censorship in Gaza's Representation

Public impressions of the Gaza conflict are significantly influenced by media control and bias. According to Herman and Chomsky (2002), the media follow a "propaganda paradigm," in which political and corporate goals shape their coverage. This concept explains why some stories—like the pain of Gazans—are typically minimized or left out. Said (1997) exposes how skewed narratives perpetuate Orientalist stereotypes and questions how Islam and the Middle East are portrayed in Western media. He contends that the representation of Gaza, where Palestinians are typically seen as aggressors rather than victims, is where this bias is most noticeable. According to Hackett and Zhao (1998), agenda-setting and gate keeping are two journalism methods that exacerbate these biases. Studies like Tasserion (2021), which used multimodal critical discourse analysis to examine British and South African print media coverage of the 2014 Gaza conflict, expose the imbalance in how media outlets portray conflicts. The analysis exposes a bias that marginalizes the Palestinian viewpoint while legitimizing Israeli military actions. It offers insights into how media semiotics convey or rescind legitimacy and the role of media in legitimizing violence by highlighting the influence of the structured reporting environment on news production through journalist interviews.

Shreim (2014) examines the proportionality of losses and the representation of military events in a comparison of the English and Arabic services of the BBC and Al Jazeera, demonstrating how an event can be presented in a subtle way. Although opinions on targeting civilians vary, the survey finds agreement on the sorrow of civilian casualties. This research emphasizes how the media shapes narratives on the legitimacy and rationality of the conflict. These studies highlight the significance of analyzing cartoons' reactions to or defiance of media bias. This study investigates cartoons' capacity to subvert prevailing beliefs and provide voice to underrepresented groups by examining them as counter-narratives.

2.4 Similar Studies using Multimodal & Ideological Analysis

Forceville (2005) examines how visual metaphors in political cartoons generate narratives about the self and others through the use of multimodal discourse analysis.

His research shows how well MDA works to reveal hidden ideologies in visual texts. Fahmy (2007) looks at how editorial cartoons depict the Iraq War and shows how military operations are criticized through the use of semiotic resources. As Assaiqeli (2021) explores how visual representation memorializes and reconstructs Palestinian national themes, semiotic repertoire can be used to convey national and ideological narratives. In order to investigate the function of Nakba images in counter-hegemonic discourse, the study employs Kress and van Leeuwen's grammar of visual design. Assaiqeli highlights the emancipatory potential of these images by illustrating how they maintain historical narratives and influence Palestinian collective consciousness.

In a similar vein, Adawiyah et al. (2020) investigated media portrayals of Israelis and Palestinians during the Gaza conflict using Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis (MCDA). Their study used Kress and van Leeuwen's (2006) paradigm for visual analysis and combined Halliday's (2004) transitivity analysis and Van Dijk's (2006) ideological square to examine linguistic choices. The results showed a definite ideological position: Israelis were portrayed as aggressors, while Palestinians were portrayed as an in-group fighting for justice. This demonstrates how binary oppositions can be created and reinforced by the media. However, it calls into question the wider implications for peace building and conflict resolution, as well as possible bias in the selection of media sources and portrayals (Fairclough, 1995).

Patrona (2022) critically examines the idea of information as a propaganda tool by examining political statements made during the conflict between Russia and Ukraine. The study shows how emotional appeals and inter-textual references are used in multimodal discourses to influence public opinion. The subject of how readers might recognize manipulation in multimodal texts is a relevant one. Echoing Ellul's (1973) investigation of propaganda as a tool for influencing public opinion, the study highlights the significance of critical media literacy. Osborn (2017) also examined how Israelis and Palestinians are portrayed in foreign history textbooks. Osborn used MCDA to draw attention to how narratives tended to emphasize conflict over cultural and identity elements. This implies that varied representations that go beyond conflict-centric narratives must be taken into account by educators and media creators. The study supports Said's (1978) criticism of Orientalism, which contends that Eastern cultures are frequently stereotyped and oversimplified in Western media.

Tehseem and Bokhari (2015) investigated political cartoons in Pakistani newspapers in a different setting, demonstrating how media biases are reflected in face-saving and face-spoiling strategies. Their results are consistent with those of Ashfaq et al. (2019), who used political cartoons to investigate Indo-Pak relations and found nation-centric depictions. Both studies emphasize how the media shapes national identity, but they also call for a critical analysis of the ways in which these representations affect public opinion and international relations. Galtung's (1990) idea of peace journalism, which supports media narratives that foster understanding rather than conflict, is consistent with the dichotomous depictions.

El-Falaky (2019) and Lennon & Kilby (2021), who concentrate on the Arab Spring and Brexit, respectively, further illustrate the influence of cartoons in political discourse. These studies highlight how beliefs are communicated through visual grammar (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006). They do, however, also prompt consideration of the moral ramifications of these portrayals and how they affect public opinion. For instance, the way Brexit is portrayed shows how ideas of otherness and national identity are created. This approach is extended to the representation of political ideologies and the War on Terror in Pakistani media by Jabeen et al. (2022) and Shahzad et al. (2023). These studies demonstrate the intentional use of semiotic resources that shape identities through the frameworks outlined by Van Leeuwen (2008) and Fairclough (2003). These interpretations enhance our understanding of media discourse while also pushing us to think about the role that media literacy plays in encouraging critical interaction with texts. This supports Foucault's (1972) theory that discourse serves as a tool for control and power, according to which viewers must critically interact with media narratives.

Semiotic discourse is also useful in the process of propagating and reinforcing specific attitudes toward something, among its many other uses; Aazam et al. (2020) examined COVID-19 representations in Pakistani political cartoons, highlighting paranoia and governmental criticism. The current investigation elucidates the manner in which semiotic analysis is able to reveal underlying agendas in media, and it additionally prompts us toward a discussion of media's responsibility when crises are being reported. Zurbriggen's (2022) study concerning editorial cartoons furnishes a certain perceptive perspective into the portrayal of political candidates, and it spotlights

various themes of gender, race, and age. The depicted modality of cartoons accentuates the manner in which it appends emotive components. Certain inciting components may not be conveyed with equivalent effectiveness through written editorials. This corresponds with the more wide-ranging discipline of multimodal analysis. Within media, it scrutinizes the way that diverse modes such as visual and textual ones are used so as to impart meaning.

To conclude, these studies highlight the multimodal discourse analysis's diverse applications and reveal its potency in uncovering ideological underpinnings which are in media. They collectively underscore the need for critical media literacy to empower audiences to navigate and interpret complex multimodal texts. As researchers and consumers of media, we must remain vigilant to both the overt and covert messages embedded within these discourses. While these studies provide valuable insights, they focus on specific conflicts or crises, with limited attention to the Gaza conflict. This study contributes to the literature by applying these frameworks to cartoons about Gaza, offering a comparative analysis of recurring themes and strategies.

2.5 Research Gaps and Justification for the Study

Although aforementioned studies have examined semiotic discourse, to the researcher's best knowledge no study has leveraged a comparative Multimodal Discourse Analysis to examine Gaza conflict cartoons published in the Pakistani and British print media. Moreover, most of the studies are limited to either a certain event or lack in terms of the size of the dataset, thus making the generalizability of their findings difficult. The study thus aims to fill this niche and add to the body of knowledge on how cartoons are used for portraying the prevalent opinions and ground realities around a conflict.

This study addresses these gaps by combining MDA, semiotics, and the ideological square to analyze 30 cartoons about Gaza. By examining recurring themes, semiotic strategies, and ideological patterns, it provides a comprehensive understanding of how cartoons represent the Gaza conflict.

2.6 Theoretical Foundations

2.6.1 Multimodal Discourse Analysis (Machin, 2007)

Multimodal Discourse Analysis (MDA) provides for an approach using which various multimodal resources like objects, participants, positioning and color, come together to construct a certain narrative. Machin (2007) is of the view that communication involves use of a gamut of elements and aspects, each playing its role in formulating a message. Some integral aspects of Machin's model include:

Semiotic elements: These include various figures, and objects or props that are employed by the cartoonist along with their symbolic meaning.

Salience: This aspect covers how the various semiotic elements are shown in relation to each other and the overall visual field. Through this one gets a sense of the prevalent power structures and state of relations. In addition, the color, contrast, and size of these elements highlight the significance each one carries.

Interplay of modes: The literary elements in the form of captions or thought bubbles work together with the visual elements in the meaning-making process.

Application of MDA to Political Cartoons

Kress and Van Leeuwen (2006) in their seminal work *Reading Images: The Grammar of Visual Design* put forth a "visual grammar" that governs the meaning that images can transmit. They argue that spatial composition, gaze direction, and framing are crucial for understanding the connections between elements in a visual text. For example, cartoons about Gaza usually use spatial compositions to highlight the power imbalance between aggressors and victims, with military figures taking up much of the visual space and civilians looking devalued. O'Halloran (2011) expands on the usage of MDA to multimodal texts in media by emphasizing the importance of inter-semiotic interactions, or the way that several modes interact to produce cohesive narratives. She argues that because this approach is particularly effective at exposing ideologies embedded in visual media, it is a valuable tool for analyzing political cartoons.

Despite the solid theoretical foundations provided by Machin and others, nothing is known about how MDA is used in the Gaza conflict. This study uses MDA to investigate how cartoons in the Gaza context produce narratives of violence, victimization, and resistance in order to bridge this divide.

2.6.2 Ideological Square (Van Dijk, 1998)

Van Dijk's ideological square is a critical discourse analysis approach that examines how language and communication influence in-group and out-group dynamics. This framework is based on four key principles:

1. **Emphasizing in-group virtues.**
2. **Downplaying in-group vices.**
3. **Emphasizing out-group vices.**
4. **Downplaying out-group virtues.**

Van Dijk (1998) argues that ideologies are embedded in discourse and are used to legitimize or challenge power relations. He asserts that ideologies are embedded in discourse and function to either support or challenge power structures. For instance, in media discourse, majority groups are usually depicted as rational and moral, while minority groups are viewed as destructive or nonsensical. The ideological square can help researchers better understand how these processes are established and maintained.

Relevance to Political Cartoons

Political cartoons offer a perfect platform for ideological analysis because they usually highlight the positives or negatives of specific parties through satire and exaggeration. Van Dijk's method offers a perspective for analyzing how cartoons construct narratives about antagonistic groups, such as Gazans and aggressors. For example, a cartoon might highlight the suffering of Gazans while displaying the violence or hypocrisy of aggressors.

In his work on discourse and manipulation, Van Dijk explores the ways in which language is employed to maintain ideologies and influence opinions (Van Dijk, 2006). He argues that selectively including or removing information is a typical manipulation method, which is in line with the visual and linguistic strategies used in political

cartoons. In their research on critical discourse analysis, Wodak and Meyer (2009) also stress the significance of emphasis and omission in constructing ideological narratives. Although the ideological square has been employed extensively in textual discourse, visual media still seldom ever use it. This study contributes to the field by analyzing how political cartoons about Gaza produce ideological narratives by fusing Van Dijk's methodology with MDA.

2.7 Conclusion

This review of the literature has looked at the theoretical and contextual foundations for analyzing political cartoons related to the Gaza situation. It has analyzed key frameworks like MDA and the ideological square critically while highlighting gaps in the corpus of recent research. By addressing these gaps, this study contributes to our understanding of how cartoons tell tales about Gaza and offers data on how visual media shape popular perceptions of humanitarian and political situations.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design

The study focuses on understanding how political cartoons construct and communicate narratives of victimhood, aggression, and resistance. This involves examining the interplay of visual and textual elements, as well as uncovering the ideological underpinnings embedded in these representations. Such an inquiry requires a deep, interpretive analysis of semiotic and discursive resources, which is best achieved through qualitative methods (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018). Qualitative research prioritizes rich, descriptive data and interpretive frameworks, making it the most appropriate choice for analyzing the symbolic and ideological dimensions of political cartoons (Creswell, 2013). Moreover, it is well-suited for studies that require sensitivity to context, as it allows researchers to consider the historical, cultural, and social dimensions of the phenomenon under investigation (Yin, 2018).

Within the qualitative paradigm, this study employs two specific sub-designs: **Discourse Analysis (DA)** and **Semiotic Analysis**. These sub-designs are complementary, allowing for a comprehensive examination of both the discursive and visual dimensions of political cartoons. The former focuses on understanding how language and symbols are used to represent social realities (Fairclough, 2001). While the latter is essential for understanding how visual elements, such as color, spatial composition, and symbolism, contribute to meaning-making.

3.2 Data Collection

The second step involved the collection of data about the portrayal of the conflict from the reportage of the Pakistani and British newspapers, from August 2020 to August 2024.

3.3 Research Population

The researcher then entered queries pertaining to Gaza Cartoons published in the aforementioned period in the said newspapers into the Google search engine. A total of 50 results were obtained for the Dawn newspaper and 40 results for the Guardian newspaper respectively. Subsequently the obtained cartoons were perused and cartoons addressing similar events or content were filtered out to avoid redundancy and to obtain a comprehensive analysis.

3.4 Research Sample

The researcher then made a purposive sampling of fifteen cartoons for each newspaper out of the available data. **Representational and Ideological diversity** was insured by sourcing data from media outlets and cartoonists in different regions, capturing culturally specific perspectives on the Gaza conflict. The sample reflects a range of ideological perspectives, including **pro-Palestinian, pro-Israeli, and neutral viewpoints**. This ensures a balanced analysis of how different actors construct narratives of victimhood, aggression, and resistance. The study prioritized publicly accessible cartoons to ensure ethical compliance and transparency. The selection of 30 cartoons balances depth and breadth, allowing for detailed multimodal and ideological analysis while maintaining feasibility, as evinced in previous studies such as Forceville (2005).

The chosen time frame coincides with significant political and military events that have shaped the Gaza conflict, providing a rich context for analysis. The outbreak of violence in May 2021, **Operation Al-Aqsa flood** in October 2023 and subsequent **regional expansion** of the conflict to Lebanon, Syria, Yemen and lately Iran has intensified global discourse on the Gaza conflict, with widespread media coverage. The **ongoing blockade**, humanitarian crises, and sporadic escalations continue to generate media attention and political commentary. Hence, it ensures relevance of the study by capturing evolving narratives about the conflict. The selected time period also reflects significant changes in the media landscape, particularly the rise of digital platforms and social media. The increasing dissemination of cartoons online has expanded their reach and influence, making them a critical medium for global discourse (Bounegru & Forceville, 2011). The particular newspapers i.e. The Dawn and The Guardian were

selected as data sources due to the following reasons: *wide readership; high reputation and credibility; demographic alignment; and access and availability of pertinent content.*

3.5 Review of Conceptual Framework

After the collection of the relevant data, the following theoretical lenses were used to interpret the various discursive strategies embedded in the political cartoons:

Machin's Multimodal Discourse Analysis: the framework enables a researcher to deconstruct the various semiotic resources employed by the cartoonist and the implicit or explicit messages these visual choices communicate to the audience. The factors under which the cartoons were analyzed are presented below:

Participants

In this section, the entities whether human or non-human portrayed to be playing a role in the cartoons are the center of attention. Machin (2007, p. 109-123) points out, 'analyzing the precise details of actions in written or speech can reveal more subtle messages about the way people are represented as having power or as being passive....applying this to images gives us a more precise tool kit for thinking about action and agency'.

Settings

According to Machin (2007), settings are used to connote discourses and their values, identities, and actions. Settings take into account the socio-cultural background and the contextual information which aids in a better understanding of the layers of meaning in an image.

Captions

In this section, the textual data accompanying the visual components in the semiotic discourse is examined. These include subtitles, labels, titles etc., which give the audience supplemental information for a clear and better interpretation of what is meant to be conveyed. Captions are important in that they are vital in shaping the meaning and interpretation of the overall message present in a multimodal discourse.

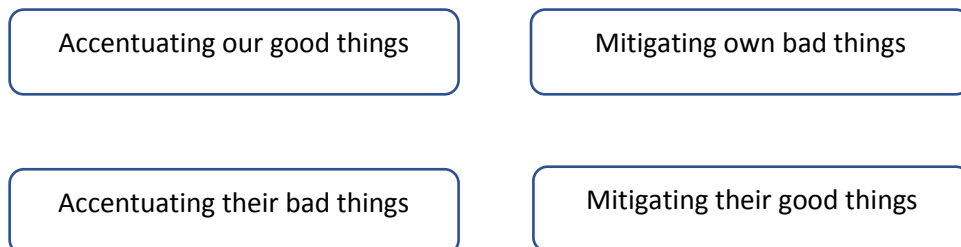
Poses

Poses play a significant role in the meaning-making process when it comes to semiotics. It refers to the bodily positions, gestures, and expressions bearing which various semiotic elements are deployed, giving a certain meaning to the audience. Moreover, it is essential to understand the non-verbal cues provided in the multimodal discourse and how they reflect the attitudes, emotions, and power dynamics found in reality.

Objects

Here the focus is on the various symbols, props, and other physical elements employed in the semiotic discourse. These objects act as carriers of meaning working in unison with other semiotic resources, by analyzing them, the messages intended and their underlying ideologies can be understood.

Van Dijk's Ideological Square (1998): posits that a certain group or individual forms his discourse according to their ideological standpoint. They paint a positive picture of themselves, while also negatively portraying the opposing party. In order to achieve this, they employ various strategies throughout their discourse. The negative traits of the other party are brought under the spot-light, whereas, any bad attributes related to own-self are covered up. Thus, the fundamental essence of this theory is about:



Van Dijk emphasized the cognitive dimension of usage of language and the social practices associated with it. In this approach cognition is viewed as a link between social practices and discourse. Moreover, cognition is seen in terms of mental models or schemata which enact ideological values and attitudes of people. In this regard these ideologically driven schemata, act as guiding force and scaffolding in the production of discourse and consequently attain a control over the social practices or actions. In a similar manner, discourse by the means of these mental models, influences ideologies and enact and reproduce them. Thus, discourse fundamentally acts as a medium to formulate and express various sets of beliefs and ideologies.

3.6 Method of Data Analysis

The integration of Machin's MDA and Van Dijk's Ideological Square provides a comprehensive framework for analyzing both the multimodal and ideological dimensions of political cartoons. While Machin's MDA focuses on the semiotic and structural aspects of meaning-making, Van Dijk's Ideological Square examines how these elements are ideologically positioned to construct in-group and out-group dynamics. The conceptual framework operates on two levels:

1. Multimodal Level (Machin's MDA): focuses on how meaning is constructed through the visual and textual elements of political cartoons. Key aspects include:

- What semiotic resources (e.g., symbols, colors, and spatial arrangements) are used to represent Gazans, aggressors, and other actors?
- How do visual elements such as size, positioning, and salience shape the narrative focus?
- What metaphors or symbols are used, and what meanings do they convey in the context of the Gaza conflict?
- How do text and image interact to reinforce or subvert specific narratives?

2. Ideological Level (Van Dijk's Ideological Square): examines the ideological positioning of the narratives constructed by the multimodal elements. Key aspects include:

- How is in-group virtue (e.g., Gazans' victimhood, humanity, or resilience) emphasized in the cartoons?
- How is out-group vice (e.g., aggressors' violence, hypocrisy, or indifference) portrayed?
- Are in-group vices or out-group virtues omitted, and how does this omission shape the ideological framing of the conflict?
- How do these ideological patterns contribute to constructing moral judgments or critiquing power dynamics?

CHAPTER 4

DATA ANALYSIS

4.1 Analysis of Gaza Cartoons in respective newspapers

Figure 1. From 'The Dawn', published: 14th October, 2023

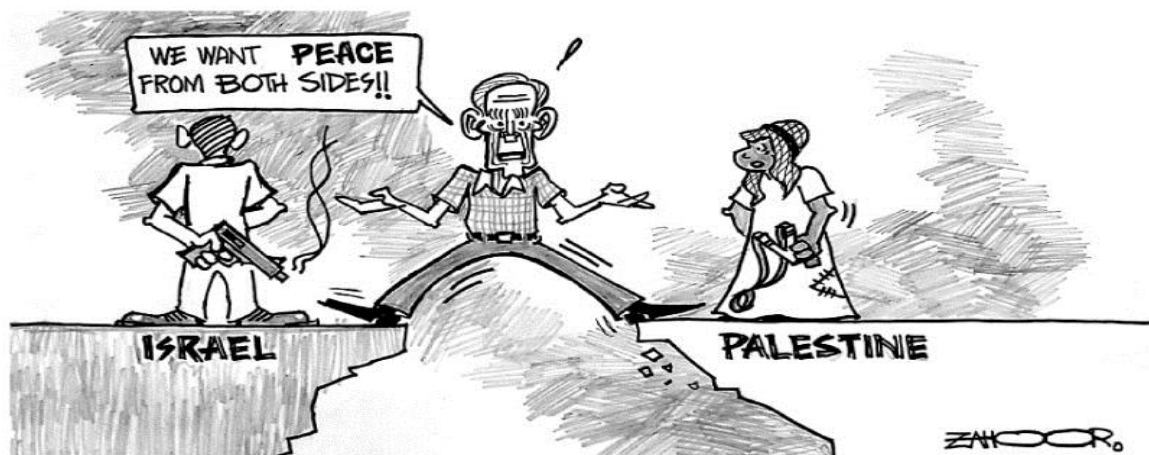


The idea of Gaza as a small, barren island surrounded by shark-infested waters symbolizes danger, isolation, and the inescapably dire circumstances that Gazans must face. The lack of resources and escape routes emphasizes their incarceration. On the island, skulls stand for destruction and death, emphasizing the life-threatening situations caused by ongoing fighting. The sharks that circle the island represent external hostility and threats. It implies that even making an effort to leave Gaza is flirting with danger. It highlights the unending incarceration and the lack of safe alternatives for Gazans. By donning a helmet bearing the Star of David, a conspicuous emblem of governmental power, the soldier represents the strength and power of the Israeli aggressor. His rhetorical demand to "leave within 24 hours!" is unreasonable as there is no actual way out. Spatial juxtaposition is used effectively in the cartoon. While the soldier occupies a commanding position on the left, indicating authority and control, the Gazans sit passively on the island, appearing vulnerable and defenseless. The dangerous atmosphere created by the sharks and skulls surrounding the island

graphically reinforces the captivity of the Gazans. When the soldier is told to "leave within 24 hours!" the Gazans ask, "Leave where?" This literary interchange emphasizes the cruelty and absurdity of the demand. It conveys the powerlessness and grief of the Gazan people while highlighting their lack of agency in the face of incessant attack. The cartoon critiques the aggressor's unreasonable and unjust demands while showing Gaza as a location of severe misery, peril, and despair for its inhabitants.

The cartoon criticizes the Israeli soldier by portraying him as a cruel and dictatorial figure who gives an impossible order; the visual elements (dominant stance, weapon, and militaristic look) reinforce his repressive role; the sharks and skulls emphasize the aggressors' role as catalysts of violence and pain by symbolizing outside hostility and the lethal results of their deeds; and the Gazan people are portrayed as helpless and obedient targets of violence, their vulnerability, lack of agency, and incarceration emphasized by their small, desolate island and their dialogue, "Leave where?" The island's lack of supplies, shelter, and escape routes further exacerbates their victimization and desperation. It showcases Israel's abuse of power and the ensuing humanitarian crisis while highlighting the suffering and victimization of Gazans. Death, enmity, and loneliness are recurring motifs in representations of the conflict. Unlike other cartoons that might focus on media restrictions or political hypocrisy, this one highlights the real existential and physical threats to Gazans and openly condemns the aggressor's actions.

Figure 2. From *'The Dawn'*, published: 30th August, 2021



The cartoon depicts two opposing sides of Israel and Palestine as being divided by a gap, both literally and figuratively. This arrangement of spaces emphasizes how pervasive the hostility is. The figure in the center, which stands for international diplomacy or mediation, highlights how challenging it is to bring about peace because the mediator appears frustrated and powerless. An Israeli individual is pictured holding a rifle while standing stiffly. This represents aggression and militarism. Despite holding a weapon, the Palestinian figure's traditional attire and gentler features create a sense of dispossession and hardship. The mediator's wide arms and frustrated look, which highlight the seeming hopelessness of settling the conflict, further underline the violence's cyclical and unresolved character. The speech bubble "WE WANT PEACE FROM BOTH SIDES!!" objects to the purportedly equal distribution of responsibility. The omission of any contextual information such as the historical background and stress on both factions for reaching a peace deal runs the risk that the issue is oversimplified. The yawning gap between the figures representing Israel and Palestine illustrates how devoid of trust and dialogue their relationship is. The dilapidated structure is a reminder that attempts to bridge the divide have repeatedly failed.

In this categorically military depiction of Israel, the gun is the primary prop. This visual selection is congruent with criticisms of Israel's use of force in the Gaza conflict. The representation is less militaristic, stressing traditional clothing and a less intimidating posture, even though Palestine is armed as well. People may sympathize with the occupied Palestinians as a result of this contrast. The mediator is portrayed as unbiased but impatient, representing other entities (perhaps the UN or Western nations). This story may imply that these forces are not held responsible for addressing power disparities or fixing systemic injustices. By emphasizing "peace from both sides," the cartoon questions the oversimplified equality of blame commonly used in international relations. It causes viewers to question whether the two sides are truly equally accountable. Israel and Palestine are regarded as responsible for the ongoing war because they are both armed and located on different sides of the divide. This is consistent with the mutual-blame ideological paradigm. Visual semiotics is used in the cartoon to subtly differentiate between the two groups. The idea that Palestine is clothed traditionally and Israel is modern and militarized suggests a power imbalance. These visual cues could persuade the viewer that Israel is the dominant aggressor and Palestine is the oppressed group. The outside narrative of neutrality, which usually overlooks the

root causes of the conflict, is criticized by the main character. The ideological square's emphasis on in-group justification (external actors claiming neutrality) and the implied criticism of the simplistic "both sides" narrative are connected by the mediator's dissatisfied stance.

Figure 3. From *'The Dawn'*, published: 18th May, 2021



The cartoon depicts two figures: a small Palestinian individual on the left and a massive Israeli tank on the right. The tank takes center stage, symbolizing overwhelming might and military might, while the Palestinian figure appears little and helpless, emphasizing the power disparity. The division of the room into two distinct areas highlights the imbalance of the conflict. The Palestinian person, barefooted, stands on a little rock that is marked "Palestine," emphasizing dispossession and fragility. Reminiscent of the biblical story of David and Goliath, the figure's sling represents perseverance in the face of overwhelming adversity. The raised fist and pointed finger symbolize anger and defiance, portraying Palestinians as fighting for their lives. The tank is a massive, menacing symbol of power and military might. The Israeli flag flying over the tank is an assertion of state power and war ownership. The barrel of the tank, pointed directly at the Palestinian figure, conveys a message of imminent violence and intimidation. The speech bubble "ACCORD!?" from the bird figure represents calls for peace or a ceasefire while being skeptical of it being achieved anytime soon. The UN's top-level call for a "Cease-fire" demonstrates how uninterested

and possibly ineffective international actors are. The puddle of liquid beneath the tank may symbolize the harm and devastation caused by its presence, even while the contrast between the tank and the Palestinian figure visually defies the notion of equal blame in the conflict. In line with criticism of Israel's military actions in Gaza, the tank is a representation of aggression and excessive force.

The tank's massive size in comparison to the Palestinian figure creates an image of overwhelming hostility, portraying Israel as the oppressor. A sling and a raised fist are displayed on the Palestinian figure, which could be seen as a statement of resistance or defiance. In addition to indicating self-defense and expressing the notion that Palestinians are always at war, the sling subtly references the stereotype of violence. The cartoon minimizes the actions of the Palestinians by emphasizing their vulnerability and the imbalance of the conflict. The sling and rock represent minimal defense against overwhelming force. However, no excuses are provided, and the Israeli tank's overwhelming presence is portrayed as unjustifiable. The "Cease-fire" call from the UN is a critique of reductionist rhetoric that places equal guilt on both sides. The speech bubble "ACCORD!?" casts doubt on the feasibility of peace in such unequal circumstances and calls into question the impartiality that international players usually promote. The Palestinian figure's small size, traditional attire, and precarious position arouse sympathy by portraying Palestinians as defending themselves against an oppressively powerful foe.

The absence of any visual cues to soften its presentation—no good qualities are highlighted—highlights the Israeli tank's status as an aggressor. Despite being shown as opposing powers, the cartoon's comparison of Israel and Palestine's resources and capabilities clearly creates an imbalance. The condemnation of foreign actors (including the UN) as being ineffective or adopting an overly simplistic position is consistent with broader portrayals of the Gaza situation. The portrayal of the Palestinian image evokes empathy by emphasizing vulnerability and struggle, whereas Israel is nearly exclusively viewed through the lens of militarism and force. Although Israel is portrayed as the aggressor with little supporting evidence, the cartoon does not explicitly condemn Palestinian actions, instead characterizing them as symbolic or defensive.

Figure 4. From *'The Dawn'*, published: 21st April, 2022



The cartoon foregrounds a cemetery with multiple unmarked graves to symbolize mass death and the anonymity of the victims. The majority of the visible space is occupied by the graves, emphasizing the human cost of the conflict. War is impending and certain, as seen by the rocket emblazoned with the Israeli flag that looms in the upper right corner and is heading toward Gaza. The "Gaza" sign, which is literally depicting a place under constant attack and is damaged and surrounded by smoke, represents destruction and despair. By clearly connecting Israel to the attack, the missile denounces the nation's role in the carnage. The absence of any Palestinian figures or acts of reprisal reinforces the portrayal of Gaza as the victim of a unilateral attack. The "Gaza" sign highlights the political and geographical context for the audience.

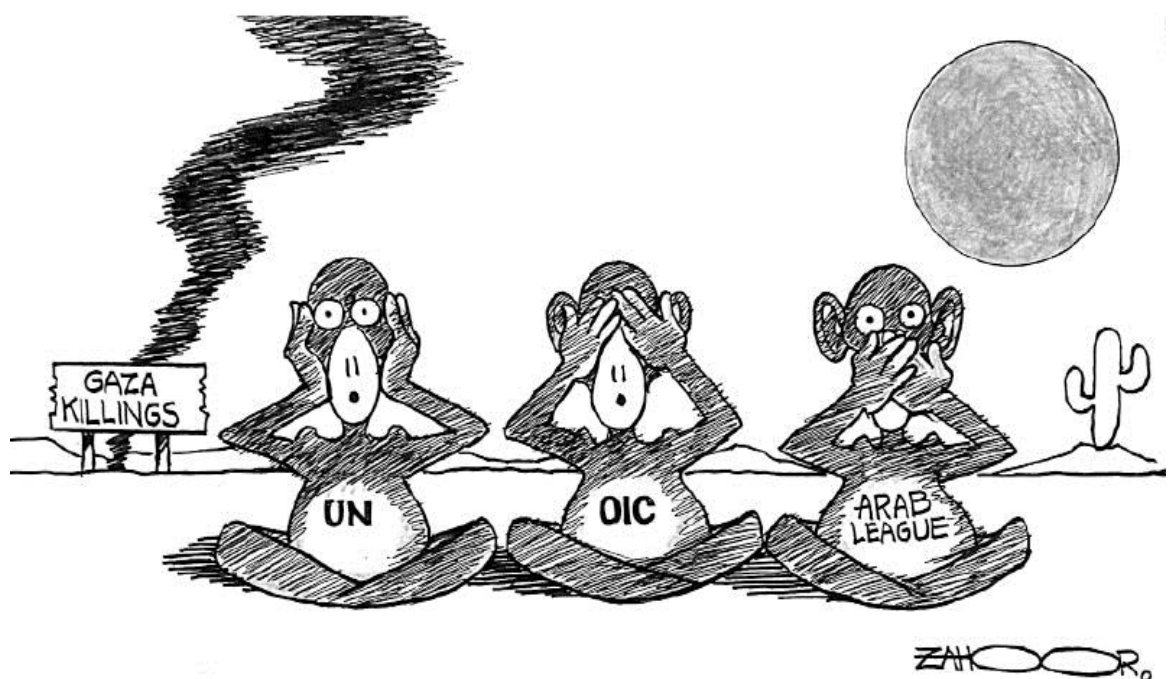
The severe devastation of the strip is further highlighted by the sign's broken and fractured state. The incoming missile towards the Gaza cemetery and the black smoke billowing in the background denote Israeli forces' ruthless strikes resulting in mass casualties and destruction. The graves with blank tombstones symbolize how the killing has been indiscriminate in nature and it also shows that the victims have been obscured. The Star of David on the tip of the rocket clearly links the aggression with the Israeli forces. No contextual information is provided to the audience in the cartoon; only the present air attack conducted by Israel is presented. The massive difference in offensive power between the two belligerents is highlighted in the form of the size and the trajectory of the missile while also emphasizing the indiscriminate nature of killing.

Palestinians are not directly seen in the cartoon, rather their graves serve as a somber reminder of the hurt and pain they have endured in this conflict. Their direct omission is meant to show Gazans as defenseless victims who carry no real power to

defend themselves from the Israeli aggression. By presenting the unmarked graves in the center of the visual field the cartoonist stresses the massive human toll this fight has taken on the Palestinian people.

The Israeli side is categorically portrayed as the sole aggressor. The signage of graves and billowing smoke evoke a sense of sympathy for the Palestinian people. The absence of any militancy on the part of the Palestinians in contrast to the missile's overt militancy, contributes to a victim narrative. Like other cartoons, this one uses imagery such as the missile and destruction to highlight Israel's role in maintaining violence by portraying it as the main aggressor. Gazans are frequently depicted as victims. The absence of agency or punitive action makes it even more vulnerable and in agony. Unlike other cartoons that show both sides (e.g., armed Palestinian figures or resistance), this one solely shows the aftermath of violence, excluding any depiction of Palestinian participation. As a result, the humanitarian cost becomes the primary focus instead of the dynamics of combat. By focusing on the consequences rather than the actual conflict, graves offer a distinctive means of illustrating the depth of loss and the senselessness of the violence.

Figure 5. From *'The Dawn'*, published: 9th August, 2022



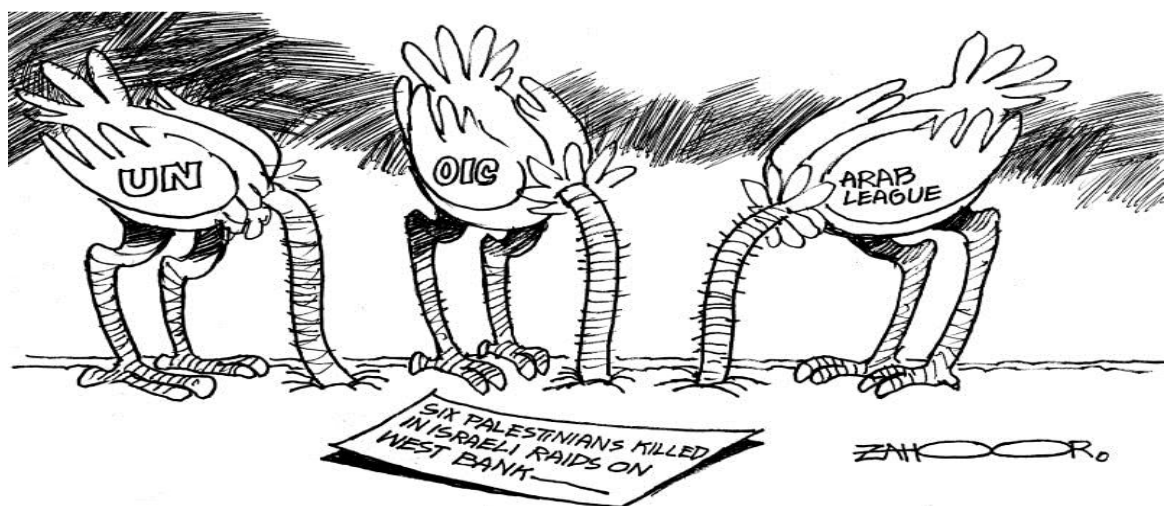
The cartoon's "Gaza Killings" label and the ominous black smoke billowing in the background place the situation in Gaza on the left. As a result, the battle becomes the center of bloodshed and destruction. The "three wise monkeys," which stand in for the UN, OIC (Organization of Islamic Cooperation), and Arab League's inability to acknowledge the situation, are the three primary protagonists. It is a reference to the Japanese maxim of 'sanjaru', which posits adopting an indifferent approach whereby one sees no evil, speaks no evil and hears no evil. The lone cactus in the backdrop shows the desolation and neglect shown towards Gaza by these organizations. Monkeys covering their mouth (Arab League), eyes (UN), and ears (OIC) represent the passivity and apathy of these institutions. The deliberate use of the "three wise monkeys" is meant to stress how these organizations which are meant to work for humanitarian causes stand in complete disregard to the misery of the Gazans.

The dark smoke in the backdrop of signage reading "Gaza Killings" highlights the tremendous amount of destruction wrought on by the Israeli aggression, where these organizations are a silent spectator. Moreover, the lack of any human figures representing the Palestinians in Gaza shows their dehumanization. Three wise monkeys, traditionally used as a moral lesson are used here to critique institutional passivity and apathy. The barren setting, which includes a cactus and a giant sun suggests isolation, neglect, and a lack of noteworthy action. The indifference of regional and international institutions is criticized in the cartoon. Charged with being "blind," the UN is alleged to have disregarded the glaring atrocities taking place in Gaza. Known as "deaf," the OIC has shown itself to be indifferent to the suffering of Palestinians. Described as "mute," the Arab League is allegedly reluctant to take action or speak out. These institutions are held accountable for prolonging the suffering by doing nothing.

The cartoon doesn't depict Palestinians or their conduct; it just highlights Palestinian misery. Gaza is exempted from accountability and portrayed as a passive victim of attack by excluding any reference to resistance or retaliation. In the cartoon, none of the actors are shown as explicitly moral. Instead, it highlights the virtue—or lack thereof—in the activities of the Arab League, the OIC, and the UN. The cartoon's subtle indictment of these organizations suggests that Gaza is suffering because their obligations are not being met. Although qualities are not emphasized expressly, the emphasis on the word "Gaza Killings" evokes empathy and moral anger, prompting viewers to sympathize with the plight of Palestinians. By avoiding taking responsibility,

the cartoon presents Gaza and its citizens as defenseless victims whose suffering is being ignored. It depicts Gaza as the victim of injustice and violence, highlighting its suffering and lack of agency. External actors, in this case the UN, OIC, and Arab League, are blamed for their inaction, which is similar to more general allegations of international disinterest in resolving the Gaza situation. Unlike other cartoons that highlight the disparity of power between Israel and Palestine, this one refocuses the criticism on international and regional institutions, portraying them as complicit in violence by their inaction. This animation is unique in that it does not include Israel or specifically discuss its actions; rather, it focuses only on the lack of intervention rather than the violent perpetrators.

Figure 6. From *'The Dawn'*, published: 27th August, 2022



The cartoon uses a number of semiotic strategies to show how regional and international organizations are unfazed and apathetic to the violence. In the cartoon, the UN, OIC (Organization of Islamic Cooperation), and Arab League are represented by three ostrich-like figures with their heads buried in the ground. They are chastised for their deliberate neglect of Palestinian suffering by refusing to acknowledge the bloodshed. The report on the ground, captioned "Six Palestinians killed in Israeli raids on West Bank," provides a concrete reference to the ongoing bloodshed, underscoring the gravity of the issue being ignored. Dark background colors convey a sense of gloom and desolation. The ostriches' position, with their heads buried in the sand, is a visual representation of passivity, denial, and avoiding responsibility. This metaphor suggests

that these organizations are aware of the problem but willfully choose to ignore it. The focus is solely on the passivity of these groups, which is blamed as a contributing factor to the issue, when no other actors—such as Israel or the Palestinians—are highlighted. The unambiguous labeling of the ostriches as "UN," "OIC," and "Arab League" eliminates any uncertainty and holds these institutions entirely accountable. The language used in the text emphasizes the specific human cost of the conflict, establishing the critique's foundation in real-world events and emphasizing the pressing nature of the issue. The metaphor of ostriches burying their heads in the sand is central to the cartoon's criticism. It reflects the general perception that regional and global institutions avoid challenging facts and would rather remain passive than intervene. The value placed on the virtues of others (in regional and international organizations). The cartoon criticizes the UN, OIC, and Arab League for their deliberate ignorance and inaction. Their ostrich-like behavior shows that they have not fulfilled their duties to protect Palestinian life and put an end to Israeli cruelty. These organizations are accused of contributing to the perpetuation of violence by neglecting their duties as mediators or defenders.

The animation avoids associating Palestinians with violence or retaliation by omitting a direct depiction of them. According to the text, the cartoon emphasizes the plight of Palestinians, portraying them as defenseless victims of Israeli assault. The cartoon berates the UN, OIC, and Arab League for their pusillanimity rather than celebrating any one person. The primary focus is on Israel's and Palestine's inaction rather than any specific actions they have performed. The cartoon's emphasis on Palestinian violence ("Six Palestinians killed...") evokes sympathy and rage in viewers, calling on them to support the victims. The fact that Palestinian resistance is not mentioned at all reinforces their image as defenseless victims of attack. This cartoon wholly shifts the focus to international and regional institutions, holding them accountable for their apathy, rather than confronting the perpetrators of the violence. Cartoons that specifically denounce Israel's involvement in the bloodshed stand in contrast to this. The ostrich metaphor is employed to show the organizations' avoidance and denial in a distinctive way, in contrast to other cartoons that would portray them as complicit or inept mediators.

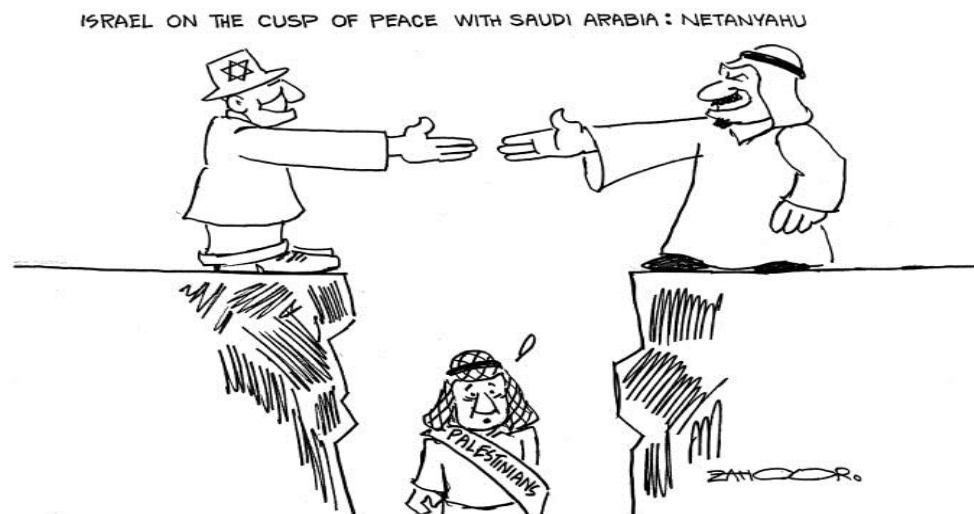
Figure 7. From *'The Dawn'*, published: 15th May, 2023



The cartoon's primary subject is a battered and injured man named "Gaza," who is lying on a crutch amidst rubble. This graphic metaphor portrays Gaza as a wounded and helpless organism, symbolizing the destruction and suffering caused by the fighting. The black smoke billowing from the debris, a sign of perpetual bloodshed and destruction, adds to the area's melancholy. The missile with the Israeli flag in the upper right corner is depicted as a frightening threat, emphasizing the continuous aggression and targeting of Gazans. The pitiable condition of the figure representing Gazans is meant to convey feelings of anguish and hopelessness, and depict Gaza as weak and broken. The rubble around this central figure stands for the widespread damage to infrastructure caused by indiscriminate Israeli bombings. The proximity of the incoming missile to the figure heightens the sensation of despair and the unavoidable fate by implying imminent violence. The word Gaza printed on the worn-out clothes of the man makes the suffering more relatable and strengthens the audience's emotional bond with the destruction. The man though brutally injured can still be seen standing tall this reflects the tenacity and will power of the Gazans in the face of the Israeli aggression. The Israeli missile with the Star of David on it is portrayed as the source of suffering and destruction. As in previous cartoons the Star of David etched onto the rocket is meant to point out Israel as the primary aggressor. On the other hand, Gaza is shown to be a helpless victim who doesn't rebel or seek retribution. This kind of framing is meant to show the passivity and innocence of the Palestinians.

The broader context of the war is not depicted, such as the motivations behind the actions of each side. Instead, it highlights the detrimental consequences of violence, letting the viewer infer the moral implications. The cartoon portrays Gaza as a wounded yet morally right character, demonstrating resilience and perseverance in the face of enormous challenges. It furthers the feeling of empathy for Gaza's plight and makes it more relatable. The fact that Gaza is not associated with weapons or terrorist imagery lends even more credence to its portrayal as an innocent victim. Israel is shown as the aggressor through the launching of a rocket, a recurring motif in representations of the Gaza conflict. Showing Gaza as a battered man adds a unique emotional appeal, making it more approachable and personal than abstract symbols like graves or smoke.

Figure 8. From *'The Dawn'*, published: 25th September, 2023



In this cartoon the focus is on the political outreach between the Arab countries and Israel with the Palestinians sidelined. The main characters include a Saudi leader on the right, an Israeli leader on the left, and a Palestinian in the middle, standing at the bottom of an abyss. The reaching out of hands between the Saudi and Israeli leaders represents the ongoing efforts in the backdrop of Abraham Accords to normalize relations between the two countries. The yawning gap between the two and Palestinian figure in between perfectly encapsulates the whole state of affairs. Though now it seems increasingly that Palestinian people would be isolated and marginalized as they are shown in the bottom of the abyss. The arrangement of the visual field is suggestive of

the fact that there is a real chance that Palestinians are being ignored so as to further bilateral political objectives. The leaders of Israel and Saudi Arabia are pictured shaking hands and smiling, signifying tacit understanding and hope.

The concern and sorrowful body language of the Palestinian figure represents desperation and marginalization. In addition, their lessened importance and diminished role is highlighted by the minute size of Palestinian figure when compared with the other two characters. The fractures and sharp edges of the cliffs highlight the precariousness of the situation and suggest that the peace process is unreliable and incomplete. The tagline, "Israel on the cusp of peace with Saudi Arabia: Netanyahu," highlights the manner in which the Palestinians are left in the lurch. The peace overtures between the two leaders are represented as being exclusive. The Palestinian figure at the bottom of the abyss is a symbolic representation of the suffering and marginalization of Palestinians, whose interests are ignored in wider geopolitical actions. It sheds light on the political dynamics, namely the exclusion of Palestinians from diplomatic endeavors. The cartoon's critique of Saudi Arabia, a regional player, for prioritizing political ties over Palestinian needs adds a new dimension.

The handshake between the Saudi and Israeli character is shown to be an act which is self-serving in nature and is indifferent to the interests of the Palestinian people. The extended hand toward Israel raises questions about disregarding Palestinian interests and emphasizes Saudi Arabia's support for Israel at the expense of Palestinian rights. The Palestinian is represented as a pitiable figure that has no say in the whole situation. This framing reduces any negative perception of Palestinians by presenting them solely as victims of political marginalization. The cartoon critiques the Saudi-Israeli handshake as discriminatory and hollow since it ignores Palestinian concerns, despite the fact that it seems like a positive move. The absence of any observable Palestinian agency lends credence to this narrative. By emphasizing the morality of the Palestinians' situation, the cartoon encourages sympathy for their exclusion from the peace process. By portraying them as powerless and disenfranchised, the cartoon highlights their institutionalized neglect and maintains their moral superiority.

Figure 9. From *'The Dawn'*, published: 12th October, 2023



The cartoon's primary focus is a large, imposing block with the Star of David on it, symbolizing Israel's brutal siege of the Gaza strip. The crushed figure whose feet protrude from under the block represents the multitudes of Gazans killed by the blockade. Despite labeling the blockade "illegal," a UN represented by a scarecrow on the left appears powerless or uncaring as they extend their arms. This spatial arrangement compares Israel's act of aggression with the pointlessness of international intervention. The bleak landscape and lack of further elements draw attention to Gaza's isolated and inhumane suffering. The block's weight and bulk, which symbolize the overwhelming and suffocating nature of the barrier, dominate the composition. Images of death and the lethal consequences of the blockade are evoked by the Gaza figure's protruding feet. The UN figure criticizes the organization's lack of meaningful action, but its open arms and unbiased position suggest inefficiency or theatrical disapproval. The headline, "UN Official Declares Israel's Blockade of Gaza 'Illegal,'" highlights the tension between vocal condemnation and inaction. The use of quote marks around the term "illegal" suggests irony or skepticism about the UN's pronouncement. The lack of more discussion highlights the disparity between the seriousness of the situation and the lack of concrete action. The siege of Gaza is a metaphor for the physical, financial, and humanitarian costs of the Israeli embargo, portraying it as a continuous constriction. International organizations' inability to solve the issue is exemplified by

the UN representative's detached manner, which minimizes them to the status of passive observers.

The massive size of the block and the Star of David instantly associate Israel with oppressive actions. Israel is viewed as the aggressor and the source of Palestinian pain and death. By focusing solely on the consequences of the siege, the cartoon condemns Israel's policies as unjust and inhumane without providing any explanation for its conduct. In the cartoon, the dead feet under the block stand in for Gaza as a defenseless victim. This framing absolves Palestinians of any guilt by focusing only on their suffering and lack of agency. The UN's assertion that the blockade is "illegal" has drawn criticism for being a pointless technicality that highlights the inadequacy of global institutions. Instead of explicitly portraying the UN as either good or evil, the animation portrays it as ineffectual. By portraying Gaza as a crushed victim, the cartoon draws attention to the agony endured by Palestinians under the blockade and inspires sympathy for them. The absence of any militant imagery serves to further bolster their appearance as innocent victims.

Figure 10. From *'The Dawn'*, published: 23th October, 2023

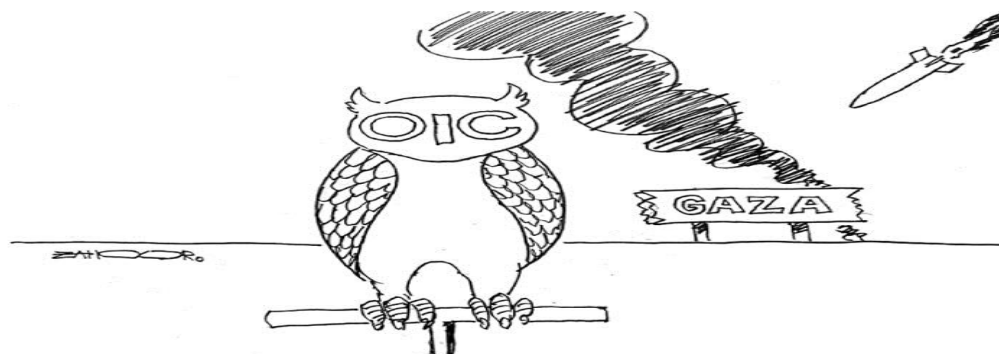


During the "Cairo Peace Summit," a group of leaders are depicted in the cartoon sitting around a circular table. The skulls in the middle of the table, labeled "Gaza" stands for death, destruction, and the quantity of those slain in the conflict. The stark

contrast between the formal surroundings of a dinner table and the skull motif placed in the center of the table showcases the detachment and indifference of the Arab leaders from the bloodshed. It actually points to the futility of such performative exercises which are only meant to pay lip service rather than addressing the core issue. The indifferent body language and facial expressions of the summits' attendees reflect their lack of concern or urgency for the ongoing massacres in Gaza. Skulls serve as the primary prop to represent the deaths in the conflict, making Gaza a grim symbol and highlighting how the humanitarian issue was not addressed at the summit. The banner "Cairo Peace Summit" is ironic because the cartoon blames the summit for failing to bring forth a permanent peace or alleviate the suffering in Gaza.

The leaders are seated passively and clothed traditionally; they are seen as distant, heartless, and unable to resolve the Gaza crisis. Their focus on formal diplomacy is allegedly performative rather than substantive. The round table and their indifferent body language demonstrate how little they are doing to alleviate the misery in Gaza. The skulls stand in for Gaza, portraying Palestinians as the targets of institutionalized mistreatment and indifference. This framing absolves them of any accountability or agency in the conflict by focusing solely on their misery. By portraying it as a symbolic gesture rather than a real endeavor at peace, the summit itself attacks the shallowness of such gatherings. The leaders' seeming passivity or lack of interest obscures any possible gains from their efforts. By using skull imagery to represent Gaza as the victim, the cartoon shows sympathy for Palestinians and condemns the inaction of outside parties. The notion that Gaza is merely a victim of the conflict is reinforced by the fact that it is not connected to any militaristic or violent imagery.

Figure 11. From *'The Dawn'*, published: 13th November, 2023



The cartoon depicts an owl with the label "OIC" (Organization of Islamic Cooperation) sitting idly on a branch while smoke rises into the sky and a missile lands against the backdrop of Gaza's burning. Although owls are usually thought of being wise, in this context they are portrayed as inert and inactive. This semiotic judgment criticizes the OIC's (typically perceived) ineptitude or delay in addressing the Gaza issue. The owl's composure in the midst of the chaos is a reflection of a lack of proactive involvement. The picture of smoke-covered Gaza conveys devastation and agony. The term "Gaza" and the simple portrayal of the burning structure effectively draw attention to the widespread devastation. The smoke serves as a visual symbol of ongoing bloodshed and unresolved conflict. The missile enroute to Gaza symbolizes the ongoing and imminent bloodshed in the area. It contributes to the overall sense of helplessness and vulnerability. The cartoon's primary focus is the criticism of the OIC, as evidenced by the owl's conspicuous foreground placement. The gravity of the situation and the urgent need for action are underscored by less obvious but crucial background pictures of the burning Gaza and the descending missile. The stark black-and-white contrast and absence of color add to the cartoon's melancholy tone and emphasize how dire the situation is. One could read the owl's expressionless demeanor as a critique of the OIC's apparent indifference. The cartoonist encourages viewers to think about whether international organizations are doing enough to address the situation in Gaza by taking a rhetorical stance.

The cartoon questions the traditional ideological square by disparaging the in-group (OIC) and emphasizing its purported flaws (passivity and inaction) rather than its advantages. This self-critical stance centers on the in-group's incapacity to effectively protect or defend Gaza. By portraying the owl as passive and uninterested in the catastrophe in Gaza, the cartoon downplays the attributes commonly associated with the OIC, such as leadership and unity in the Muslim world. The cartoon makes a subtle reference to the out-group, Israel which still commits acts of violence in Gaza, by showing the missile and the destruction it causes. However, the inaction of the in-group is emphasized instead of the overt actions of the aggressors. This indirect portrayal of the out-group demonstrates the conscious choice to focus the criticism inward and hold the OIC accountable for its own failings.

Figure 12. From *'The Dawn'*, published: 23rd November, 2023

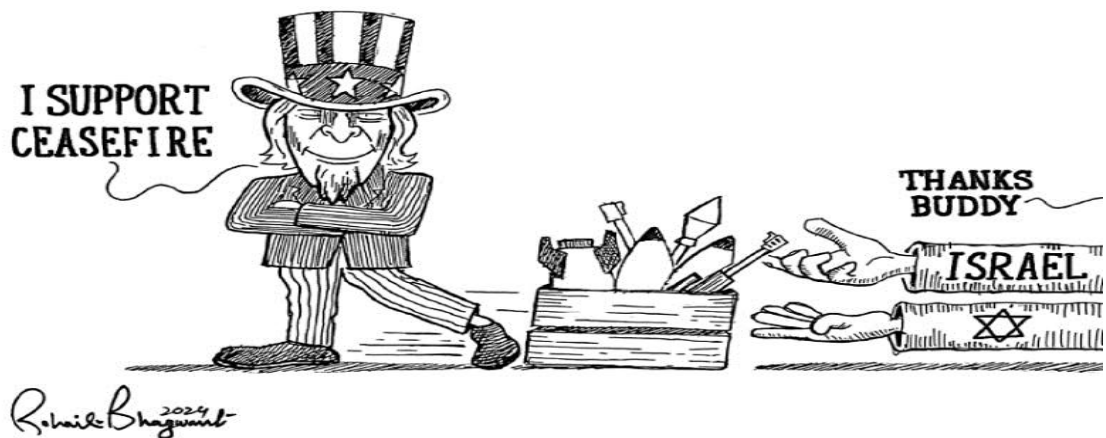


The cartoon portrays a chaotic and devastation-filled scene in Gaza, complete with ruined houses, a damaged hospital, and a soldier moving through the infrastructure. Hovering above is an Israeli soldier's head, which symbolizes strength and aggression. The visual area's preponderance of debris and dilapidated structures represents Gaza's significant physical devastation. Serious harm to the hospital, which serves as a symbol of humanitarian care, highlights violations of humanitarian norms. The elongated neck of the Israeli soldier moving through and under the buildings represents agency and control. By emphasizing Israel's significant role in the destruction, its enormous and commanding presence lends credence to the depiction of one-sided aggression. The little, scattered human figures among the debris stand in for the vulnerability and suffering of Gaza's civilian populace. Their small size in relation to the destruction starkly emphasizes their helplessness. The cartoon's primary focus is Gaza's destruction because the hospital and rubble are shown prominently to evoke sympathy for the victims. The soldier, who is positioned above the scene, stands for responsibility and authority. The elongated neck of the soldier visually reinforces the cause-and-effect relationship between the destruction on the ground and the aggression. The stark black-and-white color palette intensifies the scene's gravity by removing any distractions and focusing the viewer's attention on the scene's main themes of sorrow and destruction. The small details of the destruction (cracks, debris) convey authenticity and make the impact of the battle tangible and poignant.

The cartoon exposes the vices of the out-group by portraying Israel as the direct source of disaster. The idea that it is responsible for the chaos in Gaza is reinforced by the Israeli soldier meandering through the strip, which stands for aggressiveness and

authority. The cartoon highlights violations of humanitarian norms, such as assaulting civilian establishments (such as the hospital). Van Dijk's theory that out-group vices should be highlighted in order to condemn the aggressor's behavior is supported by this portrayal. Gaza is presented as the victim because its civilian population is small, helpless, and overwhelmed by the destruction. The in-group's victimization and innocence are emphasized by the focus on suffering and the destruction of public spaces. The cartoon uses a classic victim-aggressor dichotomy to emphasize the apparent one-sidedness of the argument.

Figure 13. From *'The Dawn'*, published: 19th February, 2024



The cartoon criticizes the portrayal of international engagement in the Gaza crisis. "I support ceasefire," says the figure of Uncle Sam, representing the United States. He then hands a box of weapons to a hand that is marked "Israel," to which the hand responds, "Thanks buddy." Given that actions of arming Israel contradict US claims that it is in favor of a ceasefire, its self-assured posture and crossed arms reveal dishonesty. The cartoon criticizes the contrast between American discourse and behavior. The box of weapons provided to Israel, which stands for active material support for violence, undermines the stated purpose of peace (ceasefire). By representing violence and devastation, the weapons clearly link the United States to the fight. The extended hand with the Star of David labeled "Israel" removing the weapons demonstrates reliance on US military support. By suggesting complicity and mockery, the colloquial phrase "Thanks buddy" highlights the cartoonist's critique of the alliance. To highlight the discrepancy, Uncle Sam's actual conduct of supplying weaponry is juxtaposed with his rhetorical declaration ("I support ceasefire"). The spoken and visual

elements work together to emphasize the seeming hypocrisy. The center placement of the weapons box serves as a visual focal point and symbolizes the primary issue, which is how U.S. aid has exacerbated the current bloodshed in Gaza. This striking visual style highlights the criticism's harshness.

The artist uses clear, exaggerated body language and facial expressions to heighten the sarcastic tone and make the critique intelligible to the audience. As it provides weapons to encourage violence while professing to support peace, the United States is perceived as being hypocritical. This discrepancy highlights the vice of duplicity, in accordance with Van Dijk's notion of emphasizing out-group flaws. Israel is seen as an aggressor that depends on American support, and its casual acceptance of weapons shows that it is indifferent to peace initiatives. The cartoon criticizes the moral obligations of both parties by portraying them as accountable for maintaining violence. Although it is not explicitly depicted in the cartoon, the criticism of U.S.-Israeli cooperation suggests Gaza's victimhood. The cartoon's focus on out-group behavior indirectly positions Gaza as the innocent, suffering party. It provides a more thorough analysis of the geopolitical forces sustaining the war by focusing on denouncing the external power structures rather than speaking directly for Gaza.

Figure 14. From *'The Dawn'*, published: 27th March, 2024



The cartoon criticizes the way the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) has handled the war in Gaza. The cartoon shows a casket with the name "Gaza," connected to an intravenous drip with the name "UNSC," over a grim backdrop of smoke and destruction. Gaza, a dead victim of prolonged bloodshed, is represented by the coffin. Due to its dilapidated condition, which is emphasized by cracks and patches, Gaza is depicted as a place of suffering and hopelessness. The "UNSC" intravenous drip is an example of ineffective and delayed help. Presenting itself as providing "help" to Gaza, it highlights the futility of international intervention because the "patient"—Gaza—has already experienced grave damage and bloodshed.

The smoke and holes in the background stand for ongoing conflict and devastation. These elements create an atmosphere that emphasizes the terrible situation and the effects of prolonged inaction. The coffin occupies most of the visual space, drawing attention immediately and contributing to Gaza's victimization. It is visually linked to the drip, which stands in for the UNSC's ineffective response, due to its upward inclination. By juxtaposing the phrase, "Security Council finally ends paralysis on Gaza," with the coffin, which bemoans the international community's inadequate and untimely response, irony is injected. The sparse backdrop features and austere design emphasize the primary critique of global inaction. The cartoon generates ideological meaning by quietly addressing the aggressors in the Gaza conflict and condemning the UNSC.

The UNSC is portrayed as an ineffective and complicit out-group that waits until it is too late to make a big difference. The absurdity of their delayed actions is highlighted by the intravenous line going into a coffin, which stands for negligence and bureaucratic immobility. The coffin itself, the craters, and the smoke all represent slaughter and destruction and are indirect references to the aggressors that ravaged Gaza. Although the cartoon does not openly depict the aggressors, it quietly critiques their actions by displaying the outcomes of their animosity. The coffin symbolizes Gaza's representation as a defenseless victim unable to halt the belligerent powers. By focusing exclusively on Gaza's suffering and the ineffectiveness of outside assistance, the cartoon emphasizes the in-group's vulnerability and innocence. The idea that Gaza is a defenseless territory ruled by foreign powers is reinforced by the absence of any representations of resistance or militarism in the area.

Figure 15. From *'The Dawn'*, published: 3rd April, 2024



In the cartoon, the US and Israel's role in the Gaza conflict is criticized through symbolic iconography. The cartoon shows two hooded figures that resemble the Grim Reaper seated at a table discussing "Rafah offensive plans." Both characters have a scythe in their hands. The animation depicts the fight as a premeditated and deadly maneuver. The Grim Reaper represents death on a global scale. By portraying Israel and the US as Grim Reapers, it draws attention to their role in planning death and devastation and positions them as the precursors of violence and disaster. The scythes used by the protagonists represent tools of death and devastation. The scythes further reinforce the lethal purpose behind the "Rafah offensive plans," which suggests deliberate and systematic harm. The table represents strategy or negotiation, implying that the carnage in Gaza is organized and planned rather than unintentional or reactive. This criticism is consistent with the idea of intentional animosity. To create a sense of balance and emphasize their equal role in violent planning, the two hooded figures facing each other are equally positioned. The diagonal positioning of the scythes emphasizes their symbolic role as tools of death. The line, "US, Israel discuss Rafah offensive plans," establishes the political context of the picture and makes it clear what the Grim Reapers represent. The cartoon's gloomy tone is heightened by the black-and-white design, which draws emphasis to the metaphorical aspects of devastation and death. The background's simplicity maintains the attention on the characters and their deeds, highlighting how grave the criticism is.

By indirectly showing sympathy for the in-group (Gaza) and criticizing the out-group (Israel and the United States), the cartoon creates ideological meaning. The

cartoon emphasizes Israel's and the United States' strategic planning of warfare while depicting them as icons of death and devastation. In keeping with Van Dijk's idea of drawing attention to out-group vices, the cartoon highlights their moral responsibility and dehumanizes their behavior by portraying them as Grim Reapers. The critique of the out-group's role in intensifying the conflict in Gaza is supported by the intimate association between the out-group and the scythes' deliberate aggression and scheming. Although there is no visual depiction, Gaza's vulnerability is conveyed. The idea that Israel and the US are Grim Reapers highlights Gaza's helplessness and suffering while suggesting that their plots target innocent bystanders. By focusing only on the actions of the out-group, the cartoon subtly portrays the in-group as defenseless and innocent, highlighting Gaza's suffering throughout the conflict.

Figure 16. From *'The Guardian'*, published: 13th October, 2023



Surrounded among the remnants of a demolished city, the cartoon depicts a Hamas militant brandishing a weapon. The militant's wearing of what appears to be a "human shield" belt constructed of children is a major element of the cartoon's critique. The primary character represents an armed side and openly criticizes their participation in the battle. The militant's stance, attire, and weapon all suggest resistance and combat preparation, suggesting that they are actively taking part in the violence. The youngsters shackled to the militant serve as a powerful visual metaphor for the suspected exploitation of people, particularly children, as shields in combat. The Hamas faction

is critiqued for putting in danger the innocent civilian lives and paints them as opportunistic and morally repugnant. The immense debris field surrounding the Hamas character showcases the toll fighting has taken on the already dilapidated infrastructure of the Gaza strip. The setting emphasizes the seriousness of the issue and the structural and human repercussions of the violence. The forceful figure takes center stage in the composition, drawing attention to itself right away. Their position as the main target of criticism is highlighted by the visual prominence. The stark juxtaposition of the militant, the children, and the debris highlights how helpless civilians are in the face of devastation. To highlight the devastation and provide a melancholy mood, the animation employs a stark and desaturated color scheme for the debris. The sky's scarlet and orange tones provide a sense of urgency, peril, and strife. The inclusion of birds flying overhead, which stand for loss and death, adds to the somber tone.

The militant figure is portrayed as immoral and a perfect illustration of the evil of taking advantage of the children, who represent the innocent bystanders. This is consistent with Van Dijk's approach, which highlights the vices of the out-group to challenge the legitimacy of their behavior. Their affiliation with violence, hostility, and devastation is further cemented by the militants' guns and combat gear. The children, who are portrayed as innocent and helpless, serve as a representation of the in-group. The violent group is criticized for endangering their lives. By serving as a visual reminder of their broader suffering, the devastated cityscape discreetly puts residents as the in-group that is most negatively impacted by the conflict. One common strategy to evoke moral outrage and empathy is to use children as symbolic victims. The focus of this cartoon is internal dynamics, particularly the role of the militant group in abusing civilian subjects. By placing the responsibility on local people rather than external forces, it offers a distinctive perspective on the conflict. This tactic effectively portrays the crisis in Gaza as a tragedy where human lives are caught between violence and exploitation.

Figure 17. From *'The Guardian'*, published: 15th October, 2023



By fusing literary and visual semiotics, the cartoon highlights the complexities and moral dilemmas involved in attacking both military and civilians in the Gaza conflict. Most of the field of vision is occupied by the "FOR HAMAS ONLY" missiles, which are precision-guided weaponry allegedly aimed at militant targets. However, their trajectory and overwhelming presence suggest an indiscriminate nature that aligns with the complaints of wartime civilian casualties. The papers that read "CIVILIANS ONLY" act as a symbolic barrier, denoting declarations or initiatives to protect civilians. Moreover, the watermark on the same paper warns the civilians to "FLEE" which highlights the futility of these initiatives during wartime.

The reddish-orange sky symbolizes the carnage and chaos of war, while the cityscape at the bottom serves as a visual reminder of Gaza, symbolizing the civilian population caught up in the conflict. The missiles, the largest and most noticeable elements in the cartoon, are visually arresting, drawing the viewer's attention immediately and emphasizing the destruction that results from war. The phrase "FOR HAMAS ONLY," while emphasizing the targeted targets, implicitly casts doubt on the veracity of such actions. By contrasting in size and movement with the missiles, the papers draw a stark contrast between the destructive might of war and the fragility of civilian security. The cartoon uses contrasting elements: the dark, pointed missiles stand for aggression and devastation, while the soft, fluttering papers symbolize innocence and vulnerability. The cityscape and background are muted, emphasizing the personal and structural costs of war. By highlighting the contradiction between the

objectives (targeting Hamas and other militants) and the outcomes (harm to civilians), the cartoon questions the "targeted strikes" narrative. It uses irony (missiles vs. papers) to highlight how difficult it is to distinguish between fighters and civilians during a war.

The cartoon attacks the military's use of massive airstrikes by questioning their morality and accuracy claims. Ironically, the missiles' "FOR HAMAS ONLY" label exposes the flaws in targeting tactics and obliquely connects Israeli forces to sporadic killings and civilian casualties. The overwhelming number of missiles, demonstrating excessive force, highlights the disproportionate impact on the civilian population. The notion that people are helpless and weak is portrayed in the "CIVILIANS ONLY" papers. The fragile nature of the sheets represents Gazans' powerlessness in the face of the bombs' immense destructive potential. Through its subtle depiction of humans as victims of both violence and the absence of preventative measures, the cartoon arouses empathy and moral anger.

Figure 18. From *'The Guardian'*, published: 18th October, 2023



The political hypocrisy, unequal power dynamics, and horrific human cost on civilians in the Gaza situation are all highlighted in this figure. Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu is shown as a toddler lighting a match stick. This portrayal of the Israeli leader fits in with the depiction of the US President Biden with a jerry can to his right.

Their dialogue makes the situation more lucid showing the overwhelming support and coordination between the two in unleashing the carnage seen in the background. President Biden's enormous features and disdainful posture exude strength, superiority, and indifference to human suffering. The threatening, looming shadows in the background, armed with rifles, represent militant groups (Hamas) and their sponsor Iran. It sheds light on the geopolitics and external interests that drive the conflict. Their perceived distance makes them seem like a secondary but persistent menace. This visual hierarchy illustrates the power imbalance between the Israeli and American leaders who appear to be unaware of the human cost of their decisions. The destruction in the background—burning landscapes, scattered rubble, and a demolished playground—serves as a somber reminder of just how horrible war can be, particularly for children and civilian infrastructure. Muted, soiled colors surround the child, emphasizing neglect and sadness, while the smoky, dark background evokes a sense of disorder and devastation. The vivid colors of the political figure stand for strength and detachment from the harsh reality. The cartoon criticizes external political actors that appear to prioritize their own interests over the well-being of civilians. The juxtaposition between the suffering population and the disdainful attitude of the leaders highlights the insensitivity and hypocrisy of these authorities.

Cartoons produce ideological meaning by emphasizing the faults of external forces and militant groups while quietly portraying people's virtues as defenseless victims. The United States, Israel, Hamas and Iran are all portrayed as self-serving, symbolizing the disdain of powerful countries or leaders that claim to support peace but fail to improve the lot of citizens. Biden's haughty stance and prominent features draw attention to his arrogance and moral deceit. The militants' menacing, destructive background depiction highlights their role in the chaos and carnage in Gaza. Netanyahu's depiction as an infant with a matchstick in hands represents the recklessness and callousness shown by the Israeli leadership. The playground's destruction and the trash surrounding it serve as additional reminders of the loss of innocence and the horrific toll that conflict takes on the most vulnerable citizens.

Figure 19. From *'The Guardian'*, published: 22nd October, 2023

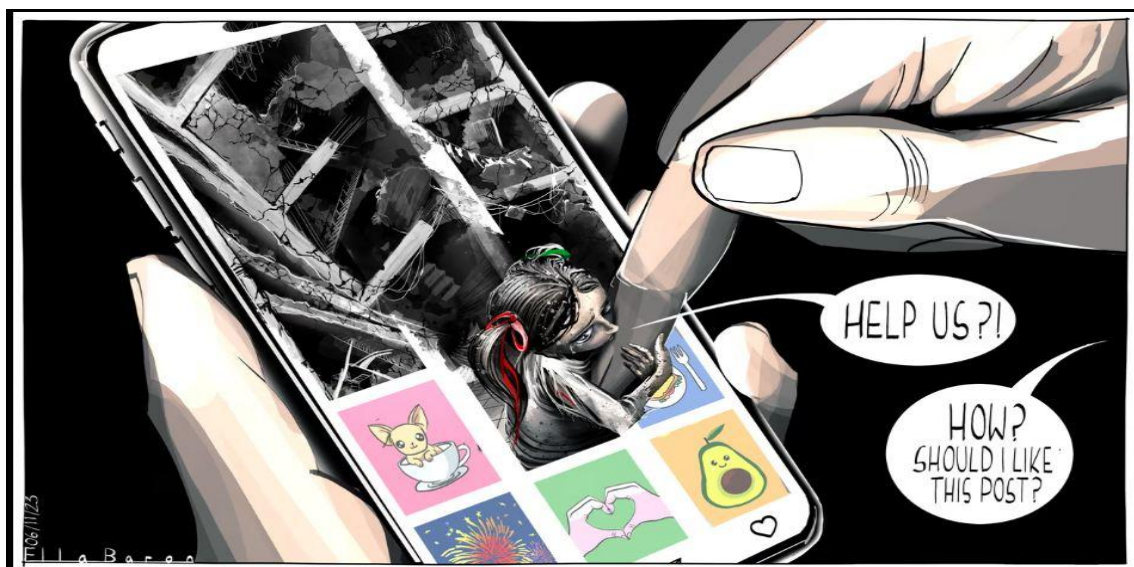


In order to portray the Gaza conflict, the animation uses powerful semiotic elements that evoke a sense of confinement, devastation, and hopelessness, emphasizing the cyclical violence and its toll on locals. The gravestone with the name "Gaza" on it serves as the main metaphor for the constant death and destruction that has plagued the strip. Its positioning in the middle of the picture highlights how calamity is unavoidable in the region. The women, children, and armed people around the grave represent the people of Gaza. The contradictory narratives of victimization and resistance are highlighted by the juxtaposition of militant people with innocent faces, such as the frightened toddler. Some figures' gun ownership both subtly criticizes the region's normalization of violence and emphasizes the value of armed resistance. This contradictory portrayal reflects the complexity of the dispute. The violence and destruction outside are symbolized by the burning sky and the bombs that are descending. This graphic portrays the fighting as overpowering and lopsided by emphasizing Gaza's continuous bombardment by aircraft. The small space that the trench-like setting creates symbolizes helplessness and captivity. The characters are practically "buried" in the battle because they are powerless to escape the carnage above. The gravestone's central placement, which depicts Gaza as the primary conflict casualty, attracts the viewer's attention. The eyes of the surrounding audience focused on the sky, highlighting their shared fragility. The terrified child's clinging to her caregiver serves as a focal point for empathy and symbolizes the innocence caught in the crossfire. The group's upward stare conveys a sense of collective dread and misery

as they wait for the aerial attack. The cartoon criticizes the outside forces that are to blame for the continuous carnage (represented by the bombs) while also highlighting the internal normalization of resistance (represented by the armed figures). This two-pronged perspective reflects the complexity of the Gaza conflict and its human cost.

The cartoon provides meaning by pointing out the virtues of Gaza's civilian populace as victims and denouncing the vices of both internal and external players. External hostility is symbolized by the dropping bombs and fiery sky (e.g., military attacks on Gaza). This image frames these actors as the primary drivers of pain and destruction. There are militant groups active in Gaza, as evidenced by the presence of armed people among the population. The fact that they are normalized alongside civilians implies that they contribute to the cycle of violence, even though they are not as often depicted. The frightened child and the surrounding crowd, which includes women and unarmed figures, are shown as innocent victims of both domestic disputes and foreign attacks. Their fragility is emphasized by their facial expressions and the solemn environment. The group's shared gaze portrays the people as resilient but trapped in an impossible situation, demonstrating solidarity in their struggle. Since this animation features both exterior (bombing) and internal (militancy) players, it is more nuanced than others that just show one viewpoint. The gravestone and trench-like setting lend a sense of fatalism, emphasizing the cyclical and inevitable nature of the struggle.

Figure 20. From *'The Guardian'*, published: 5th November, 2023



The cartoon depicts the Gaza situation by drawing a comparison between the human misery in Gaza and the performative participation and apathy commonly seen on social media. The semiotic elements draw attention to the disconnection between virtual empathy and real action. The modern medium for consuming global conflicts is exemplified by the smart phone. It highlights how social media turns real suffering into nothing more than fodder by reducing humanitarian catastrophes to "posts" that can be "liked" or quickly skimmed. The destroyed buildings and the image of the youngster pleading for help symbolize the horrific human cost of the conflict in Gaza. The child's frantic expression contrasts sharply with the dullness of the colorful symbols everywhere, which represent a dearth of noteworthy activity. The colorful and cheerful icons (a dog, an avocado, fireworks, and a heart) represent the frivolity of social media diversions and draw attention to how insensitive it is to place such insignificant objects next to images of real suffering. The majority of the screen is occupied by the child and the destroyed buildings, emphasizing Gaza's terrible suffering. However, the image's framing on a smartphone screen distances the viewer from reality and conveys disinterest. The finger lingering over the screen illustrates social media's limitations as a platform for meaningful engagement in humanitarian crises by expressing hesitation or indecision about how to respond. The child's fearful and frantic facial expressions evoke sympathy and regret in the audience. "HELP US?!", the voice bubble's direct plea, contrasts sharply with the viewer's inner question, "HOW? SHOULD I LIKE THIS POST? This discrepancy highlights how trivial social media responses are in light of the gravity of the problem. The commercialization of human suffering on social media, where crimes are reduced to fleeting trends, is criticized in the cartoon. Furthermore, it presents global audiences as passive recipients rather than engaged participants, casting doubt on their capacity to deal with such circumstances.

The cartoon emphasizes the virtues of the victims, or Gaza's civilian population, while denouncing the vices of external aggressors and global indifference. Unlike cartoons that focus just on the opposing viewpoints, this one offers a critique of the spectator audience. The crumbling buildings in the background allude to a military attack and destruction, denouncing the foreign powers responsible for Gaza's decline. Despite the lack of a clear definition, the scene conveys a sense of disproportionate brutality. The global audience's inaction is implicitly criticized in the cartoon. The

finger over the smartphone symbolizes hesitation and a lack of commitment, making bystanders appear complicit in their passivity. The child is portrayed as the epitome of innocence and vulnerability. By emphasizing their predicament and dependence on outside aid, her plea for aid humanizes the civilian population. The focus on the infant and the devastation portrays Gazans as defenseless targets of a coordinated attack.

Figure 21. From *'The Guardian'*, published: 7th November, 2023



The cartoon highlights the horrific human cost of the Gaza crisis while criticizing the ruthless language commonly used to depict war deaths. The ruins and debris all around the woman dramatically depict the destruction caused by the conflict. The desolate surroundings highlight the breadth of Gaza's devastation and the physical toll that war has on civilian lives. The woman, a civilian, cradling her injured child represents the indiscriminate nature of casualties. Her body language and grief-stricken look reveal the psychological damage the assault has caused. Occasionally, the term "COLLATERAL" is used to protest the euphemistic language used by political or military actors to minimize civilian losses, reducing real lives to abstract concepts like "collateral damage." The cartoon's main focus is on the woman and infant in the foreground. This humanizes the struggle's victims by bringing attention to their suffering. Criticizing the extent of the violence against civilian areas is the background's broad expanse of trash and ruins, which fills the visual space and highlights the enormous destruction of homes and infrastructure. The cartoon is given as a view of a reality that is occasionally overlooked or misinterpreted in media narratives by the opening lines, "Meanwhile, in Gaza...." The woman's derisive use of the word "collateral" highlights the ridiculousness and cruelty of such language when applied to

human beings, as it stands in stark contrast to her obvious misery. The conflict's physical violence as well as the degrading remarks' verbal violence are both criticized in the comic. It opposes narratives that downplay or obfuscate the human cost of violence by concentrating on people's real experiences.

The cartoon primarily highlights the virtues of the victims, or the civilians of Gaza, while denouncing the vices of the external aggressors, such as their use of euphemistic language to minimize the seriousness of their crimes. The cartoon depicts Gaza's citizens as defenseless victims of an unjust and unending conflict. The mother and her child represent the broader suffering of non-combatants and their families, highlighting their humanity and frailty. The focus on the woman's grief and suffering elicits empathy from the audience and reinforces the moral superiority of the in-group (civilians). The ruins and rubble inconspicuously condemn the actions of the forces that caused the catastrophe. Although the perpetrators are not revealed directly, their existence is implied by the aftermath of their actions. The cartoon takes issue with the out-group's use of euphemisms like "collateral damage." This rhetoric is portrayed as cold and callous by minimizing human beings to impersonal ideas and concealing the moral accountability for civilian fatalities. It provides a layer of critique on how rhetoric affects perceptions of conflict.

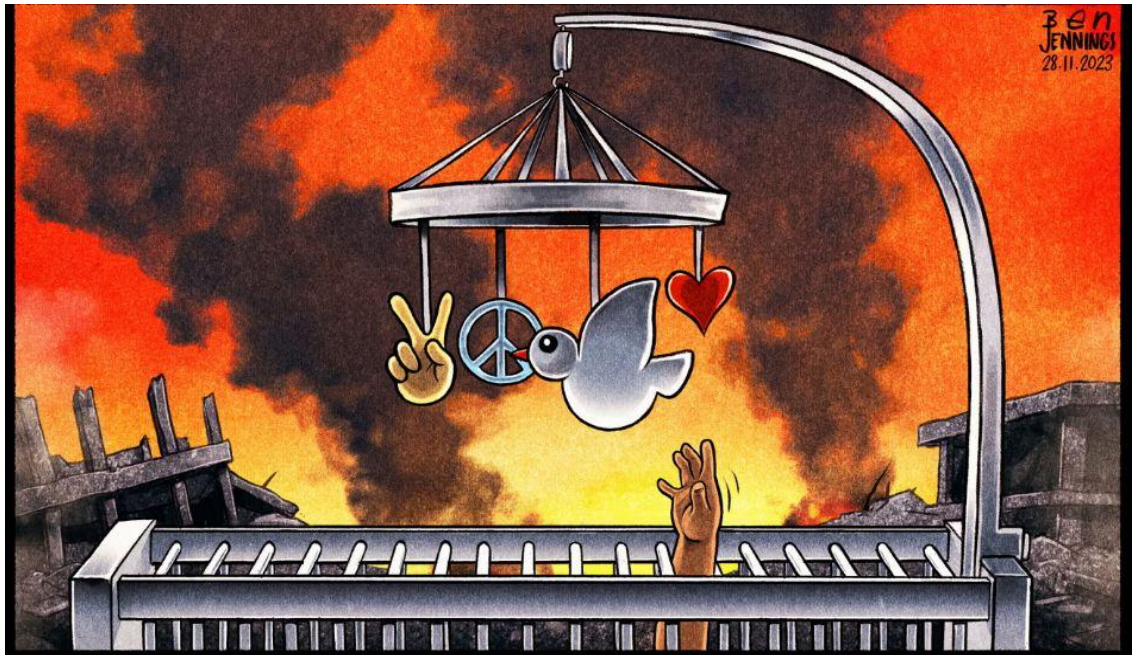
Figure 22. From *'The Guardian'*, published: 12th November, 2023



Cartoon criticizes the global political response to the Gaza situation using composition, language, and imagery. Key participants are depicted as prominent political figures that are easily recognized by their caricatures. Their exaggerated looks and body language highlight their lack of response to the Gaza catastrophe. The French leader with the microphone is passionately calling for a truce while the others (US and British leaders) exhibit inaction. The barren, empty landscape is a metaphor for Gaza's devastation. When there are no civilians or first-hand accounts of the conflict, the blame is moved to the inaction of international leaders. The lone voice in the Speech Bubble ("I CALL FOR A CEASEFIRE") contrasts sharply with the silence of the other leaders, indicating that there has been no substantial or unified international response to the issue. The leader calling for a truce is made prominent and foregrounded by his position and microphone, creating the appearance that he is the only one acting visibly. The quiet and distant demeanor of the other leaders highlights their indifference and passivity in managing the situation. The comic is set within the context of a humanitarian crisis, and the reddish-orange background conveys a sense of urgency, peril, and moral rot. "THE REST ARE SILENT" blames the other world powers for their inaction. The characters' metaphorical stillness is further reinforced by their visual serenity, which includes no speech bubbles or motions. The cartoon's main argument—that world leaders have not done enough to address the Gaza conflict—is emphasized by the contrast between the passionate appeal for peace and others' passivity. The cartoon exposes the political and moral failings of persons in positions of authority while criticizing the inconsistent international reaction to Gaza.

By highlighting the inability of world leaders to take decisive action, the cartoon skillfully contrasts the virtues of the in-group—those who seek peace—with the vices of the out-group—those who prefer to remain silent. It is intimated that the French leader who announces the need for a truce is the only one with initiative and common sense. His demeanor and speech exude moral passion and clarity. By advocating for a ceasefire, he is symbolically supporting the victims of the Gaza conflict and ethically opposing violence. The silent leaders are shown as distant and heartless, symbolizing inaction in the face of a humanitarian calamity. Their passive postures and lack of speech bubbles demonstrate how little they can add to the conversation. The exaggerated, even heartless appearance of the silent leaders berates them for their lack of responsibility and leadership.

Figure 23. From *'The Guardian'*, published: 27th November, 2023



The cartoon figuratively portrays the Gaza crisis by highlighting themes of devastation, hope, and hopelessness via the use of visual, linguistic, and compositional elements. It features icons that stand for peace and hope, such as a heart, a dove, the peace sign, and a "V" for victory. These symbols have long been associated with harmony, even though their placement above the barred baby crib and the devastation below represents their inaccessibility and impotence in the face of battle. The bars represent oppression and confinement, while the small hand reaching for the props represents the victims' frantic search for calm in the middle of mayhem. The suffering of those affected by the bloodshed in Gaza is shown in this way to perfection. The ruins and burning sky in the background evoke images of war, destruction, and despair, which contrast sharply with the props' messages of peace. The cribs' prominent position in the middle draws the viewer's attention to the ideological contrast between the upbeat symbols and the depressing reality below. The outstretched hand, which symbolizes the human cost of the conflict and the impossibility of attaining peace under the current circumstances, is the composition's central feature. The background of sorrow and violence is dramatically emphasized by the flames and wreckage, which intensifies the emotional impact. Combining the sad reality of conflict with hopeful symbolism (peace symbols) creates a visual irony. This highlights how, despite the

perception that peace is imminent; the world has not been able to effectively address the Gaza issue. The visual elements dominate the critique, leaving viewers to interpret the discrepancy between hope and reality in their own ways. The sole direct textual commentary is the artist's name and the date. Since actual peace and help are still out of reach for Gaza conflict victims, the cartoon condemns the pointlessness of symbolic acts. It highlights the disparity between the hopes for peace and the lived realities of those enmeshed in conflict.

The cartoon makes a distinction between the in-group (the victims of the Gaza conflict) and the out-group (those who are supporting or enabling it). The cartoon does this indirectly by highlighting the symbolic inaccessibility of peace and the disrespect for the world community. The extended hand is symbolic of the perseverance of Gaza's suffering people. The victims' persistent compassion and optimism are symbolized by the hand grasping for peace despite the destruction. It is implied that the victims are morally superior to those who instigate the conflict or are powerless to put a stop to it since they are stranded but nevertheless yearn for peace. The structure's cage-like form and the destruction in the backdrop stand in for the actions of those who are keeping the battle going. It is suggested that these forces create barriers to peace and freedom. The failure of the global community to implement ideas is criticized by the inability to access the peace symbols.

Figure 24. From *'The Guardian'*, published: 8th December, 2023



The cartoon challenges the way that safety and evacuation are portrayed in connection with the Gaza conflict. It emphasizes the ridiculousness of "evacuation for

safety" when there aren't any truly safe areas. There is no safe haven for people in Gaza, as the term "UNSAFE," shown on the central map, visually illustrates. The "You Are Here" sign emphasizes how risky life is by symbolizing the situation of people stuck in conflict zones. As there is nowhere safe to go, the scattered papers with the words "DANGER! LEAVE NOW" on them represents the overwhelming and futile orders made to people. The disparity between instructions and actual situations on the ground is highlighted by these messages. The diverse group, which consists of men, women, children, and an elderly person with a cane, symbolizes the collective suffering of Gaza's people and emphasizes how all demographics are affected equally. By occupying the majority of the visual field, the map directs viewers' attention to the primary problem—the absence of protection. The frequent usage of words like "UNSAFE" emphasizes how pervasive and hopeless risk is. To symbolize their lack of agency, the group of people is visually marginalized and positioned on the right side of the map. Their body language and facial expressions, fear, helplessness, and confusion, highlight their vulnerability. The conversation among the residents, especially the scathing remark, "Apparently it's for our own safety," stands in stark contrast to the map's representation of reality. This contrast highlights the ridiculousness of evacuation orders in the absence of safe alternatives. "Supposedly safe yet with utterly inadequate food, water, and infrastructure" challenges the appalling conditions in so-called "safe zones" and highlights the lack of actual shelter. The cartoon criticizes crisis management strategies for failing to offer civilians real protection or assistance. It demonstrates the execution of evacuation instructions and the disdain for basic humanitarian necessities.

The cartoon contrasts the virtues of the victims (the in-group) with the flaws of those enforcing the conflict or issuing evacuation orders (the out-group). The cartoon highlights the discrepancy between citizens' actual circumstances and the rhetoric of safety. A family with children and an elderly person serve as symbols for the population, who are portrayed as defenseless victims caught up in an inevitable disaster. Their confusion and helplessness highlight their humanity and arouse sympathy. The group's perseverance in the face of institutional ineptitude is demonstrated by their continuing processing of the evacuation alerts despite their dire circumstances. As evacuation orders, the distributed notices condemn the out-group (those issuing the orders) for their dishonest actions. They don't provide practical solutions or safe places,

even if they make claims to provide safety. The map of "UNSAFE" zones demonstrates the more significant structural flaws in the organizations responsible for managing the conflict or providing aid. The cartoon implies that either global powers or local authorities are neglecting their duties.

Figure 25. From *'The Guardian'*, published: 26th December, 2023



The cartoon retells the biblical story of the Three Wise Men to critique the Gaza conflict while drawing a parallel to the Ukraine conflict. The cartoon uses caricature, inter-textuality, and symbolism to satirically portray the roles of several conflict actors. The camels and the guiding star invoke the Nativity story, a commonly recognized symbol of peace and hope. This combination of a spiritual story with violent imagery (actors brandishing guns) critiques the mismatch between the principles of peace and the real Gaza and Ukraine conflicts. Instead of the traditional gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh, the characters carry weapons of violence, such as bombs, rifles, and rockets, illustrating how aggressiveness and militarization, rather than peacemaking, sustain the struggle. The three riders represent key figures in the conflict. Each figure stands for a distinct role: Hamas, which is notorious for its violence and militancy, is represented by the man wearing the mask. The man in the center, the Israeli Premier Netanyahu, is holding a bomb, which stands for the indiscriminate bombing unleashed by him on the Gaza strip. The third figure is Russian President Putin, holding a missile, emphasizing the carnage he has brought on in Ukraine. The exaggerated features of the figurines demonstrate how they fuel ongoing conflict. The aggressive postures and the haughty demeanors suggest that they feel unaccountable for the chaos that is developing. The visual emphasis on the "gifts" (weapons) rather than the riders

highlights the critique that violence has superseded diplomacy and peace as the primary plot point in the conflict. The title, "Bearing Gifts," is a humorous spoof of the biblical story. It uses sarcasm to mock the destructive "gifts" that the parties involved in the conflicts have brought. The cartoon portrays the crises as poisonous and vicious cycles of violence in which all sides contribute to the suffering, rather than offering practical answers. By juxtaposing religious imagery with military insignia, it critiques the moral and political failures in managing the conflict.

The cartoon highlights the violent and militaristic aspects of Hamas by using the figure with the rifle, which represents violence and the continuation of conflict. By representing militarized responses, the bomb critiques Israel's role in escalating the conflict. The disdainful looks convey a lack of empathy or moral responsibility. The Russian leader holding a missile stands for inept diplomacy, denouncing Russia for inciting violence and invading Ukraine. The cartoon simplifies the complexity of their motivations by focusing solely on how each group contributes to the continuation of violence, leaving little room for any positive contributions or attempts at peace. It implies that everyone is responsible for the current issues by satirizing the riders' harmful contributions as being morally equal.

Figure 26. From *'The Guardian'*, published: 12th February, 2024



The cartoon condemns the Gaza crisis by exposing the power dynamics and moral contradictions of war through the use of visual elements such as gaze, symbolism, and spatial composition. The protagonist is a soldier with a firearm that has been altered to fit a smart phone. This combination represents the militarization of media and the

use of technology to frame war narratives, and it may highlight propaganda, voyeurism, or the dehumanization of violence. The performative nature of modern combat and the commodification of suffering are symbolized by the smartphone's red "record" indication, which shows that it is currently recording. It criticizes how technology may be used to broadcast and multiply destruction instead of reducing conflict for ideological or geopolitical purposes. The backdrop of destroyed buildings and the gaunt, silent individuals depict the aftermath of violence. The passive postures and lack of action displayed by those caught up in the Gaza conflict reveal their helplessness. The condemnation of moral apathy in the face of human suffering is heightened by the soldier's relaxed seating stance amidst the destruction while focusing on their filming. The stripped and handcuffed people emphasize unequal power dynamics and how their plight is invisible in the dominant narratives of the war. The dark hues of the rubble and the ominous orange tones in the sky imply destruction, despair, and the end of the world. This visual atmosphere highlights the gravity of the Gaza conflict and its consequences. The cartoon portrays Gaza's bloodshed as a place where military spectacles overshadow the suffering of people. By condemning the alienation of people in authority (represented by the soldier) from the victims' everyday realities, it draws attention to the moral and ethical failings in the way the conflict has been handled.

The cartoon highlights the polarization of opposing factions by emphasizing the vices of the military actors while eradicating their virtues. At the same time, it portrays civilians as docile and defenseless while highlighting their victimization. The cartoon criticizes the soldier as a symbol of militarism and alienation. The rifle-turned-camera highlights how violence is recorded on camera and either celebrated or shared, criticizing the performative aspect of power and the lack of empathy. The civilians are depicted as victims of violence and destruction, denied agency, and placed in inferior roles. Their portrayal lends a human face to the suffering caused by the Gaza conflict. The animation completely disregards any possible explanations or moral justifications for the soldier's actions, focusing only on his destructiveness and disdain for human life. It is impossible to examine the citizens' agency or resilience in the midst of war because, despite being humanized, they are portrayed as being totally powerless. The selection of a smartphone as a prominent emblem not only critiques the actual fighting but also emphasizes how technology affects how the public perceives war.

Figure 27. From *'The Guardian'*, published: 27th February, 2024

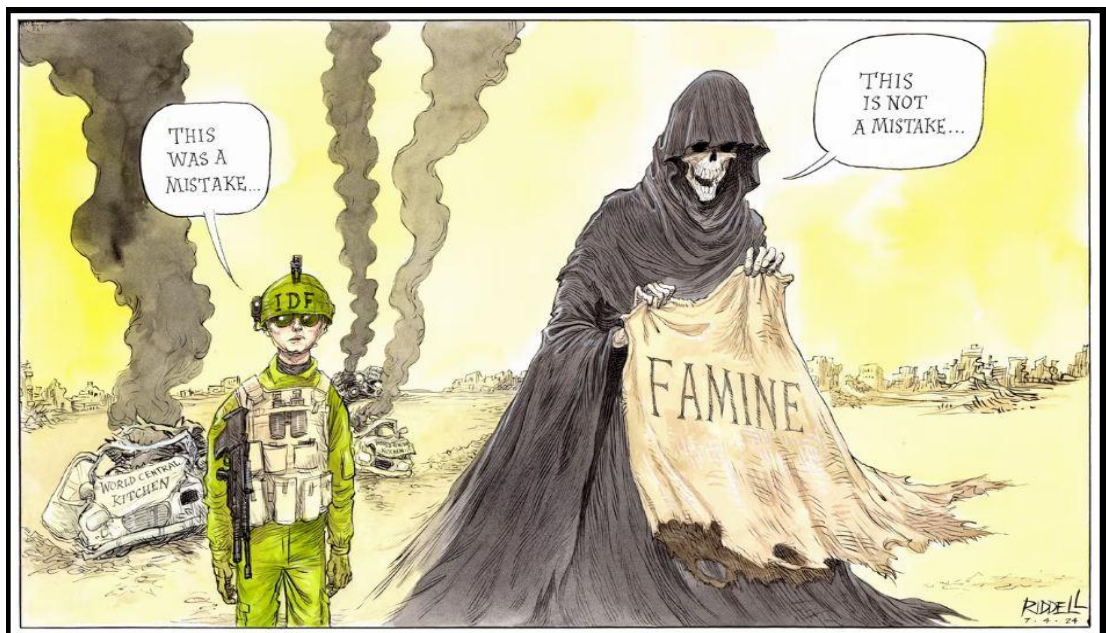


Cartoons use caricature, symbolism, and spatial composition to highlight the moral failings of global political players and the consequences of conflict. The massive canister labeled "WEAPONS GRADE WEED KILLER" stands for destruction presented as justification for war. The term "weed killer" condemns the dehumanization of war victims by portraying them as expendable, euphemistically suggesting purification or extermination. A small green plant encircled by ruins stands for resiliency and hope in the midst of tragedy, which contrasts sharply with the massive savagery depicted. Holding the deadly "weed killer," this individual represents PM Netanyahu who persists in using violence for eradication or domination. The United States' support in the aggression while disregarding its human cost are symbolized by President Biden's haughty, inflated position. His eyes are averted from the destruction, which conveys a lack of accountability or disinterest. The small figure with the "weed killer" represents the destructive agents on the ground, emphasizing their role in the ongoing bloodshed. The desolate background of smoke and rubble shows how completely Gaza has been destroyed. The sharp contrast between the foregrounded persons and the bleak environment draws attention to their functions. The muted, dreary tones create a sad atmosphere that highlights the conflict's tragic consequences. The

cartoon condemns the Gaza conflict for using euphemistic stories to excuse harm. It highlights the difference between violent criminals and victims' perseverance.

The animation polarizes the opposing sides by highlighting the vulnerability and resilience of those affected and by emphasizing the violence of the aggressors while downplaying any positive traits. The "weed killer" metaphor criticizes the dehumanizing rhetoric employed by the aggressors alongside their brutal actions. While denouncing the moral shortcomings of America, the politician's condescending and distant demeanor exposes dishonesty and indifference. In the cartoon, the budding plant humanizes the victims by symbolizing their perseverance in the face of destruction. It is a symbol of resilience, offering a glimmer of hope despite the devastation. This contrasts with the demeaning narrative that the "weed killer" metaphor suggests. The cartoon completely disregards any potential defenses offered by the aggressors, focusing only on how destructive their actions are. The victims are shown as strong but utterly defenseless, and their victim status is prioritized over their agency.

Figure 28. From *'The Guardian'*, published: 6th April, 2024



The armed forces are symbolized by the soldier with the designation "IDF" (Israel Defense Forces). Although his serious expression and the speech bubble that says, "THIS WAS A MISTAKE," suggest regret or moral distress, his presence in the

midst of destruction calls into question the validity of military actions. Death personified, the Grim Reaper represents the ultimate outcome of war: loss and suffering. The catchphrase "FAMINE" attacks the conflict's broader humanitarian issues, including malnourishment and displacement. The destruction of humanitarian efforts is symbolized by the smoke rising from the wreckage of the "WORLD CENTRAL KITCHEN" tragedy. It critiques the collateral damage done to essential assistance, which worsens people's circumstances.

The smoke and rubble in the background represent the destruction of Gaza and create a dreary, depressing war zone. The magnitude and positional supremacy of the Grim Reaper imply inescapable conclusions, as if death and starvation were the war's ultimate repercussions. The contrast between the soldier's regret and the Grim Reaper's assertion that "THIS IS NOT A MISTAKE" highlights the tension between individual accountability and institutional consequences. The soldier acknowledges his mistake and shows some regret. The Grim Reaper's answer casts doubt on the intentionality of the rules and deeds that cause misery and starvation, suggesting that these results are predestined rather than coincidental. The cartoon critiques the war in Gaza as an example of how humanitarian catastrophes are systematic and foreseeable results of ongoing armed conflict rather than merely unintended accidents.

By downplaying the virtues of the perpetrators and highlighting the suffering of the victims and the flaws of the aggressors, the comic divides the opposing factions. The cartoon, which depicts the destruction of humanitarian aid and the indirect effects of famine, criticizes the aggressors by using an IDF soldier as a stand-in. Regardless of the soldier's remorse, institutional harm is the main theme of the narrative. The domination of the Grim Reaper implies that the war's effects, such as starvation, are intentional rather than the result of accidental laws or deeds. Symbols like the destroyed humanitarian aid are used to represent civilians rather than explicitly depicting them. This emphasizes their suffering and presents them as weak and helpless, while minimizing their agency or resistance. The explicit mention of famine adds a more thorough humanitarian perspective.

Figure 29. From *'The Guardian'*, published: 26th April, 2024



The dire humanitarian situation in Gaza is symbolized by the distressed faces on the "Gazans Face Famine" screen on the right. The cruelty of the fighting and the suffering of civilians are highlighted in this picture. The screen on the left, which says "Student Protests Continue," on the other hand, shows student protests across US university campuses vis-à-vis Gaza conflict. The elderly man is angered at these protests and represents the people who are not concerned about the tragedy unfolding in Gaza. The bar represents a laid-back, everyday environment where individuals discuss global concerns. People's lack of involvement and awareness of grave humanitarian crises are criticized in this setting. Different responses from the characters expose hypocrisy or selective outrage. The man's disdainful remark, "HOW THE HELL ARE THEY LETTING THIS HAPPEN?" suggested that he was either indifferent to or ignorant of the suffering in Gaza.

He strongly disapproves of the inadequate response to student demonstrations. Spatial juxtaposition is used in the cartoon to emphasize inequality. Student protests dominate one screen, while the other is dedicated to the famine in Gaza. This lends credence to the critique of misaligned priorities. The sharp contrast between the somber happenings on the screens and the subdued hues and ordinary bar scene symbolizes the distance between everyday life and distant emergencies. Ironically, the woman's statement, "I was just about to say the same thing," has something to do with the battle as a whole as well as the more pressing problem of famine. Selective moral fury is criticized by this duality. The cartoon criticizes the world's disregard for the Gaza

problem and its propensity to put less urgent problems ahead of humanitarian emergencies by employing these semiotic methods. The global audience is criticized in the cartoon for its lack of interest and hypocrisy. The characters' focus on student protests against Gaza's famine highlights their moral ambiguities and misguided goals. The image of the famine and suffering of Gazans as being ignored or overshadowed represents the incapacity of the international community to properly address the issue. The situation of the Gazans is depicted through images of famine and suffering, emphasizing their vulnerability and exploitation.

Figure 30. From *'The Guardian'*, published: 28th June, 2024



Using a range of multimodal features, including text, images, and character interactions, the cartoon critiques the information filtering and lack of transparency surrounding the Gaza crisis. The "Gaza" wall stands for both physical and informational obstacles. The signs that read "NOTHING TO SEE HERE, NO MEDIA ALLOWED, IF QUESTIONS PERSIST, SEE A SPIN DOCTOR" are indicative of censorship and the willful suppression of opinions about Gaza. The wall also emphasizes Gaza's isolation by suggesting segregation and exclusion. The image of control, intimidation, and deliberate blocking of the outside world is clearly reinforced by the armed guard at the wall. His presence communicates authority and power, which deters investigation. The two reporters with cameras and press badges demonstrate the media's determination to uncover the truth despite its restrictions. In their discussion, they stress

skepticism and accountability, posing the question, "DOES THIS SIGN RAISE MORE QUESTIONS THAN IT ANSWERS?"

The journalists are positioned in the background, representing their limited access and power, while the wall occupies the majority of the visual space, signifying censorship and obstruction. The fires and flames in the background, which imply violence and devastation behind the wall, contrast sharply with the sign's contemptuous "Nothing to see here" message. The concealing of crimes is criticized by this graphic irony. The placard's phrasing belittles the sterilizing of narratives and the manipulation of public opinion by bureaucratic euphemisms such as "spin doctor." Critics point to systematic attempts to minimize the seriousness of the situation in Gaza. The conflict between government narratives and the media's obligation to seek the truth is reflected in the journalists' conversation. Through semiotic devices like obstacles, authoritative figures, and textual sarcasm, the cartoon emphasizes the willful obfuscation of reality and presents the Gaza conflict as a restricted and suppressed issue.

This cartoon highlights the shortcomings of Israeli forces in crafting a false Gaza narrative. The pain experienced by Gazans and the values of the journalists are stressed. The cartoon criticizes the authorities who control access to Gaza for suppressing information and swaying public opinion. The brute force yielded by the Israeli forces is not only carrying out massacres but also in trying to cover them up is depicted by the soldier and the writing on the wall. By suggesting dishonesty and the willful fabrication of facts, the phrase "spin doctor" draws attention to the vices of the out-group. The journalists are shown as inquisitive and cynical, displaying traits such as truth-seeking and accountability. Their conversation demonstrates their critical thinking and opposition to censorship. Although they are not clearly visible, the smoke and flames in the background allude to the suffering of Gazans. This visual element portrays them as brittle and empathetic.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

The discussion is structured around the research questions, offering an in-depth exploration of recurring themes, strategies, and ideologies embedded in the cartoons.

5.1 Findings pertaining first research question

5.1.1 Recurring Themes in the Representation of Gaza

The cartoons frequently draw attention to Gaza's isolation, vulnerability, and humanitarian challenges. Across the dataset, Gaza is frequently shown as:

1. A Barren and Isolated Entity: Gaza is sometimes depicted physically as a distant geographic location, such as a small island surrounded by hostile waters (like shark-infested seas) or a walled-off area under siege. These portrayals represent the incarceration, marginalization, and loss of agency experienced by Gazans. The use of fences, barriers, and barren landscapes all contribute to the sense of alienation and separation, as seen in figure 1, 7, 9, 23, and 24 respectively.

2. A Zone of Humanitarian Catastrophe: Malnourished people, destroyed homes, and skulls are among the visual elements that highlight the humanitarian cost of the battle. These depictions place a great focus on victimhood, portraying Gazans as suffering from starvation, violence, relocation, and deaths. The visual inclusion of families, kids, and the elderly adds to the emotional appeal by emphasizing the disproportionate impact on vulnerable groups, as seen in figure 1, 6, 10, 18, and 23 respectively.

3. A Site of Silenced Narratives: Throughout the cartoons we witness how Gazans are shown to have no agency; their part of the story is sidelined and suppressed through censorship of the media and suppression of information. Pictures of journalists in restraint and signs or walls that read "No Media Allowed" highlight the lack of transparency and accountability, as seen in figure 9, 14, 29, and 30 respectively. These

multimodal elements showcase how distorted and manipulated the narrative is around the Gaza conflict.

5.1.2 The Role of Aggressors and Authority Figures

All characters save for the civilian Palestinians are shown to have more or less some authority. Thus the leadership on both sides is portrayed as the ones responsible for Gaza's misery. They are shown to be:

1. Oppressive and Unyielding: Heavily armed Israeli soldiers are seen threatening the Gazans to leave their homes or face imminent death. Likewise Hamas are shown to use the civilian population as a human shield in their fight. These characters brandish weapons and are shown as callous enforcers of misery, as seen in figure 1, 7, 9, 16, and 23 respectively.

2. Detached or Hypocritical: Political leaders and other international players are usually depicted as disingenuous or indifferent to Gaza's situation. For instance, characters in certain cartoons become enraged over trivial issues while ignoring the humanitarian crisis in Gaza. This illustrates how the problem has been approached differently around the world, as seen in figure 6, 10, 21, 22, and 29 respectively.

5.1.3 Juxtaposition and Irony

Irony is one of the primary semiotic methods used in the cartoons to critique the actions of the aggressors and the world's overall apathy. For instance:

1. Contrasting Narratives: By contrasting scenes of destruction and suffering with text on walls or signs (such as "Nothing to see here!"), several cartoons highlight the deliberate repression of the crisis.

2. Selective Outrage: The characters' misplaced priorities—such as ignoring Gaza while focusing on unimportant subjects—are used to critique international hypocrisy. This selective moral anger is emphasized by facial expressions, gestures, and conversation.

5.1.4 Symbolic Use of Space and Objects

Features like walls, fences, and borders are positioned to visually depict Gaza's imprisonment. Symbols of deprivation, death, and destruction include skulls, broken houses, and empty plates. These semiotic resources reinforce the themes of victimization, loneliness, and suffering.

5.2 Findings pertaining second research question

Van Dijk's Ideological Square offers a framework for understanding how cartoons emphasize the vices of one group (the out-group) while downplaying their virtues and the virtues of another group (the in-group) while downplaying their vices. The cartoons under examination show consistent patterns in the use of the ideological square, despite notable variations in how opposing groups are portrayed.

5.2.1 Portrayal of Gazans (In-Group)

Throughout the dataset, Gazans are consistently shown as victims, with the following recurring themes:

1. Emphasis on Vulnerability: The helplessness of Gazans is symbolized by small, thin individuals or families surrounded by hostile elements (such as walls, sharks, or army) as seen in figure 1, 7, 9, 16, and 23 respectively. Their victimhood is emphasized to arouse sympathy and call attention to the disproportionate suffering caused by the battle.

2. Minimization/Absence of Agency: The cartoons usually portray Gazans as helpless victims rather than as active participants in conflict. They are either given minimal representation or they are totally absent from the visual space as seen in figure 3, 8, 15, 17, and 18 respectively. This is indicative of their powerlessness in the face of tremendous aggression; while also highlighting the sense of their entrapment.

5.2.2 Portrayal of Aggressors (Out-Group)

The attribution of being an aggressor varies throughout the cartoons. At times it is the Israeli forces or Hamas militants, or both, with a focus on their vices:

1. Oppression and Authoritarianism: Israeli soldiers, Hamas militants and political leaders are shown as tyrants who exploit their power to impose unjust laws and prolong suffering. They exaggerate their acts of violence or control (e.g., bombings and censorship) to highlight their role as the cause of the issue, as seen in figure 1, 12, 16, 17, and 19 respectively.

2. Hypocrisy and Indifference: Global powers and international actors are presented as callous or dishonest. For example, some cartoon characters exhibit selective moral outrage by voicing worry about trivial matters while ignoring the tragedy in Gaza, as seen in figure 9, 10, 13, 17, and 29 respectively.

5.2.3 Comparative Analysis

While both newspapers are congruent in their depiction of the widespread destruction in Gaza, there does exist a subtle yet significant difference in their depiction of who is to blame and to what extent.

Similarities:

1. Emphasis on Victimhood: Every cartoon portrays Gazans as victims, emphasizing their suffering both as direct targets of naked aggression and as inadvertent victims caught in the crossfire between the belligerents, as seen in figure 1, 7, 14, 23, and 26 respectively.

2. Critique of Aggressors: The vices of the aggressors are constantly brought to light whether it is the Israeli forces, the Hamas militants or global organizations which are letting this bloodshed go on, as seen in figure 1, 7, 11, 13, and 23 respectively.

Differences:

1. Focus on Media Suppression: While the cartoons in the Pakistani press focus more on physical action of the fight and the inaction of global actors the British press sheds light on equally important aspect of media censorship by displaying walls and placards that prohibit journalists from gathering information as seen in figure 28, 29, and 30 respectively. The integral role that narrative control has in sustaining the conflict is highlighted through this.

2. Representation of Global Actors: The Pakistani newspaper zeroes in on the adverse role of international organizations such as UNSC and OIC in the conflict as seen in figure 3, 5, 6, 10, and 11 respectively. The British newspaper scathingly critiques western leaders for their tacit cooperation and deafening silence in the face of this bloodletting as seen in figure 18, 22, and 27 respectively. Thus, the British newspapers' representation is more comprehensive in this regard expanding the scope of guilt; unlike its counterpart which is limited to the Arab and Muslim leadership. Moreover, it hyphenated the situation in Gaza with the Ukrainian conflict; drawing a moral equivalence between Hamas, PM Netanyahu and President Putin as harbingers of death and destruction (see cartoon 25).

5.3 Limitations of the Study

The study is limited in terms of sample size and representativeness owing to time constraints and difficulties in availability of pertinent data. Hence it affects the generalizability of the research findings.

Conclusion

Through the integration of multimodal elements, the 30 cartoons analyzed in this study provide a thorough and varied portrayal of the Gaza issue, emphasizing victimization, denouncing aggression, and exposing global hypocrisy. Drawing on Machin's Multimodal Discourse Analysis, the cartoons use linguistic and visual semiotics to emphasize themes of suffering, loneliness, and censorship. By means of Van Dijk's Ideological Square, the cartoons continuously expose the atrocities committed by aggressors while drawing attention to the suffering of Gazans. When taken as a whole, the cartoons are powerful critique tools that challenge popular narratives and draw attention to the humanitarian costs of the Gaza conflict. However, the cartoons' points of emphasis vary; some focus on media restriction, while others criticize global indifference. It was found that the cartoons in the British press provided a relatively objective and comprehensive picture of the conflict. It highlighted not only the wrongs committed by the Israeli side but also highlighted the role of Hamas in this fight. On the contrary in the Pakistani newspaper, the Hamas element was avoided altogether which may provide an incomplete and lop-sided view of the conflict. Similarly, when it came to depicting the negative role of the global community, the

Dawn newspaper was found to be focusing on UN or OIC; whereas the Guardian extended it to the role of western leadership as well. This aligns with the region and demography each newspaper basically caters to. The use of devices such as intertextuality (three wise men) and drawing parallels with the Ukraine conflict in the Guardian newspaper gave a broader perspective when compared with the other newspaper. The findings align with those of Shreim (2014) and Tasseron (2021), as it is seen that when it comes to assigning the responsibility for the wide scale chaos, there are nuances and subtle differences in both newspapers' depiction. These differences allow for downplaying the faults of a faction and providing it leeway for possible further aggression. The policy implications of these multimodal representations are significant since they influence how the conflict is perceived by the masses and thereby affect the decision-making at higher government echelons. It could lead to decisions which bring this brutal conflict to an end or perpetuate it indefinitely. The study acknowledges limitations in terms of sample size and representativeness owing to time constraints and difficulties in availability of pertinent data. Hence it affects the generalizability of the research findings. For future research, it is recommended that a larger set of data which may include pertinent documentaries and podcasts may be analyzed, keeping in view the increased following of such platforms. Moreover, depending on the availability of relevant cartoons in the future, this study may be expanded by including more newspapers from each region. This could provide a richer understanding of various viewpoints that exist on the subject within the media space. In conclusion, the cartoons in both newspapers demonstrate the critical role that multimodal media plays in forming and shaping public discourse and affecting the future outcome of the Gaza issue.

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