



Abstract: This study aims to examine the representation of the Gaza war in Pakistani and British newspaper editorials through cartoons. Machin and Mayr (2012) multimodal analytical model has been applied for the analysis of cartoons. The data for this study is collected from English newspapers. The data source of this research included two Pakistani newspapers (The Dawn, The News International) and two British newspapers (The Telegraph, The Independent). The time period for the data collection is 3 weeks. The editorial cartoons have been selected by using the purposive sampling technique. The results of the study indicate that Pakistani and British newspaper editorial cartoons show significant differences in narrative focus and ideological alignment regarding the issue of the Gaza war. Pakistani cartoons highlight the victimization of Palestinians, criticize western support for Israel, and advocate Islamic and international solidarity against the policies of Israel. In contrast, British cartoons criticize political leadership and larger international issues through humor and satire. These findings reflect the political, cultural, and social background of each country, which influences the way the Gaza war is represented and perceived by the public. This study highlights the importance of cartoons and images in conveying specific ideas and perspectives, particularly in the context of the Gaza war.

Key Words: Gaza War, Media Representation, Newspaper Editorials, Semiotic Analysis

Introduction

Media is a major source of information on current issues in society and plays an important role in the formation of public opinion. It highlights international politics/conflicts and the majority of people rely on media to get timely and reliable information about events (Ross, 2006). According to Entman (1993), media transforms the complexity of the world into a meaningful and digestible form. Journalists can select particular information and connect it to form a coherent perspective. In this way, they frame what is happening in the world and thus offer a possible interpretation of social reality. The Palestine and Israel war is an incident and an important national liberation struggle in the Middle East. It has been declared an international issue since the establishment of the Zionist entity in 1948 followed by many wars in different periods. The most recent is the Gaza war that started in October 2023. During this war, media used language to convey ideas, viewpoints, and ideologies that might influence public opinion. Visual communication is a significant part of media and cultural studies (Machin & Mayr, 2012). According to Van Dijk (2002), editorials also play the role of recommendation and emphasize the newspaper's view about current events. Newspaper editorials represent the evaluative beliefs of their editors. The newspaper's policy and political affiliation are represented through editorials in newspapers. Media studies were not given much attention by the linguists until the late twentieth century when it was noticed that a large part of how we understand meaning is not only conveyed by language, but also by sign and images (Machin & Mayr, 2012). According to Kress (2013), when images appear online alongside words, they become a means of linking culture, personal perspective and the way of making new meanings. Multimodal discourse analysis helps to study these aspects. However, despite the increasing focus on images in today's technological world, the analysts need some rules to better understand and interpret the events around us, even if they are highly abstract.

¹ M.Phil. Scholar, Department of English, University of Gujrat, Gujrat, Punjab, Pakistan.

Email: ssomia876@gmail.com

² Associate Professor, Department of English, University of Gujrat, Gujrat, Punjab, Pakistan.

³ M.Phil. Scholar, Department of English, University of Gujrat, Gujrat, Punjab, Pakistan.

Email: zulekhafajar001@gmail.com



According to Leeuwen (2012), pictures and words work together to create meaning and multimodality has just started to emerge as a separate field with its own identity.

Research Questions

- 1) What ideological aspects are represented in Pakistani and British newspapers through editorial cartoons regarding Gaza war?
- 2) How are cartoons in Pakistani and British editorials used differently to represent Gaza war?

Delimitations

This study has certain limitations. Firstly, only four newspapers have been selected for the present study; two Pakistani English newspapers and two British newspapers. Secondly, only one editorial cartoon with reference to Gaza war from each newspaper was taken into consideration keeping in view the time constraint and the scope of the study.

Literature Review

One of the important roles of media is to provide information about current events happening around the world like economics, politics, social issues etc. Alsaba (2023) examined the impact of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict on the Arab media's visual reporting of the Abraham Accords. The methods of human interest and peace versus war frames and graphic expressions were used as framing devices. The analysis compared images from Arab television stations, such as Qatar's Al Jazeera, Sky News Arabia, Saudi Arabia's Maliki Al Arabiya, and Britain's Sky Broadcasting. The results showed a substantial difference between the visual reporting of the 2014 Gaza War and the 2021 Gaza War. Al-Dala'ien et al. (2023) examined Arab social media posts on Gaza mobs during Israel's invasion in 2021, focusing on their political views. They analyzed visual texts, revealing hidden symbolic meanings and interactions between symbols. The findings emphasized the significance of visual communication in the Arab world and offered new interpretations for discourse analysis and semiotics. Yarchi and Ayalon (2023) investigated the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, particularly on the Gaza border after March 2018, from a more focused perception. It indicted that the Palestinians have used urban protests and electric shocks as their main competitive weapon, which was largely responsible for crop damage in the Israeli conflict.

Eldin and Tawwab (2024) examined the narrative of the Hamas and Israel conflict through images of both sides. Multimodal critical discourse analysis was used to analyze the images. The study findings showed that Israel and Hamas used different methods. Hamas used interactive images while Israel used symbolic images. Gondwe and Walcott (2024) investigated online cartoons resenting Palestine-Israel conflict. By using multimodal critical discourse analysis and multimodal semiotic theories, the study analyzed Western and non-Western media cartoons. The results of the study indicated that cartoons cover complex narratives, personal perspectives and the effects of cartoons on the public's preconceptions and understanding. Similarly, Damanhoury and Saleh (2024) investigated the polarization of the Gaza war in the media. The study focused on the images from the Al Jazeera Arabic and Fox News. Machin and Mayr multimodal critical discourse were used to analyze the images. The results showed that due to Qatar's influence and US closeness to Israel, the coverage of the conflict is biased.

Although previous studies in this area have focused on newspaper articles, stories, and visuals, one perceptible gap in the existing literature is the lack of attention to the cartoons in the context of Gaza war. So, the present study has been conducted to bridge the gap as it examines the representation of the Gaza war in Pakistani and British newspaper cartoons.

Research Methodology

The present study uses qualitative research design. Qualitative research is a technique used to understand the meaning of social or human problems to individuals or groups (Creswell, 2009). In qualitative research the researchers take a naturalistic stance, they aim to gather information in real everyday settings rather than artificially constructed situations (Bryman, 2012, p. 50).

Population and Sample

The population of the present study is Pakistani and British newspapers editorial cartoons about Gaza and Palestinian war. The time period for the data collection is 3 weeks (8 October 2023 to 28 October 2023).

The Pakistani and British newspapers “The Dawn” The News International” and “The Telegraph, The Independent” are selected respectively. The sample size of the current research is 4 cartoons; 2 from British newspapers and 2 from Pakistani newspapers. The cartoons have been selected through purposive sampling technique for analysis by applying Machin and Mayr model.

The systematic process of gathering, documenting, and organizing information or data from various sources for the purpose of analysis, research, or decision-making is defined as data collection (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). The data for the current study is collected from English newspapers. The newspaper cartoons serve as the unit of analysis. The current study uses purposive sampling techniques for the selection of the sample. The purpose of choosing purposive sampling is to specifically pick those cartoons that are representative of Gaza war. The current study chooses the purposive sampling technique to ensure that the cartoons selected for the study cover all the characteristics being considered. Purposive sampling included only those elements that meet certain criteria to ensure a complete and accurate picture of the available data.

Theoretical Framework

The image of the participants in the photographs can convey a certain interpretation of their personality, identity, and character, which makes possible an evaluation of comments and events. Using stock photos, famous social workers can portray them in different ways, including confident, defeated, or compassionate. Gaze and poses in images are able to promote certain interactions and relationships, helping the viewers to evaluate the participants (Machin and Mayr, 2012, p. 70).

Gaze: Gaze is an important component of poses that guide the viewer to examine the participant, whether they are looking up or down at the viewer. Gaze includes two types of images: demand image and offer image. In a demand image, the viewers feel that their presence has been acknowledged and a response is required. The mood is affected by other factors, such as a slight smile or a frown. Looking off the frame has meaning capability because it invites the viewers to imagine what they are thinking. The metaphorical analogy of virtual relationships up and down is also important in passing meaning. The implicit relationship of up and down is very important in Western culture, where people of higher status often sit in positions that are higher than those of lower status. Politicians are generally portrayed positively in photographs, looking slightly up when viewed from the frame, while women look down in certain magazines (Machin & Mayr, 2012, p. 70).

Poses: Poses in photographs are specific physical positions that convey different meanings and messages. They are used to communicate the characteristics of the subject, such as their behavior, mood, or character. For example, a photographer who advertises music videos describes how she poses for a boy band to appear cheeky and mischievous, showing energy and fun. In opposition, they stated that they posed an indie band to appear more self-possessed and independent, to emphasize their dark and non-mainstream. Poses can also show the degree of physical control; for example, soldiers usually stand in a controlled pose that shows obedience, while young people usually stand in a loose or non-dominant pose. Poses can convey a very tangible meaning and contribute to a reflective message (Machin & Mayr, 2012, p. 74).

Representational Strategies in Visual Communication

This text analyzes strategies in visual communication that are used to represent individual, focusing on how specific people can be portrayed and general concepts, jokes and stereotypes can be expressed. It highlights how these strategies look at linguistic and visual representation to create meaning (Machin & Mayr, 2012, p. 96).

Angle: In pictures, we can engage with people in different ways. Being intimate with people means literally challenging them, coming face to face with them. It can convey a sense of compatibility or distance. For example, in the case of two people arguing we see them in a light that shows a shared perspective, in photographs we can look people up or down to show their strength or weakness. For example, in a pamphlet for a children's charity we look down on vulnerable children, while in a lifestyle magazine we look up at celebrities. It can convey strength or a sense of being drawn closer to someone who is troubled (Machin & Mayr, 2012, p. 98).

Individualization and Collectivization

Visual can be used to represent groups, individuals or unidentified figures in ways that can affect how the readers observe action and events.

Individuals and Groups: People can be represented as individuals or groups, usually homogenized to create standardized effect. The image of the immigrants or ethnic group is often used to express diversity and political causes, but they are usually presented as a homogenized whole (Machin & Mayr, [2012](#), p. 100).

Generic and Specific Depiction: Image may depict individuals as individual or specific figures such as Jews, black or Muslim individuals. This is achieved through the famous style of their clothing and physical characteristics, which are more exaggerated in cartoons. It can disappear the individuality of people, creating the selective and racist interpretations (Machin & Mayr, [2012](#), p. 101).

Modality Markers in Visuals

Machin and Mayr ([2012](#)) used the term modality to explain how images can convey various levels of truth. According to them, media images usually assume a state of unreality while images may seem real. Images can convey messages that are not entirely true or accurate (Machin & Mayr, [2012](#), p. 201).

Degree of Articulation of Detail: It defines how much detail is shown in the picture, ranging from simple drawing to detail images. Lowered details can make image symbolic that show categories rather than specific personalities or events (Machin & Mayr, [2012](#), p. 201).

Degree of Background Articulation: It defines how detailed the background of the picture is, ranging from blank to very detailed. The background with the lower articulation can reveal symbolic facts, drawing more attention to the expression of the people in the picture (Machin & Mayr, [2012](#), p. 203).

Data Analysis

In this section, the analysis focuses on how ideology is presented visually in the context of the Gaza war. It examines the different semiotic resources used to create meaning through different type of settings, objects, actions and characters in cartoons. The cartoons are analyzed through Machin and Mayr's multimodal analytical model, which focuses on visual semiotic choices and representational strategies.

The News International

Figure 1



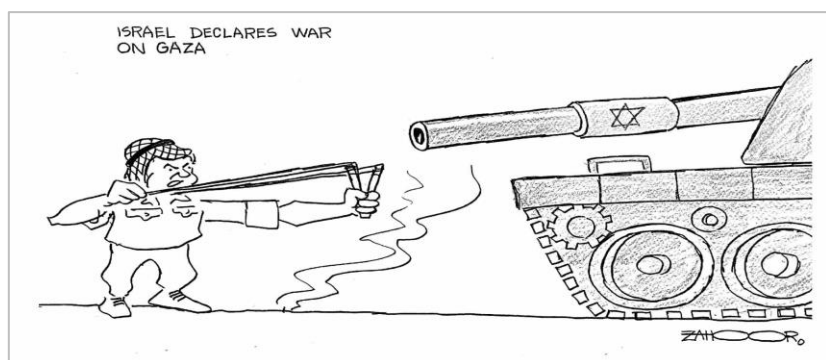
Reference: Taken from the "News International" dated: 10-10-2023

Figure 1 shows the globe, missile, and the area labeled Gaza in foregrounding with no background element. The globe is held by a large hand, a missile bearing the Star of David above the globe, representing Israel, heads in a puff of smoke toward the territory called "Gaza." The missile indicates Israeli military action against Gaza, while the hands around the globe symbolize global indifference, as discussed in the text's critique of international hypocrisy and inaction. The smoke rising from Gaza represents suffering and destruction. The missile and the area of "Gaza" are in the spotlight because of their central position.

Correspondingly, these elements are clearly in focus, drawing the viewer's attention to the immediate danger and destruction. These symbols are the salient elements in the cartoon due to their size and focus. The cartoon emphasizes symbolic representations rather than individuals, highlighting the collective experience and impact of conflict. Moreover, details are defined moderately, show important symbols clearly, and convey the message without being devastating. The blank background keeps the focus on the central elements and emphasizes the urgency of the action and the serious implications of the conflict. Similar results were found in the previous study conducted by Tehseem & Naz (2020).

The Daily Dawn

Figure 2



Reference: Taken from the Daily "Dawn" dated: 08-10-2023

Figure 2 shows both characters in foregrounding, highlighting their importance and emphasizing the direct confrontation without any background elements. The Palestinian, wearing a headscarf and holding a slingshot, directly faces an Israeli tank, prominently displayed with a Star of David. The focus of the cartoon is to emphasize the stark contrast between the slingshot and the modern tank, showing a significant imbalance in their capabilities.

Additionally, the visual highlights power dynamics through positioning and size. The tank, which is larger and more detailed, symbolizes dominance and military power, while the Palestinian man is smaller, placed prominently in the predominant position, symbolizing his resistance and bravery. All these salient features confirm that both Palestinian and tank are important elements of the visual. The visual contrast between simple Palestinian weapons and advanced tank technology highlights the difference in power. Moreover, the gaze of the Palestinian man directed at the tank reflects determination, while the motionless tank is a great symbol of military might. The individualization of the Palestinian character against the collective representation of the Israeli army emphasizes the asymmetry of the conflict. The visual's low degree of background focuses the viewer's attention on the symbolic nature of the conflict, emphasizing the broader message of resistance to overwhelming power. The findings of the study align with the previous research conducted by Jabeen et al. (2020).

The Independent

Figure 3



Reference: Taken from the "Independent" dated: 11-10-2023



Figure 3 shows the woman and the flag in the foreground with a plain background, making them the central elements of the image. The woman holds a large flag bearing the symbol of fasces, often associated with Roman magistrates and historically also related to fascism. The woman struggling to hold a flag, which symbolizes a political figure trying to uphold these principles or dealing with the burden of authority and unity, reflects the editorial's discussion of the challenges Israel's leadership faces in responding to Hamas attacks and maintaining international support. The main focus is on the large flag and the woman, showing their importance. The dark blue color of the flag and the red dress of the woman stand out against the plain background, drawing the viewer's attention. Additionally, the bright tones of the flag and dress highlight the significance of the struggle and the symbolic consequence of the fasces. All these salient features confirm that the flag and woman are important elements of the visual. The direct gaze of the woman at the flag, which shows her focus and hard work, and her pose with bent knees and outstretched arms show the determination and struggle involved in this task. The angle is level with the woman, making the audience feel sympathy for her effort and hard work. Moreover, the woman is focused as a single figure, which individualizes the struggle, making it understandable and personal. The detailed composition of the flag and representation of the woman's expression highlight the realism of her struggle, which is consistent with the serious tone of the editorial, which discusses the challenges facing Israel's leadership. The blank background keeps the focus on the central subject, emphasizing the significance of political struggle and the burdens of governance. Similar outcomes were found in the previous study conducted by (Syed et al., 2022).

The Telegraph

Figure 4



Reference: Taken from the "Telegraph" dated: 16-10-2023

Figure 4 shows a man, Vladimir Putin in the foreground, standing on a pulpit labeled "Gaza" with a Russian flag. He is speaking as a man of peace over the pile of dead bodies. The visual represents Vladimir Putin, proclaiming peace while his or those of his nation tells a different story. The representation of his claim with bodies and destruction criticizes the hypocrisy of his statement. There are ruins and a war-torn landscape, symbolizing the dire consequences of the conflict. The "Hotel Ukraine" with the Ukrainian flag indicates that global conflicts are interconnected, and the attention of the international community is shifting from one global event to another, mirroring the text's depiction regarding the Ukraine conflict as overshadowed by other global events. The focus is on the man and podium that are central and large. The use of dark colors for both man and dead bodies, highlights the intensity of the visual. The grim scene set against the claim of peace strengthens the irony and critique in the picture.

Additionally, the destruction and dead bodies are directly beneath the man's pulpit, a sign that his statements are based on them. The man, podium and pile of bodies are salient elements due to the focus and foregrounding. The man's frontal pose and direct contact with the viewer convey confidence and authority in his statement. Moreover, the focus on a single figure who usually represents broad national

initiatives or policies, the image criticizes policy decisions and leadership that profess peaceful intentions while causing mass violence and destruction. Detailed depictions of man and the destruction around him highlight the intensity and human cost of the conflict. This description roots the speaker's hypocrisy in a concrete reality. The findings of the study correspond to the previous research conducted by (Jabeen et al., 2020).

Conclusion

This study examines the representation of the Gaza war in Pakistani and British newspaper editorials through cartoons. The analysis of the study indicates that Pakistani and British newspaper editorials show significant differences in narrative focus and ideological alignment regarding the issue of the Gaza war. Pakistani cartoons use symbolic imagery to reinforce the story of confrontation. Pakistani cartoons highlight the victimization of Palestinians, criticize western support for Israel, and advocate Islamic and international solidarity against the policies of Israel. In contrast, British cartoons often criticize political leadership and larger international issues through humor and satire. British editorials present a balanced view, compare both sides of the war, and focus on the legal and moral consequences. These findings reflect the political, cultural, and social background of each country, which influences the way the Gaza war is presented and perceived by the public.

References

- Al-Dala'ien, O. A., Al-Daher, Z., Al-Shboul, Y., & Al-Rousan, M. (2023). Analyzing verbal and pictorial Arab's Facebook posts During the Israeli attack on Gaza Strip in 2021. *GEMA Online® Journal of Language Studies*, 23(1), 114–139. <https://doi.org/10.17576/gema-2023-2301-07>
- Bryman, A. (2012) *Social research methods* (Fourth). Oxford University Press.
- Creswell, J. W. (2009). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches* (3rd ed.). Sage Publications, Inc.
- Creswell, J. W., & Creswell, J. D. (2017). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches*. Sage publications.
- Damanhoury, K. E., & Saleh, F. (2024). Mediated Clash of Civilizations: Examining the Proximity-Visual Framing Nexus in Al Jazeera Arabic and Fox News' Coverage of the 2021 Gaza War. *Digital Journalism*, 1–23. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/21670811.2024.2332614>
- Eldin, S., & Tawwab, A. A. (2024). The Power of Political Cartoons in Shaping Discourse on the Gaza War. *CDELT Occasional Papers in the Development of English Education*, 85(1), 101–147. <https://dx.doi.org/10.21608/opde.2024.384363>
- Entman, R. M. (2000). Media and Political Conflict: News from the Middle East. By Gadi Wolfsfeld. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997. 386p. \$19.95 paper. *American Political Science Review*, 94(2), 521–522. <https://www.proquest.com/docview/214406636?sourcetype=Scholarly%20Journals>
- Gondwe, G., & Walcott, C. (2024). Victims or villains? How editorial cartoons depict the 2023 Israel – Palestine war. *Online Media and Global Communication*, 3(1), 1–26. <https://doi.org/10.1515/omgc-2023-0061>
- Jabeen, S., Tehseem, T., & Khanam, A. (2020). Representation of War on Terror in Pakistani Newspapers: A Multimodal Analysis. *Pakistan Journal of Social Sciences*, 40(2), 1107–1118. <https://pjss.bzu.edu.pk/index.php/pjss/article/view/915>
- Kress, G. (2013). Multimodal discourse analysis. In *The Routledge handbook of discourse analysis* (pp. 61–76). Routledge.
- Leeuwen, T. V. (2012). *Critical analysis of multimodal discourse*. The encyclopedia of applied linguistics.
- Machin, D., & Mayr, A. (2012). *How to do Critical Discourse Analysis: A multimodal introduction*. Sage
- Ross, S. D. (2006). (De) constructing conflict: A focused review of war and peace journalism. *Conflict & Communication*, 5(2), 1–30. https://regener-online.de/journalcco/2006_2/pdf/ross_2006.pdf
- Syed, A. F., Khan, M. A., & Sarwar, R. (2022). Afghan Conflict in Religio-Political Editorial Cartoons Published in Pakistani Newspaper: A Semiological Discourse Analysis. *Pakistan Journal of Islamic Philosophy*, 4(1), 28–42. <https://www.pakjip.com/index.php/pjip/article/view/143>



- Tehseem, T., & Naz, S. (2020). War against terror impacts on Pakistan's economy: a critical discourse analysis of Pakistani newspapers. *Review of Economics and Development Studies*, 6(2), 531–543. <https://reads.spcrd.org/index.php/reads/article/view/229>
- van Dijk, T. A. (2002). 7. Political discourse and political cognition. *Politics as Text and Talk*, 203–237. <https://doi.org/10.1075/dapsac.4.11dij>
- Yarchi, M., & Ayalon, A. (2020). Fighting over the Image: the Israeli – Palestinian Conflict in the Gaza Strip 2018 – 19. *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, 46(2), 1–14. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1057610x.2020.1751461>