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A Multi-modal Critical Discourse Analysis of Selected English Political Cartoons

A B S T R A C T

This study analyses six political cartoons selected based on their relevance to current Iraqi political issues, specifically the period between 2005 and 2015, from American online newspapers (calgecartoons.com). The selection criteria included the cartoons' satirical elements, visual rhetoric, and their ability to engage with themes such as power dynamics, social issues, and public opinion. It sheds light on how these cartoons can function as mediators of meanings between the cartoonists and the readers. The data is examined using multimodal discourse analysis (MDA), which combines language study with the analysis of other visual elements, like colors, gestures, and images, to understand meaning (O'Halloran et al., 2011). The Visual Social Semiotics framework proposed by Kress and Van Leeuwen is applied for data analysis. According to Kress and Van Leeuwen (2006, p. 1), who built upon Halliday's functional socio-semiotic theory of language (1975, 1978, 1994, 2004), visual texts serve as resources for encoding interpretations of experience and enacting forms of social interaction. They identify three functions of meaning that act as semiotic modes of communication: representational meaning, interactive meaning, and compositional meaning. Moreover, the study attempts to demonstrate how cartoons portray surrounding circumstances, particularly political events, and examines their role in reflecting the main issues present in our daily lives and their impact on readers' beliefs and attitudes.

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تحليل خطاب نقدي متعدد الوسائط لرسوم كاريكاتورية سياسية انجليزية مختارة

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ملخص البحث:

يتناول هذا البحث تحليل ستة رسوم كاريكاتورية سياسية، مُختارة بناءً على صلتها بالقضايا السياسية العراقية الراهنة، وتحديدًا الفترة بين عامي ٢٠٠٥ - ٢٠١٥، من أحد المواقع الخاصة بالصحف الإلكترونية الأمريكية (calgecartoons.com). وشملت معايير الاختيار العناصر الساخرة في الرسوم، والبلاغة البصرية، وقدرتها على تناول مواضيع مثل ديناميكيات القوة، والقضايا الاجتماعية، والرأي العام. وتُلقي الدراسة الضوء على كيفية عمل هذه الرسوم كوسيط للمعاني بين رسامي الكاريكاتير والقراء. وتُفحص البيانات باستخدام تحليل الخطاب متعدد الوسائط (MDA)، الذي يجمع بين دراسة اللغة وتحليل العناصر البصرية الأخرى، مثل الألوان والإيماءات والصور، لفهم المعنى (أوهالوران وآخرون، ٢٠١١). ويُطبق إطار السيميائية الاجتماعية البصرية الذي اقترحه كريس وفان ليونين لتحليل البيانات. وفقًا لكريس وفان ليونين (٢٠٠٦، ص ١)، اللذين اعتمدا على نظرية هاليداى الاجتماعية السيميائية الوظيفية للغة (١٩٧٥، ١٩٧٨، ١٩٩٤، ٢٠٠٤)، تُعدّ النصوص البصرية مصادر لترميز تفسيرات التجارب وتمثيل أشكال التفاعل الاجتماعي. وقد حددا ثلاث وظائف للمعنى تعمل كوسائل تواصل سيميائية: المعنى التمثيلي، والمعنى التفاعلي، والمعنى التركيبي. علاوة على ذلك، تسعى الدراسة إلى توضيح كيفية تصوير الرسوم الكاريكاتورية للظروف المحيطة، وخاصة الأحداث السياسية، وتبحث في دورها في عكس القضايا الرئيسية في حياتنا اليومية وتأثيرها على معتقدات القراء ومواقفهم. **الكلمات المفتاحية:** رسوم كاريكاتورية، خطاب متعدد الوسائط، تمثيلي، تفاعلي، تكويني.

1. Introduction

Multimodality analyses how different kinds of meaning are combined to make a whole multimodal experience (Jewitt et al., 2016). This method deals with both spoken and written language and also looks at several types of semiotic resources, pointing out how they all interact and relate to each other. This work uses MDA to look at political caricatures and cartoons which are seen as visual forms of communication that convey critical ideas about society. It points out that using visuals instead of words better helps people understand the main ideas and meanings (Abdulrazzaq, 2022). Calder et al. (2000) indicate that caricatures help represent attitudes, stereotypes, identities and values. Cartoons are also used to communicate vital political points in both printed and digital media (Shaikh, Tariq and Saqlain, 2019). In politics, they have become means for expressing views and criticizing society. The cartoons analyzed in this study address Iraqi politics, which highlights their importance on a global scale. To examine what the selected caricatures mean, the background, visual aspects, textual parts and interpersonal meanings are studied using theories of multimodal discourse analysis and pragmatics, as well as the emotions elicited by them. It is important to understand the social and political situations surrounding both creators and viewers of caricatures while studying them. Analysing historical events, cultural symbols, and guiding principles that influence the storytelling of these stories is essential. Looking at the way visuals and text are connected in satire shows us how humor and satire are used to analyze and reflect on current issues. In CDA, we study how social interactions

relate to their corresponding language use, understanding how language and culture are connected (Fairclough and Wodak, 1997; Abdulrazzaq, 2022).

2. Political Cartoons

Allusion, humor, metaphor and caricature are often part of cartoons used by artists to highlight important parts of their work, as these visual features are more memorable than spoken or written explanations (Akinwale and Scholar, 2015). We should recognize that cartoons are considered a unique form of multimodal discourse, mainly in political communication. Conveying complex topics is often easier and more successful with this form than with direct sentences, as it improves the way we communicate important features (Omosebi, 2021). Using various resources, caricatures play a role in multimodal communication (Achour and Adel, 2021). Also, cartoons draw attention from viewers, just like caricatures do (Al-Momani, Badarneh and Migdadi, 2017). Also, cartoons can highlight satire or irony using pictures that comment on political matters (Naghy, 2010). Political caricatures are used to show the world's political state and are a way for society to talk to government groups. They show us how society reacts to political happenings, with the main aim of convincing the audience (Dugalich, 2018). Political caricatures also act as a way to express political messages and meanings visually (ElFalaky, 2019). Political cartoons may address forceful actions, detailed policies, important historical times and provide amusement (De Sousa and Medhurst, 1981). This means, as numerous studies (Machin, 2007 and De Sousa and Medhurst, 1981) suggest, that political caricaturists seek to share their political ideas by relying on well-known signs and symbols to help audiences understand political contexts.

Cartoons, particularly political ones, have been regarded as a less serious genre than others, doubtless in part because they are often humorous and their key and crucial attributes are a series of images and a few words. However, in the iconological climate that developed during the mid-half of the last century, there has been an ideologically driven desire for counter-knowledge to reassess and rewrite the history of images. There is deep ideological intent and political implications set in place, as far as he is concerned, at the expense and to the detriment of visual culture.

3. Visual Elements in Political Cartoons

Political cartooning depends on the use of symbolism, metaphors, and visual representations to persuade the audience. The visual language of cartoons relies on a complex interaction of various elements, including, but not limited to, text, drawing style, layout, and iconic representation of identity. These visual symbols are part of the knowledge base for the members of the represented culture, allowing cartoonists to achieve economy of expression and utilize the shared understanding they manipulate. The visual symbols operate according to established conventions regarding how the world works to maximize the communication of ideas presented within it. Addressees, members of an intentional community, members of the power community, or members of a third public in diplomatic representation exchange as

different linguistic communities share and understand these symbols. Thus, visual products represent the social tendencies of groups and the beliefs they promote. (Gandhi et al., 2023)

Every designer of visual images, especially those involved in social critique, is responsible for contributing to engendering and maintaining a friendly and socially responsible atmosphere by using their influence to offer more constructive themes. Insightful support for the active involvement of the audience asserts that the perception of standards in culture or art, linking politics and art, is transitory, ad hoc, and socially produced, reflecting a kaleidoscope of factors over a long-term horizon. Clearly, it is impossible for the visual artist to influence or even control audience members aside from creating viewing conditions conducive to optimal reception, and this directly relates to the use of critique. Ideological values should be depicted, contested, and negotiated. Cartoons can achieve this by continuously producing a flow of editorial insights to promote such democratic phronesis, serving as a reminder that life is not as smooth as it could be and that public figures need to care for the common good. (Rustamov et al.2022)

4. Verbal Elements in Political Cartoons

The verbal elements of political cartoons are anything written in or around them to complement the representation offered by the picture. This includes, among other internal verbal elements, headlines, dialogues, jokes, captions, balloons, and offensive speech, whereas the external verbal elements refer to those written outside the cartoon that add meaning to the political cartoon or the context of the cartoon. The internal verbal elements have further been classified into three groups according to their type: headline and caption, joke/pun/wordplay, and offensive language. The choice of these three categories is justified by considering the cartoons produced in several newspapers, which employed many headlines and captions, jokes or puns, and offensive language to embody their satirical intention. Indeed, the illustrator can use one, two, or even all these verbal tools in the same cartoon to give meaning and context to the image (Panadero & Lipnevich, 2022).

The headline takes the form, in general, of a title or subtitle and can also be further realized as direct headlines or captions. The chart employed direct headlines to guide eyes toward the message depicted in the drawing of the cartoon and linked the drawing to the article. The direct headline plays a principal role in guiding the viewer's gaze toward the relevant aspects of the picture. It names the scene and is the most frequent literal data source in this type of joke, predisposing to its importance for visual verbal humor in general. The matching was made under the framing where the direct headline played as a satire promotion, which was essential to the discourse's absurdity and funny potential. (Rustamov et al.2022)

5. Research Objectives

To bridge this gap, this study aimed to examine the meaning-making processes that take place when visual multimodal texts are employed in political communication. Thus, the specific research objectives of this study were: i) to analyze approximately English political cartoons using a suitable multimodal approach to understand the relevant mechanisms of meaning-making via the cartoons; ii) to explore how and what visual components influence

the process of communication of the respective cartoons; iii) to unveil the various perspectives, ideologies, arguments, or comments expressed through political cartoons.

6. Methodology

This research uses a qualitative method because the data is in the form of qualitative data (which is political cartoons). The research used the qualitative method of Critical Discourse Analysis, focusing on multimodal texts to describe the representation of communicators in political cartoons about some Iraqi issues. The data for this study consists of six political cartoons that were selected based on their relevance to current Iraqi political issues from the period between 2005 and 2015 in American online newspapers (calgecartoons.com). The selection criteria included the cartoons' satirical elements, visual rhetoric, and their ability to engage with themes such as power dynamics, social issues, and public opinion.

This study employs multimodal discourse analysis (MDA), integrating linguistic analysis with the examination of other semiotic elements such as colors, gestures, and images to comprehend meaning (O'Halloran et al., 2011). The Visual Social Semiotics framework proposed by Kress and Van Leeuwen is applied for data analysis. According to Kress and Van Leeuwen (2006, p. 1), who built upon Halliday's functional socio-semiotic theory of language (1975, 1978, 1994, 2004), visual texts serve as "resources for encoding interpretations of experience and [enacting] forms of social (inter)action." They identify three functions of meaning that act as semiotic modes of communication: representational meaning, interactive meaning, and compositional meaning. i) The "representational meaning" refers to the internal relationships among participants (both represented and interactive), the actions taking place, and the context of the circumstances. This aspect focuses on two representation patterns that illustrate the internal relationships of visual images: narrative patterns and conceptual patterns. The distinction between these two patterns is identified through the presence of a vector, which may be depicted by an abstraction like an arrow or a component of the represented participant. Conceptual patterns categorize participants based on meaning, structure, and type, which can be further divided into three subprocesses: symbolic, classificational, and analytical processes. Conversely, narrative patterns can either be "transactional," showing both an actor (from whom the vector originates) and a goal (to which the vector is directed), or "nontransactional," depicting only an actor (Kress & Van Leeuwen, 2006, p. 59).

(ii) The "interactional meaning" pertains to interaction patterns or "the actions we can perform for or on each other through visual communication, as well as the relationships between the creators and viewers of visual 'texts' that arise from this" (Kress & Van Leeuwen, 2006, p. 15). The interactional meaning involves two participant types: represented participants and interactive participants, along with their relationships. Represented participants are defined as "the people, the places, and things depicted in images," while interactive participants are the actual "individuals who engage with each other through images, including the producers and viewers of these images" (Kress & Van Leeuwen, 2006, p. 114). The interactive meaning of an image is analyzed through three visual dimensions: (i) gaze or contact (either offer or demand); (ii) frame size or social distance (social, personal, or impersonal); and (iii) attitude or power dynamics (determined by camera angles). (iii) The

“compositional meaning” references the visual elements that ensure a visual text is coherent both internally and within the broader context for which it was created (Kress & Van Leeuwen, 2006, p. 43), thereby integrating both representational and interactive meanings. Kress and Van Leeuwen (2006) outline three interconnected visual systems of composition: (i) framing (or the lack thereof), which conveys “individuality and differentiation” or “group identity”; (ii) salience, encompassing visual weight, cultural symbols, element placement, relative size, and foreground versus background; and (iii) information value, which relates to how elements' positioning in a composition influences the interpretation of images.

7. Analysis

In this section, each selected cartoon is analyzed using MDA to investigate the underlying messages based on three levels of meaning, namely, representational, interactive and compositional.

- Analysis of political cartoon (1)



This political cartoon offers a satirical commentary on the state of democracy in Iraq during the post-2003 period, especially following the Iraq War and the toppling of Saddam Hussein. Here's a breakdown of the cartoon based on three levels of meaning, namely, representational, interactive and compositional.

Representational Meaning:

The henhouse represents the fragile and imperfect state of democracy being built in Iraq. The label "Iraq Democracy Henhouse" is a play on words. A "henhouse" traditionally symbolizes a place for chickens, and in this context, it metaphorically portrays Iraq's struggling democratic experiment as something unstable and in its early stages. The Soldiers and Builders; Two figures appear in the cartoon: a soldier (holding a rifle) and a worker or builder (carrying a tool). These characters likely represent Western (mainly U.S.) forces and the Iraqi populace or government attempting to construct a democratic society. The soldier signifies military involvement, while the worker embodies local efforts toward development, though both are engaged in constructing this "democracy" together. Signage; "Under Construction" signifies that Iraq's democracy is still a work in progress, indicating instability

and challenges in building a functional and stable democratic system. The Threats; There are menacing creatures below the henhouse that represent various challenges Iraq faces. The monsters are labeled with words like "Insurgency," "Sectarian Anarchy," and "Neighbor's Interference." "Insurgency" refers to violent opposition forces threatening the new democratic order." Sectarian Anarchy" refers to the ongoing division between different religious and ethnic groups, leading to internal strife. "Neighbor's Interference" indicates external influence or intervention from neighboring countries, potentially destabilizing Iraq further. The "Exit" sign on the soldier suggests the possibility of withdrawal or retreat, symbolizing the desire to leave Iraq, as well as a critical commentary on the international involvement and commitment to the region.

- Interactive Meaning:

The cartoon shows the shaky circumstances in Iraq after Saddam Hussein was removed from power. In other words: "Iraq Democracy Henhouse": This phrase was used to mock the idea that Iraq was rapidly becoming democratic. The image of a henhouse points out that the shift has not been properly thought out. "Under Construction": Points out that Iraq's democracy is not done and is still dealing with fresh challenges. Exit: Might signify that foreign or military forces, including the U.S., could be planning to leave which could leave the system in an unstable state. These labels on the monsters ("Insurgency," "Sectarian Anarchy," and "Neighbor's Interference") are important reasons for Iraq's difficulty in forming a steady democracy.

- Compositional meaning:

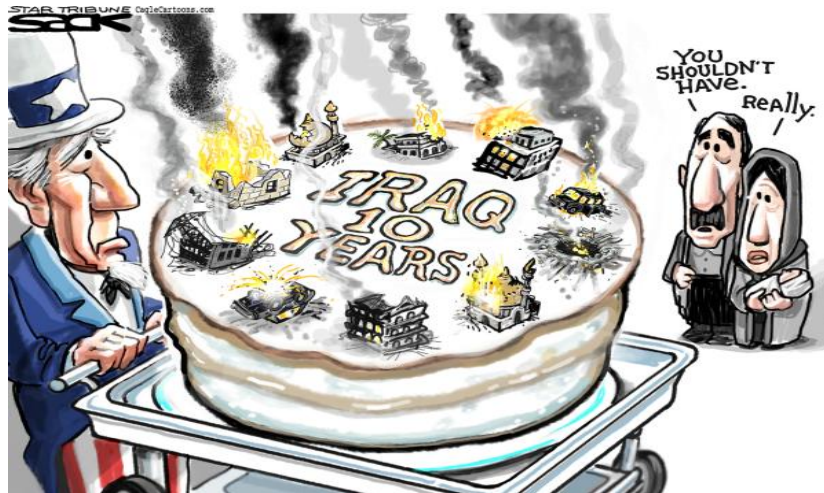
The cartoon uses satire to point out the problems with the U.S. and other countries sending troops to Iraq. It proposes that the efforts to establish a democracy are undercut by both internal and external challenges.

Building democracy proved to be much harder than anyone expected, as reflected in the use of the exit sign for frustration. The partial and weak henhouse illustrates that the process is no longer up to expectations.

Vulnerable and Innocent: Iraqi people, like chickens in a henhouse, cannot shield themselves from the turmoil, insurgency, sectarian violence and outside intervention.

All things considered, the cartoon shows that the Iraqi democracy-building effort after 2003 faced weaknesses, continued danger and interference from outside parties. It implies that the work is still in progress and that it faces big difficulties.

- Analysis of political cartoon (2)



This political cartoon is a commentary on the Iraq War, particularly marking its 10-year anniversary. It uses dark humor to highlight the disastrous outcomes of the war, as seen from a U.S. perspective, and the unintended consequences faced by the people of Iraq.

- Representational Meaning:

The cake, with "IRAQ 10 YEARS" written on it, symbolizes the anniversary or "celebration" of the Iraq War. Traditionally, a cake represents a positive occasion like a birthday or achievement. However, the burning buildings on top of the cake create an ironic and dark contrast. Rather than a joyful celebration, the burning buildings symbolize destruction, war, and the chaos Iraq has endured for the past decade. Often, political cartoons show Uncle Sam to illustrate the U.S. government or its effect on the world. He is moving the cake in front of him. He smiles happily, though the cake looks very sad. So, Uncle Sam and the U.S. government could respond to this anniversary with pride or without caring, regardless of what happened during the war. The burning buildings stand for the ongoing damage happening in Iraq. The smokestacks from the plants highlight the ongoing pain and unrest that has gone on for a decade. They may also symbolize the wounds, trouble and long-term effects of the war. It is clear from their expressions that the two people at the front of the image are Iraqi citizens who feel disappointed or resigned. They are looking at the cake and telling you, "You didn't need to do that." Really." They use sarcasm in their speech, as if they are not sure or disappointed by what has happened. They aren't celebrating; rather, they are pointing out the destruction happening to their country right now.

- Interactive Meaning:

The cake says "IRAQ 10 YEARS," which stands for the 10-year anniversary of the war in Iraq. Rather than celebrating a decade of improvement or success, it reminds us that Iraq has suffered through a decade of fighting, destruction and chaos. Having this phrase in the song makes it clear that the long war caused people to feel tired and regretful. You really didn't need to. Really.": The two men in the foreground exchange sarcasm about the U.S. celebrating the 10th year since the war began. The message is that, for the Iraqis, the war

created harm and was not something they wanted. They use sarcasm and doubt because they don't understand why Americans would celebrate what they have destroyed.

- Compositional Meaning:

The cartoon employs dark humor and sarcasm to look at how the U.S. took part in the Iraq War. By contrasting the cake with images of cities in flames, the artist points out that what the U.S. celebrates is not what Iraqis felt. You really shouldn't have done that. Really shows how those suffering from the war have become disillusioned and frustrated. While showing sarcastic gratitude, the two are presented as the main victims of the war. They appear to believe that the invasion and the occupation have brought great hardship to their lives, country and people. In the poster, Uncle Sam's smile suggests that the U.S. is not concerned with what is happening. The happy face of Uncle Sam demonstrates the difference between how the U.S. viewed the war and what Iraq suffered because of it. The cartoon shows that celebrating a war that brought so much destruction and death is silly. It points out how ironic it is that the U.S. praises the anniversary, while the damage from the war is still clearly noticeable.

This cartoon indicates that people's views on what happens globally after a war can change according to their position. While Iraqis do not celebrate the anniversary, for others (especially Americans), it could be considered a landmark or a win. The cartoon points out that the same event can be understood in very different ways by different people. In conclusion, the cartoon uses irony and humor to point out the problems of the Iraq War and the U.S.'s part in it, by pairing the war's anniversary with the damage it brought. By making a sarcastic comment, the Iraqi characters show just how much regret and disbelief many there feel about what happened.

- Analysis of political cartoon (3)



The cartoon highlights the problems of corruption, unemployment and bad leadership that were very common in Iraq after Saddam Hussein was removed from power. The short film uses images and dialogue to highlight the disharmony between the way Iraqis feel and the actions of the government.

Representational Meaning:

The dust storm which is shown large and threatening, signifies the repeated public protests in Iraq. The storm's disorder reflects how the Iraqi people urgently wanted change which shows how quickly the situation was changing. The cartoonist makes it obvious that the protests in Iraq are a main topic of the drawing. The storm represents the large and increasing feelings of discontent among the people. The Political System (Box): A small, labeled box called "POLITICAL SYSTEM" is unable to handle the much larger force of the protests. How little and easily breakable the box appears shows that the government is not strong enough to manage the issues the country faces.

In the box, you can see two people, probably political leaders or government representatives, hiding from the powerful storm. The storm approaching them shows that the government cannot manage or answer the people's desire for change. The two officials in the box can be seen looking confused or unable to decide. You're wondering if dealing with the issues will truly bring about significant changes? It means they are either unsure or don't want to do much about the protests and what people are demanding. They are shown as unable to manage the increasing disturbances.

"No Jobs," "Poor Governance," and "Corruption": The box is full of papers with these words. According to the cartoon, these are the main reasons behind the demonstrations. Because these matters are escaping the political system, it is clear that they are lasting and unaddressed issues that are creating chaos in the country.

Interactive Meaning:

When we see this, we can relate it to the many protests that have taken place in Iraq, frequently caused by problems like corruption, unemployment and bad governance. If we address the problems, will we be able to change things? This statement comes from a political figure inside the Political System box. It shows that the government is hesitant to address the main issues properly. It suggests that the changes suggested might not be significant enough to resolve the main causes of the unrest.

Three main themes of the protests are expressed by the words "No Jobs," "Poor Governance," and "Corruption." The fact that these issues are escaping government control is clear from how they are flying out of the box.

Compositional Meaning:

- Portrayal of Political Ineffectiveness: The cartoon shows that the government is not reacting to the urgent matters brought up by the protesters. The officials inside the box look confused and wonder if solving these issues would truly help make a difference. As a result, we can say that those in charge either refuse or lack the ability to address Iraq's major issues. Seeing the storm and the papers flying about causes us to feel frustration and despair. Many people are protesting, but the political system appears to be confused about what to do. It brings attention to the gap between what the government does and what Iraqis actually require. By using sarcasm, the writers suggest that the government does not seem certain it can change things, despite a lot of people being unhappy.

The unstable box representing the political system after 2003 marks how Iraq's government agencies cannot handle the big challenges the country encounters. It seems the cartoon suggests that political leaders are not able to change the system in any significant way which suggests it is failing. The approaching dust storm in politics means that the protests might get worse if they are not handled. The cartoon points out that if the government doesn't handle key problems (like jobs, corruption and governing), the situation might get even worse.

In conclusion, the cartoon shows that many Iraqis were upset by the government's inaction on corruption, poor management and high unemployment in the years after the 2003 invasion. Like a dust storm, the protests are growing stronger, but the politicians inside the box are unsure and hesitant about what to do. The message is clear that the government's lack of action has worsened the nation's many ongoing problems.

- Analysis of political cartoon (4)



This cartoon critiques the situation in Iraq during the early years of the Iraq War.

Representational Meaning:

- The image shows two characters: Uncle Sam: Traditionally represents the United States in political cartoons, symbolizing the government or American military. A farmer (likely representing George W. Bush): He is holding a small spade, dressed like a farmer, and is looking at a barren field. This imagery suggests that he is trying to "grow" something, possibly representing the military or political efforts in Iraq that have not yielded positive results. The Sign (Iraq Victory Garden): This sign in the foreground says "IRAQ VICTORY GARDEN," which is a play on the concept of "Victory Gardens" (gardens planted during wartime to support food supply). In this case, it is ironic because instead of a thriving garden, the field is barren. This suggests the failed promises or expectations of the Iraq War, where the U.S. was trying to "plant" democracy or stability in Iraq, but after several years, there was no success. Barren Field: The lack of crops in the field visually conveys the failure or lack of success in the mission in Iraq, showing a lack of tangible results despite the efforts.

Interactive Meaning:

The speech bubble coming from Uncle Sam says, "...Three years and still no crop, so we just gotta stay the course..." . "Three years": This references the timeline of the Iraq War, which started in 2003. By 2006, the situation in Iraq was far from resolved, with continued violence and instability. "No crop": A metaphor indicating that, after years of military involvement, the expected positive outcomes (such as peace or stability) have not materialized. Instead of flourishing, the efforts have led to barren results. "Stay the course": This phrase was a common political mantra, especially used by President George W. Bush during the Iraq War, which suggested that the U.S. should remain committed to its current strategy in Iraq, despite the lack of success.

- Compositional Meaning:

- The scene with Uncle Sam and the farmer (probably George W. Bush) reflects the government's (and its military) stance on the war, contrasted with the public's growing disappointment about it. Farmers are told to continue their work on the farm, even though the outcomes are not good. It could be an attack on continuous leadership from politicians, even when things go wrong. It implies that the U.S. government carried on with its role in Iraq, without changing strategies or admitting that things were not working which can be seen as a negative view of the administration's choices.

In conclusion, the cartoon shows how empty the promises of the Iraq War turned out to be by comparing the results to a dry "Victory Garden." Both the image of the field and the farmer and the phrase "stay the course," point to the difference between what the government wants and what it achieves. It shows that people are becoming disappointed and frustrated by the military being involved for so long.

- Analysis of political cartoon (5)+-



This political cartoon is a satirical commentary on the U.S. invasion of Iraq and its aftermath, specifically referencing the toppling of Saddam Hussein's statue in 2003.

Representational Meaning

A statue showing several political figures tangled awkwardly on top of a pedestal. A U.S. military vehicle (with "U.S." painted on it) driving away, with two soldiers inside and an

American flag drooping behind them. A road sign labeled "EXIT" points to where the U.S. vehicle is heading. The background features Middle Eastern architecture, like a mosque and people in traditional clothing, setting the scene clearly in Iraq or the broader Middle East.

Color and Style: The cartoon uses muted colors (grays, tans) to suggest seriousness. The exaggerated features of the statue and characters indicate satire and criticism. The statue echoes the famous toppling of Saddam Hussein's statue in Baghdad in 2003 a powerful image from the Iraq War. The US soldiers leaving implies military withdrawal. The EXIT sign highlights the end of an occupation or intervention.

Interactive Meaning

Speech Bubble: One soldier says, "Remember the statue of Saddam?". This line draws a direct connection between the current withdrawal and the moment of symbolic victory years ago (Saddam's statue falling). There's irony back then, the U.S. celebrated bringing down a dictator, but now they are leaving a situation that remains messy and unresolved, as symbolized by the chaotic statue. **Labels:** "U.S." on the vehicle, "EXIT" on the road sign very clear identifiers to remove ambiguity about who is withdrawing. **Language Tone:** Informal, conversational speech suggesting casual reflection, almost a hint of regret or cynicism.

Compositional Meaning

- Relationship between characters and viewer. The U.S. soldiers are looking back while moving forward inviting the viewer to also reflect on the past and present. The chaotic statue suggests instability left behind engaging the viewer's critical judgment about the success or failure of U.S. intervention. The soldiers' speech directly addresses the viewer's memory and shared knowledge, creating a connection: "You remember that, right?". **Mood and Attitude:** Slightly sarcastic or regretful tone the cartoonist critiques the U.S. mission, showing that the removal of a dictator didn't lead to the order or success that was promised. There's a feeling of unfinished business- soldiers leave, but the situation remains complicated.

Visually, it shows chaotic aftermath and withdrawal. Textually, it refers ironically to a past moment of supposed victory. Interpersonally, it positions the viewer to critically reflect on whether the intervention achieved its goals.

In conclusion, this cartoon critiques the way the U.S. framed its success in Iraq, suggesting that the symbolic act of toppling Saddam's statue was shallow in comparison to the long-term challenges and instability that followed the invasion, it underscores the disillusionment with the consequences of the war.

- Analysis of political cartoon (6)



This political cartoon addresses the consequences of the Iraq War, focusing on the human and financial toll it took.

Representational Meaning

A grim reaper labeled "IRAQ WAR" is operating a roulette wheel. Instead of chips or money, the wheel is stacked with skulls symbolizing death. The roulette table has a sign: "10 Trillion Jackpot"- hinting at a massive cost. Uncle Sam (the classic symbol of the United States) is walking away from the table, looking shocked and clutching a bill. In the background, there's a door marked "SPIRAL", suggesting further decline or consequences. Color and Style: Darker tones on the left side (where death and gambling occur) contrast with brighter tones around Uncle Sam, making the "war zone" feel sinister. Highly exaggerated features (grim reaper, skulls, and a massive roulette wheel) heighten the cartoonish but critical feel. Symbolism: Roulette symbolizes gambling — implying that the Iraq War was a risky, reckless decision. Skulls represent loss of life. Bill/Invoice represents the financial and moral "cost" handed to the U.S.

Interactive Meaning

Signs and Labels: "IRAQ WAR" on the Grim Reaper's robe — personifying the war as death itself. "10 Trillion Jackpot" - dripping with irony; the "jackpot" is catastrophic loss. Uncle Sam's invoice reads: "Iraq War \$2+ Trillion Lost 4,000+ Dead Thousands Wounded"- directly quantifying the human and economic costs. Language Tone: Very blunt, serious numbers are used (trillions, thousands) without emotional adjectives, making the reality hit harder. The word "Spiral" on the door signals ongoing deterioration even after leaving the war zone.

Compositional Meaning

- Relationship between characters and viewer:

The viewer is positioned to observe Uncle Sam realizing too late how devastating the war was evoking sympathy, blame, and critical reflection. The grim reaper's gleeful gambling posture contrasts sharply with Uncle Sam's regret, creating a strong moral stance: the war was not noble but deadly and foolish. The cartoon seems to "speak" directly to American citizens and decision-makers, questioning the worth of the war. Mood and Attitude: Bitterly ironic and critical the cartoonist critiques the U.S. involvement in Iraq, emphasizing death, waste, and ongoing consequences. There's a sense of loss, futility, and foreboding (symbolized by the "spiral").

Visually, the cartoon portrays the Iraq War as a deadly gamble resulting in catastrophic loss. Textually, it presents cold facts and grim figures, emphasizing the wastefulness. Interpersonally, it urges viewers to see the Iraq War not as a justified effort but as a reckless, devastating mistake.

Conclusion

This research enhances understanding of how political cartoons reflect the political events occurring in Iraq. It attempts to investigate political cartoons that highlight various political issues using MDA. The study asserts that comprehending the three different aspects or meanings of visual compositions—namely, representational, interactive, and compositional—is essential for understanding and conveying the intended message behind these images. Hence, this study aligns with previous research that **recognizes** the significance of political cartoons in addressing pressing political issues. Cartoonists can **utilize** both visual and verbal modes to convey their intended messages to readers. These political cartoons play vital roles in framing and shaping public sentiment towards current events, often providing a clearer and simpler explanation of the political situation than traditional political writers. The most common themes covered by these political cartoons include financial and administrative corruption, abuse of power, unfulfilled government promises, procrastination, electricity failures, and governmental negligence. Based on the earlier discussions, it is evident that these cartoonists employ humour not only to entertain readers but also to inspire positive societal change. Moreover, they can sometimes evoke feelings of anger and outrage.

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