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Representation of Regional Political power through Cartoons: A Semiotic Study

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Abstract

Media is an essential tool to describe the current issues from the individual level to international relations. Through presenting images and cartoons, media highlights the occurred situation of the world with specific illustrations. The present research study describes the semiotic analysis of the Pak-India relationship as presented by political cartoons in Pakistani-published Urdu newspapers. As there is an ideological representation of cartoons to present the desired sense through media, so the linguistics and semiotic analysis can counter the meanings and illustrations of such desired ideologies by which meanings are presented. Construction and deconstruction of desired ideologies can be best observed by such loaded semiotics. The discourse approach model of Zubair & Sajid (2011) has been used of semiotic analysis, and for linguistic analysis, the framework of Fairclough's model (2003) of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is adopted to manipulate the hidden ideologies as presented in political cartoons. The linguistic and semiotic analysis of such political cartoons, as presented in media, can be used as the best tool to shape public opinion towards desired realities.

Key Words: Power, CDA, SA, Political Cartoons

Introduction

Pakistan-India relationships have been under a critical environment since the emergence of both states. Mahmood (2002) describes, "The miserable situation has been observed between Pakistan and India on fine relationship building." Major wars of 1948, 1965 and 1971 have been fought between these nuclear power countries of Asia, which gave birth to the emergence of cold war phenomena among the countries. Bukri (1991) says, "Since partition, most of the Indian statesmen have been considering that Pakistan will be able to survive its existence and will return back for merging with India as a prodigal son come back to his mother's lap" (Varshney, 1991). The first nuclear experiment was conducted by India to

prove its supremacy in the sub-continent which led Pakistan to replicate to normalize the balance of power in the region (Synnott, 2009). Particular social relations, identities, customs, and themes of powers can be best illustrated by the semiotic representation of cartoons in media. The existence of issues has been since the emergence of both states, so strengthening the national ideology and state idea; both states have been expressing the state of satisfaction and contentment through media for the public. Using provocative language on images, the discourse of foreign affairs and relations is considered as a useful tool to produce desired discourse among the public. Pakistani complex relationships can be best

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described by the US-India relationships as the foreign affairs on the current situation. Indian Prime Minister Mr. Modi's cartoons presentations on media describe the forced dominance and role regarding war implementation on Pakistan as there have been following of the ethical and international rules of minimizing the chances of wars. Instead, he is presented as the game planner of war in the region. The feelings of accusation and anger for Pakistan are meant to describe through the cartoons. The top political leadership of India is described as the team of propagation against Pakistan but neglecting the results of war. The leadership is described as they consider themselves dominant and suffered in the phobia of war as it would be implemented at any cost. Beside these Pakistani officials are presented as in great danger which are willing to minimize the war chances to maintain peace in the region. To produce traditions rivalry and hatred against India among Pakistani people, the tool of semiotic discourse is functionalized in the cartoons.

Semiotic and Discourse of Newspaper

[Saussure \(1916\)](#) defines semiotic in the following way:

"Semiotic is the science which studies the life of signs presented in the correspondence society. It can be called by as semiology (root word of Greek language "Semeion" means signs). Semiology has to describe the presented signs in the society and the laws through which these signs are governed."

It is further described by Saussure that among many systematic symbols and signs, language is one of them to be present. It can be illustrated that language is among one of certain signs through which production, use and exchange of signs are done within the society. A sign is a representative mark for something else which clearly understood by the native society. So, it can be said that semiology permits the human beings to observe the language in natural and de-naturalized correspondences.

Peirce defines semiotics as the system of principles to study the signs based on the specific behaviour, presented in the society. In the same sense, Peirce (1985) proposed the definition of semiotics and illustrated his view in a sense that signs are necessary to describe the words as the words cannot be described very well without existing signs

in the society ([Noth, 1999](#)). The term semiotics has keen features as is described by [Barthes \(1974\)](#) in his work on fashion, boxing and other elements. "Semiotics is based on the contextual sense and varies from culture to culture because of existing diversity in the culture and norms of different societies, so the meaning extraction is meant a lot.

Semiotic discourse(s) of print media is a great facilitator for our understanding as it provides us the understanding of the political, social, economical, cultural, constructed and de-constructed ideologies and realities presented in our surroundings. It can be observed that, for satirize government or issues of present or past, can be presented by cartoons in the newspapers for exaggeration of the facts.

Objectives

[Zubair & Sajid \(2011\)](#) describe the objects are very important, which carry out the connotative illustrated meanings to connotate the context. In this perspective, the following objectives are observed in the study.

- To illuminate the ideas and values presented by objects.
- To represent the discourse which is communicated by objects.

Research Question

1. How political ideology is presented through cartoons to win the favour of the public regarding regional politics?

Significance of the Study

The study is unique as it demonstrates the representation of political power and ideology through cartoons in the regional political phenomenon. The study helps to understand the geopolitical strategies, in a way, that how the public opinion is made in favour of rulers through semiotics and linguistic descriptions.

Literature Review

[Werner \(2004\)](#) made a study on "On Political Cartoons and Social Studies Textbooks: Visual Analogies, Intertextuality, and Cultural Memory". The study highlighted that visual analogy are used to animate political cartoons, implying a similarity

between the incident depicted in the graphic and the problem on which the cartoonist is commenting. While many different types of analogies can be employed, meaning emerges as the observer recognizes and interprets them. When a cartoon's analogy is pulled from current or historical events, plays on literary references, or uses past cultural information not readily available to a spectator, this becomes more challenging. The intertextuality that results assumed an ideal spectator and a limited cultural memory, which had ramifications for who is included in and who was excluded from, the continuous editorial debate. The implications of this supposed memory were examined in respect to British Columbia's social studies textbooks.

[Dodds \(2010\)](#) conducted research on "*Popular Geopolitics and Cartoons: Representing Power Relations, repetition, and Resistance*". The popular geopolitical relevance of cartoons and caricatures was examined in this research. The findings indicated that a broader interaction with the world of cartoons, humor, and satire beyond the realm of Euro-American cartoonists and performers might strengthen popular geopolitical studies of cartoons. As post-colonial and post-apartheid South African political leaders and publics confront the interrelationships between race, money, and neoliberal governance.

[Willems \(2011\)](#) looked at satirical images of Zimbabwe's leadership in order to portray the country's political situation. Significantly, the assessment of literature reveals that, while much research has been done on political cartoons, less research has been done on how political cartoons are used to shape agendas, particularly in the Nigerian socio-political environment. The study's findings provide answers to the research questions that the country politics is made to be favouring for politicians as well.

[Sani, et al. \(2012\)](#) did a study on "*Political Cartoons as a Vehicle of Setting Social Agenda: The Newspaper Example*". The study revealed that in recent years, the cartoons genre has piqued researchers' interest in a variety of fields, including communication, media studies, and health sciences. More importantly, cartoons are a valuable source of data for researchers studying social phenomena. This study demonstrated how political cartoons are

utilized to construct social agendas in Nigerian newspapers, reorienting and shaping public opinion through recurring images of current socio-political topics at a given time. During the years 2007-2010, the comic words were taken from two prominent Nigerian newspapers, Daily Trust and Vanguard. Using the purposive sample technique, one hundred cartoons were chosen. Each newspaper magazine provided fifty cartoons. Content analysis was employed specifically to determine the topics depicted in the cartoons. Semiotic analysis was utilized to study the cartoons using a qualitative manner. The study revealed a key flaw in earlier cartoon research: a lack of supportive and clearly defined theoretical basis in studying political cartoons. As a result, through agenda-setting theory of media effect, this work contributes to cartoon research by providing theoretical insight into the cartoon genre.

[Ashfaq et al. \(2019\)](#) made a study on "*Drawing the Foreign Rivalry: Depiction of Indo-Pak Relations in Political Cartoons of Mainstream Pakistani and Indian English Newspapers (2014-2017)*". The study described that political cartoons play an important role in the image-making of countries based on their foreign policies and alliances. As a result, the purpose of this article was to look at how English media in Pakistan and India depict the Indo-Pak relationship in their political cartoons. The signs and symbols used to generate images during disputes are also examined in this research. Political cartoons from Pakistan's Dawn, Express Tribune, India's Times of India, and The Hindu, published between June 2014 and July 2017, were chosen. Under the umbrella of framing theory, quantitative content analysis and semiotics methodologies are used. It was founded that political cartoons in both countries follow national interests, citing the competition between India and Pakistan as an example, and constructing the image of "*we are the best*" and "*they are the worst*." It also emphasized that terrorism was the most frequently featured problem by both political cartoonists.

Methodology

The model adopted for this research paper is taken from the paper on "*Semiotic representation of Islam in western media: CDA*" of a published article by the

famous Weekly Guardian ([Zubair.S. & Sajid, A. 2011](#)). Along with, as the presence of political cartoons analysis and manipulation of hidden ideologies in the analysis is necessary, Fairclough 's framework of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) for semiotic and linguistics analysis is also used to manipulate the power relationships and ideologies that existed between Pakistan and India. The current study is with the aim to expose and illuminate the hidden ideologies and desired semiotic discourse presented by Pakistani Urdu newspaper JANG by analyzing the cartoons by semiotic and linguistics perspectives as presented in the newspaper.

Data Collection

Data is collected for the study from the Daily Urdu newspaper JANG as published on March 1, 2019, March 4, 2019, and March 9, 2019, accordingly. It is very much important to keep in note that the political activities between Pakistan and India were on their peak to earn the favour of the US after its attack on Afghanistan. In the context of the US-Afghan War, the role of India is very much important to deploy its nexus and ideological aspects to undertake Pakistan with terrorism by making effective relationships with the US. The choice of cartoons in this context is very much important to expose and describe the stretches of power and ideologies existed between Pakistan and India.

Framework of the Present Study

In order to explore the research questions of the study, the model of semiotic analysis, as already described, is applied proposed by [Zubair & Sajid \(2011\)](#) along with the most applied CDA framework of [Fairclough \(2003\)](#) for semiotic and linguistic analysis of the cartoons presented in a political sense about the ideologies of relationships between Pakistan and India. The framework of [Leeuwen\(2008\)](#) is also applied to manipulate the social factors presented in both nations to present the over determination of their ideologies towards other nations that how these factors are presented physically. The model of semiotics presented by [Zubair & Sajid \(2011\)](#) can be used as a toolkit to analyze and judge the semiotics resources which

were presented in media in the name of person, objects, settings, gestures, and norms to show "what meanings does the specific sign carry?, and how signs are used with a combination of words to present the desired ideologies and discourse?". By using the mentioned models, the purpose of manipulation of political and power ideologies existed between Pakistan and India in the current situation.

Data Analysis

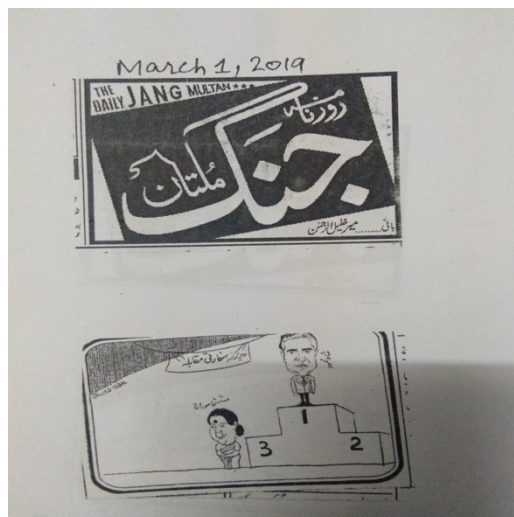


Figure 1.

The discourse of games has been the best tool of media and politicians after Pakistani Prime Minister Mr. Imran Khan 's entry in politics as he is an ex-cricket player also. In context, it can be observed that the policy of making Pakistan isolated on an international level has been played by the Indian Government after the Pulwama Attack by Kashmiri natives as these two nations has ideological differences in their context, so the factors of self-determinations have been presented in both nations to accuse the fault of one on other. Indian Government and Media had been started accusing Pakistan and started trying to make attempts on Pakistani areas, and meanwhile, Indian Air-Crafts' are countered and hit by the Pakistani Air Force. Under the application of linguistic and semiotic analysis, the cartoons, as presented, illustrate the victory of Pakistani Foreign Minister Mr. Shah

Mehmood Qureshi in terms of foreign affairs diplomacy. Through representing and grading the top position of the Pakistani Foreign Affair Minister, the proposed discourse is presented that the public has to idealize and acknowledge the capabilities and abilities of the current Pakistani Government's diplomatic successes. The object of 2nd positions, as is presented in the cartoons describes the abstract power which produces the confusion and diplomatic struggle. The sense can also be developed of the acquisition of 1st position from 2nd position of Pakistani Foreign Affairs minister. The semiotic analysis also describes that the struggle has also been done by Indian Foreign Minister, Mrs. Sashma Suraj as it was tried hard to develop the diplomatic loneliness for Pakistan. Under linguistic analysis, it is described that the capabilities of the Pakistani Foreign Embassy are of higher range than India as it was pre-described by the Indian Government to produce isolation for Pakistan. The defeated Indian Diplomatic Policy is described with a low grade under Asian Politics.

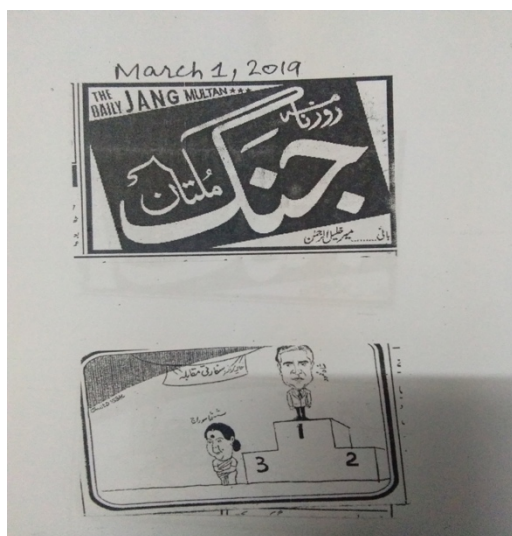


Figure 2.

Pakistan-India relationships have been a hot discussed topic all over the world. Pakistani Prime Minister Mr. Imran Khan is an ex-cricket Captain, so the images of game and crickets are considered as the accurate and preferable tool of depiction. Semiotic discourse illustrates that Indian Prime Minister Modi is in the position of violation of every principle of

ethics and global peace. The OIC (Organization of Islamic Countries) members and other countries describe the Indian Prime Minister's way of War implementation as a defective policy, but the Indian Prime Minister is surrounded by so-called accuses of Pakistani-made terrorism because there is frustration in the shape of Pulwama Attack in Indian Occupied Kashmir. The semiotic analysis describes the election-winning aims after showing the policy of implementation of war and attack on Pakistan on behalf of accuses. As the whole world is highlighting that, even by the support of nuclear weapons and other emanations, the Indian Prime Minister's policy of war is defective and unacceptable. Meanwhile, Mr. Modi is still with aim to attack Pakistan by the war weapons, but the Indian Prime Minister is not with the aim to get back from his aim of attack and still stuck and lying on his pitch (list of accuses on Pakistan) due to so-called ideology of war on Pakistan because India is with ideological factors of "I am right and stronger." Semiotic and linguistic analysis of Figure No. 2 also describes that desired discourse must be in public that, even under the outclass performance of Pakistani Foreign Affair Policy, the thinking of war implementation on Pakistan is still revolving around Modi's mind even Pakistan is not favoured to have war.

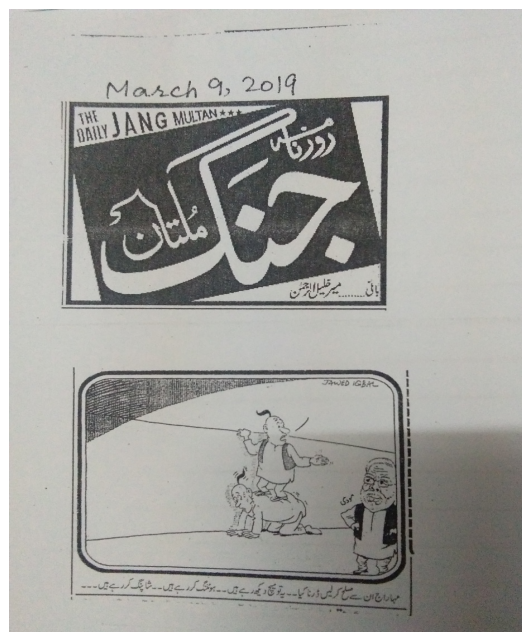


Figure 3.

As semiotic discourse illustrates how the desired and favouring discourse would be produced among the public. Figure 3, under the linguistic and semiotic discourse, it can be observed that the threats and war policy is being neglected by Pakistani people, and they are enjoying Pakistan Super League (PSL) matches, rushing towards markets for shopping instead of getting fear of war with India and they are making fun of Indian War Imposing Policy as they are ready to face all the conditions. Indian Prime Minister Mr. Modi is under high pressure from his ministers as well as of own public opinion to have no war. The minister of Modi's cabinet are illustrating that, as Pakistan is ready for war and taking no fear of being victims or death so no fear should be taken, and the peace policy must be applied to make the region peaceful. The desired ideology through Figure No. 3 is to assure the people of Pakistan through media that Indian ministers also acknowledge that Pakistanis are brave people and they are ready to face war instead of taking the fear of war as Modi's policy is of war. Under these perspectives, the public opinion of "No Fear" and "Take it Easy" is proposed through these figures, illustrating that the Indian Government is also thinking about to revise its war policy.

Conclusion

Representation of political and ideological cartoons has been a popular phenomenon and tool to

represent the desired discourse through the semiotic representation of images and words. After semiotic and linguistics analysis of the data under the ideological and power factors, it can be observed that the desired ideology is used through cartoons in daily Urdu newspapers in Pakistan to manipulate and build the correspondence ideology and power in public. By applying the semiotic and linguistics analysis of mentioned models, it can be concluded that the relationship between Pakistan and India is still critical and at tense situation, even seventy-five years have been passed. To build the desire ideology and discourse among people, print media is used as a best tool to make the sense of public opinion towards satisfaction level. The factors of superiority in both nations are still alive to overcome one another. India is still in concern to employ war on Pakistan with self-made accusations of terrorism and frustration in India by Pakistan. In the context of war threats, the Pakistani government is in concern to satisfy the public through cartoons as Pakistan is winning the diplomatic and ideological war. It can also be concluded that through words and images of cartoons, the intellectual and developmental supremacy and victory of Pakistan is described to take the favour and sympathy of the public.

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