

POLITICAL CARTOONS PRACTICE IN NIGERIA AND ESSENTIAL COMPONENTS

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Abstract

With the impact of technological mediation on the current socio-political landscape, political cartoons have evolved into a potent medium for educating and addressing critical political issues online and have thus become the ideal contemporary tool embraced by cartoonists for expressing their frustrations, grievances, and opposing views against hardheaded political figures and leaders. This study investigated the components that constitute political and editorial cartoons in Nigeria. It is anchored on the Visual Metaphor Theory and adopts a mixed approach of qualitative descriptive research which explores political bias, symbolism, exaggeration, irony, labelling and analogy as critical components of an ideal political cartoon piece. Using semiotic and comparative analysis descriptive techniques with secondary data, this research reinforces the meaning and context inherent in political cartoons. The findings in this paper reveal the important role political bias, symbolism, exaggeration, irony, labelling and analogy play as key components of political cartoons and shed light on their relevance. This paper adds to the body of knowledge on political cartoon practice in Nigeria and provides insight into the milieu for practicing and aspiring cartoonists and educators who teach the art of political cartooning.

Keywords: Cartoons, Components of Cartooning, Editorial Cartoons, Political Cartoons, Visual Metaphor

Introduction

Long before civilization, early man utilised pictures and sketching to represent and describe his moods, feelings, thoughts, and adventures; today, visuals continue to attract mankind. In addition, humans' urge to make images that convey and capture thoughts has inspired some of the most brilliant cartoon artwork and popularised the discipline. As a result, whether animated or printed, humorous or serious, realistic or fictitious, entirely amusing or purely satiric, cartoons remain a broad medium of artistic and creative expression.

Cartooning is the process of creating pictures and drawings that look comical, sarcastic, or

distorted. According to contemporary literature, cartooning is a drawing or sequence of drawings that makes a point or tells a joke or narrative about human activities and habits, political and historical events, fads, trends, and sports issues.

Political cartoons, also known as editorial cartoons, are an age-old endeavour by cartoonists to use graphic critique and cynicism to explain some aspect of political behaviour, vice, or foolishness to encourage the audience to better understand and criticise socio-political issues. In this graphic and creative method of communication, caricature, humour, irony, and satire are

employed as expressive elements that convey the artist's impression of political situations.

In Nigeria, the rise of political cartoons can be traced back to Akinola Lasekan's (1916–1972) work with the leading Nigerian Pilots Newspaper and his resistance, revolt, and nonconformist stance against the authoritarian rulership of the colonial lords in the early imperial era, which transitioned into agitation for Nigerian independence in the 1930s.

Political cartoon

Political cartoons are cartoon illustrations that parody political and public figures using exaggeration and sarcasm to express the artist's opinion about their bad behaviour, foolishness, and blunders. They are single-panel drawings that comment on current events and policies. They contribute to the definition and recording of significant problems in political debate, resulting in a "microcosm" of the political milieu at a given moment. (Jimoh, 2010).

According to Lee and Goguen (2003), political cartoon practice can be traced to the 16th century with evidence of drawings used in the theological debates of the Reformation. Additionally, evidence of the practice is traceable to James Gillray in England amid the thriving Industrial Revolution of the 18th century. James Gillray was a famous British caricaturist and satirical printer who significantly contributed to the growth and acceptance of political cartoons in England during the late 18th and early 19th centuries (Britannica.com, 2023). Editorial or political cartoons were initially offered in print shops as individual prints before reaching widespread recognition throughout the globe.

In contemporary practice, most political cartoons are viewed as editorials on the front pages of newspapers, magazines, or online blogs and on the social handles of both publishers and cartoonists, who conjure them as mediums for expressing complicated political matters most humorously so that viewers can comprehend them better.

Moreso, political cartoons are becoming increasingly popular in Nigeria, owing to their ability to help viewers adapt their political fury when they encounter such amusing artwork. From Akinola Lasekan, who addressed colonial injustice through political cartoon satire, to Josia Akanbi and the likes of Joy Ajiboye, Ade Ogundero Bayoor Odunlana, Mooyiwa Original, Kenny Adamson, Mooyiwa Collins, Chins Nworjih, Sanm, Cliff Ogingo, Dele Jegede, and the more contemporary cartoonists like Mike Asukwo, Mustapha Bulama, Kenny Tosh (pen name, Kenny Mation), and Ohams Albert, to mention a few, the tome of political cartoon works is in no doubt a pointer to its relevance in the Nigerian socio-political landscape.

Political cartoon development in Nigeria

While most of the precolonial African cartoon technique was inspired by tradition and socio-cultural practices, satirical portrayals were generated from African folklore and archetypes" and used to elucidate difficult messages. In Nigeria, historical documents show that foundational works in illustration and cartooning were evident in the works of leading illustrators, cartoonists of foreign origins, and advertising agencies such as West African Publicity Limited, a brainchild of United African Company (UAC), and Lever Brother International, which later became "Lever International Advertising Services" (LINTAS) as early as the 1920s. The West African Publicity Company served colonial businesses both at home and abroad from its base in Lagos, which housed advertising firms like "Ogilvy, Benson, and Mather (OB&M), Graham and Gills (G&G), Advertising and Marketing Services (AMS), Grant Advertising, Auger & Turne, and others (Olatunji, 2018).

As noted by Jimoh, cited in Fasunon (2018), Akinola Lasekan (1916–1972), one of Nigeria's "Fathers of Contemporary Art," pioneered modern cartooning through the West African Newspaper, founded in 1937

by Nnamdi Azikiwe. As a graphic illustrator for the newspaper house, Lasekan's political cartoons echoed the people's agitations and became a vehicle for criticising the oppressive policies of the Colonial masters and advocating for Nigeria's independence; thus, indigenous political cartooning became a mainstay in the Nigerian cartooning landscape.

Following the post-independence political upheavals and military coups, cartooning became a vehicle for addressing Nigeria's socio-cultural and political issues, along with denouncing repressive military and civilian administrations. This new wave of creative protest using illustrative cartoons quickly evolved into a movement and gave rise to the golden age of Nigeria's illustration and cartoon era that merged concept cartooning with political satires, which soon became a muse for the then cartoonists as well as a strong voice that exposed Nigerian politicians' ill agendas for the electorate. The late 1970s and '80s further saw the use of cartoons as a viable tool for product advertising, as cartooning soon experienced less controversial themes after the Civil War. In the past, the use of unmanned aerial

and expanded to action adventures and multiple panels called comic strips, which were used to tell stories and advertise products; notably were "Kaptain Afrika" by Andy Kman and "Terror Muda" by Kola Fayemi, which featured in the Vanguard Daily Newspaper in the 1970s and 1980s. (Jimoh, 2019; Fasunon, 2018; Pijnaker, 2018).

Current socio-political issues in Nigeria are no stranger to cartoonists' creative impulses and impressions, as well as their interpretations of political diegesis, which helped shape voters' political consciousness and biases regarding political aspirants, power grabbers, and political parties' agendas. As a result, this article looks into the key components of editorial cartoons in Nigeria's political landscape. It accomplishes this by evaluating key variables that are taken into account while creating political cartoon works intended to persuade and change public opinion and employing descriptive narratives and observational findings from the existing works of current cartoonists in Nigeria.

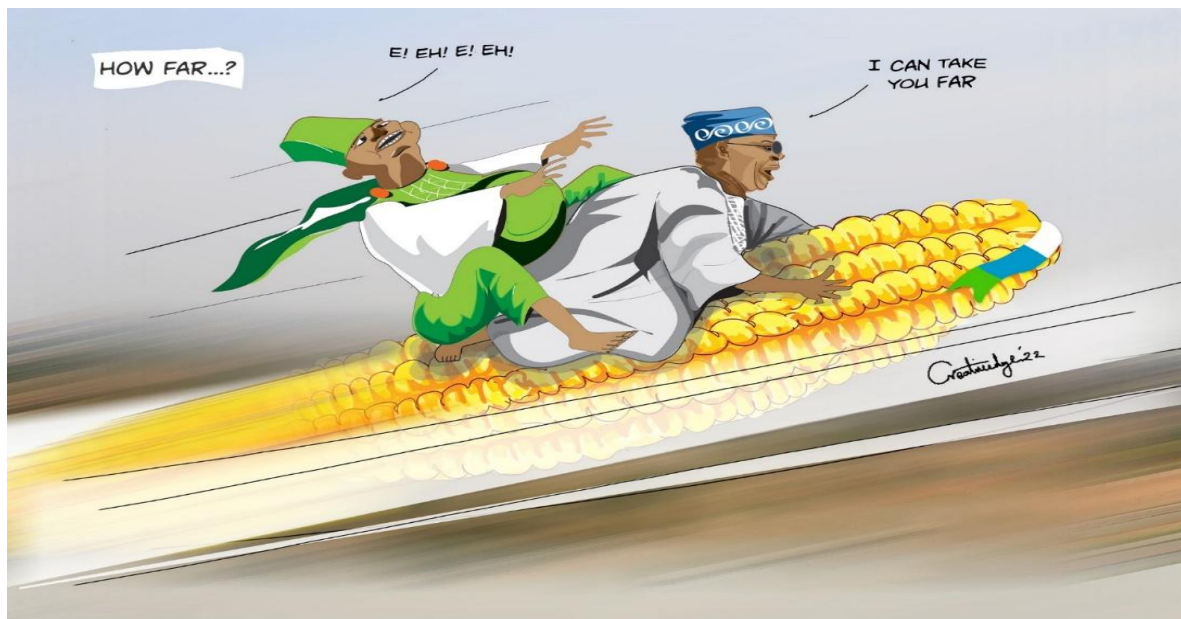


Figure 1: A political cartoon depicting the artist's impression of the viral verbose 'Agbado' which thrived during the 2023 election campaign period

Source: Toluwani (2022)

The popular political satire phrase Agbodo, which Nigerian voters used as a parody of one of the presidential contenders in the just concluded 2023 elections, is shown in Figure 1. In an attempt to make a sarcastic point, the artist overstated the importance of maize (called Agbodo in the Yoruba dialect), a seasonal cereal grain that is a staple food in Nigeria, and cynically represented it as the centrepiece of a political party's campaign. The cartoon's depiction shows 'Nigeria' (represented by an exaggerated cartoon character) and the intended political candidate having a symbolic conversation on 'how far their journey and union would go'. Their conversation offers a counterargument to claims made by the opposition party as voters' head to the polls and is intended to elicit objections or rejections on the subject matter. Symbolism, irony, labelling, exaggeration, and analogy were employed in the cartoon piece in Figure 1 as compelling tools and show the power of political cartoons as a metaphor for influencing public opinion and bringing up issues and discussions, narratives, and counter-narratives that would otherwise go ignored.

Statement of the Problem

While there have been several expressions of cartoon arts and literature that emphasise the importance of cartoons in the development and presentation of Nigeria's sociopolitical topics, few works of literature have dug into identifying the components that promote a compelling political cartoon. Furthermore, with the rise of expressive social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, Pinterest, Ticktok, WeChat, and Twitter that aid in the dissemination of cartoons in Nigeria, many may mistake the practice of political cartooning for mere artistic aesthetics. As a result, there is a need to identify the components to consider while illustrating political cartoons so that both practitioners and cartoon enthusiasts can understand them and use them appropriately, thus contributing to the creation of a better body of political cartoon works in Nigeria.

Research Question

To effectively understand the relevance of the topic of this paper and perform the relevant qualitative analysis accurately, the following questions were asked:

1. What are the key components that promote a compelling political cartoon?
2. How do these components influence the features of a political cartoon?
3. Why are the components of political cartoons significant in understanding the message behind political cartoons?

Literature Review

Cartoons and humour

In Obadare's views, laughter denotes an unofficial and subversive way of expression, a release in the face of restraints, and is the primary response to all humorous-artistic expressions, including cartoons. Obadare (2009) noted that humour is also important in how ordinary people cope with societal ills, as well as how they negotiate, shape, and challenge the public sphere of critical discourse. Over the years, Nigerian artists have not only sought out ways to critique and avow their rebellion against oppressive and repressive leaders but have also developed creative ways to display and register their contemplation about the ill-fated actions of such leaders when they display their political folly. This they did by using music, paintings, poetry, drama, and cartoon expression shrouded in visual metaphors.

Based on the foregoing, Obadare (2009) asserted that humour's ability to upset the social fabric and disrupt hegemonic narratives has been visible in Nigerian political situations. Jimoh (2019) argued that cartoons, as a substantive medium of artistic expression, have been a powerful weapon against tyrannical leadership through the ages and played an important role in highlighting the upheavals that greeted Nigeria's post-independence and that their place in contemporary politics remains valid as a metaphoric language for political narratives

and counter-narratives. Akande (2022:2, in Jimoh 2019) equally agreed that the use of cartoons in any political context remained a virtual tool for commenting on current political situations and discussions.

Jimoh demonstrated that a contextual study of cartoon works is possible by contextualising how the artist uses components such as humour, irony, and labelling, among others, to evoke counter-narratives against the prevailing government plots about socio-political issues on socio-media platforms in his discussion of Etim Bassey Asukwo's cartoon works. Adejuwon and Alimi (2011) also reiterated the potency of political cartoons when they submitted that cartoons have an instructional role and have proven to be a valuable instrument and channel for educating readers on every platform where they appear.

Therefore, the above submissions by Obadare (2009) and Jimoh (2019) on this subject matter strengthen the perspective of this paper and position it to seek out the necessary key elements of a compelling political cartoon and their connections to creative expressions, as well as how these, when used, improve understanding of socio-political narratives.

Satirical narrations in Nigerian political cartoons

Metaphors and satire have long been potent tools in communication, using exaggeration, irony, or mockery to expose and criticise people's vices and folly, particularly in modern political situations. The colonial lords did not allow the publication of local cartoons in their newspapers before independence, but the establishment of local newspapers, particularly the West African Pilot established by Nnamdi Azikiwe in 1937, provided a much-needed platform for cartoonist Akinola Lasekan (1916–1974) to creatively expose the colonial lord's misgivings, which helped stir up agitation for Nigerian independence (Jimoh, 2010).

LeBoeuf (2007) posits that satire, in addition to being a powerful art form capable of pointing out flaws in certain human behaviours and social issues, can also shield the cartoonist from criticism because it is often metaphoric rather than overtly stated; thus, it is a weapon for nonconformists who want to resist repressive political times. M.D. Fletcher (as cited in LeBoeuf, 2007) also agreed that it connotes verbal aggression. However, the only difference is that these aggressions are depicted as illustrated sarcasm that ridicules rather than direct vocal attacks. LeBoeuf (2007) went on to list criticism, irony, and implicitness as essential characteristics of satire.

1. **Criticism:** Satire is usually a criticism of some aspect of human conduct, vice, or foolishness to convince the audience to see it with scorn and, as a result, to inspire some type of societal reform.
2. **Irony:** Satire employs irony, frequently in a hilarious manner, to highlight the flaws in the conduct being criticised.
3. **Implicitness:** Satire is neither an overt assertion nor does it arrive at an express judgement; rather, the criticised conduct deconstructs itself inside the satirical work by being manifestly silly, most commonly because it is exaggerated or removed from its regular setting.

Based on the foregoing, the researchers opine that criticism, irony, and implicitness were critical in the adoption of political cartoons for combating Nigeria's repressive military juntas in post-independence Nigeria and relevant to understanding the practice of political cartoons in contemporary Nigeria's socio-political space.

Essential components of political cartoon

Since Adejuwon and Alimi (2011) assert that the primary function of cartoons, like any educational construct, is to educate and enlighten viewers, it is critical that the components that comprise their creation be clarified so that practitioners understand how and what to employ in creating a persuasive

cartoon piece. The following are therefore listed as essential components of political cartooning:

Political bias

Every political cartoonist has a political bias on which to base their political inputs, inferences, and positions. This might be cultural, ethical, religious, or political, and it provides a clue for interpreting the cartoonist's art. Jimoh (2019) revealed Mike Asukwos; political bias when he analysed his work "Riding Out the Storm" (Figure 2).

Political bias aids political cartoon reviewers and critics in swiftly arriving at work summaries by identifying where the cartoonist is coming from. Mustapha Bulama is another political cartoonist who shows political bias in his cartoons.

Symbolism

The use of an abstract expression to denote a clear meaning in cartoons is referred to as symbolism. It may also apply to the use of items or symbols to depict a person, thing, or emotion. In Africa, symbols are used in several ways to denote rights, traditions, or instructions. Therefore, to represent more abstract thoughts or ideas, cartoonists employ semiotic expressions, objects, signs, cyphers, markings, or emblems. Viewers are encouraged to recognise these symbols in political cartoons, consider their significance, and deduce what the cartoonist intended for each symbol. For instance, the symbolism of a ferocious wild cat eating its prey at the whim of a political leader who showed no care was created to represent insecurity in the country and the insensitivity of the government, as seen in Figure 3 above.

Exaggeration

Exaggeration is a crucial component of caricature and is the foundation on which all other elements of visual appeal in political cartoons rest. Characters' attributes are occasionally disproportioned to provoke comedy. The artist may enlarge, raise, or decrease a character's features so that they

look comically bigger or smaller in size. While maintaining a degree of likeness, this essential feature appeals to viewers who frequently find the caricature humorous. As a result, features including facial expressions, clothes, the head, hands, and limbs become exaggerated. Cartoonists often attempt to hide meanings within exaggerations; hence, viewers should take care to comprehend them.

Irony

The difference between how things should be and how they appear or are seen is called irony; it is the communication of one meaning via the use of syntax that symbolises another. In political cartooning, artists infer a notion but go ahead to represent it in another way using imagery that is the opposite. This is done to lighten up the punchiness of the cartoon and play down the criticism while still passing on the sarcasm.

Labelling

Labelling in a political cartoon refers to the intentional tagging or captioning of individuals, objects, and events to denote their intended meaning and emphasis. They serve to clarify and simplify the meaning of a cartoon's context for the audience.

Analogy

Political cartoonists juxtapose two unrelated concepts that have some characteristics using analogies. This shows that while the political issue being addressed is unique, the cartoonist's perception of the issue may share certain commonalities, which may help readers and viewers of political cartoons comprehend the topic in a new and clearer way.

It is therefore imperative to note that the components: political bias, symbolism, exaggeration, irony, labelling, and analogy, are the key components of a political cartoon and that each plays a significant role in making a political cartoon meaningful and viable. Whether in academics or practice, it remains essential that practitioners

understand how they function and know how to adapt them to enhance the features of their political cartoon pieces and education.

Methodology and Theoretical Anchorage

This paper adopts a mixed-method approach to provide insight into the components needed for a viable political cartoon and uses secondary data to buttress its position. It adopted the semiotic analysis approach as a qualitative technique for explaining signifiers and connoted meanings of symbols, characters, signs, objects, and colours used in the adopted cartoon pieces. This research also employed comparative analysis as a technique to study the phenomenon of political bias, symbolism, exaggeration, irony, labelling, and analogy and how they interplay in political cartoon art. The researchers compared how the above components played out in Mike Asukwo and

Mustapha Bulama cartoon pieces, respectively, and created associations for the conveyor of specific ideas and criticisms.

Theoretically, this paper is grounded in the Visual Metaphor Theory, which emboldens the practice of representing concepts through visuals that allude to a certain relationship or similarity. It refers to the use of visual elements, such as images, symbols, and graphics, to convey meanings that go beyond their literal representations. Hence, to examine how political bias, symbolism, exaggeration, irony, labelling, and analogy interplay in the description of political cartoons, recognisable semiotics in the adopted cartoon were alluded to evoke their contributions to the overall sociopolitical narrative in Nigeria.

Semiotic analysis of Mike Asukwo’s cartoon

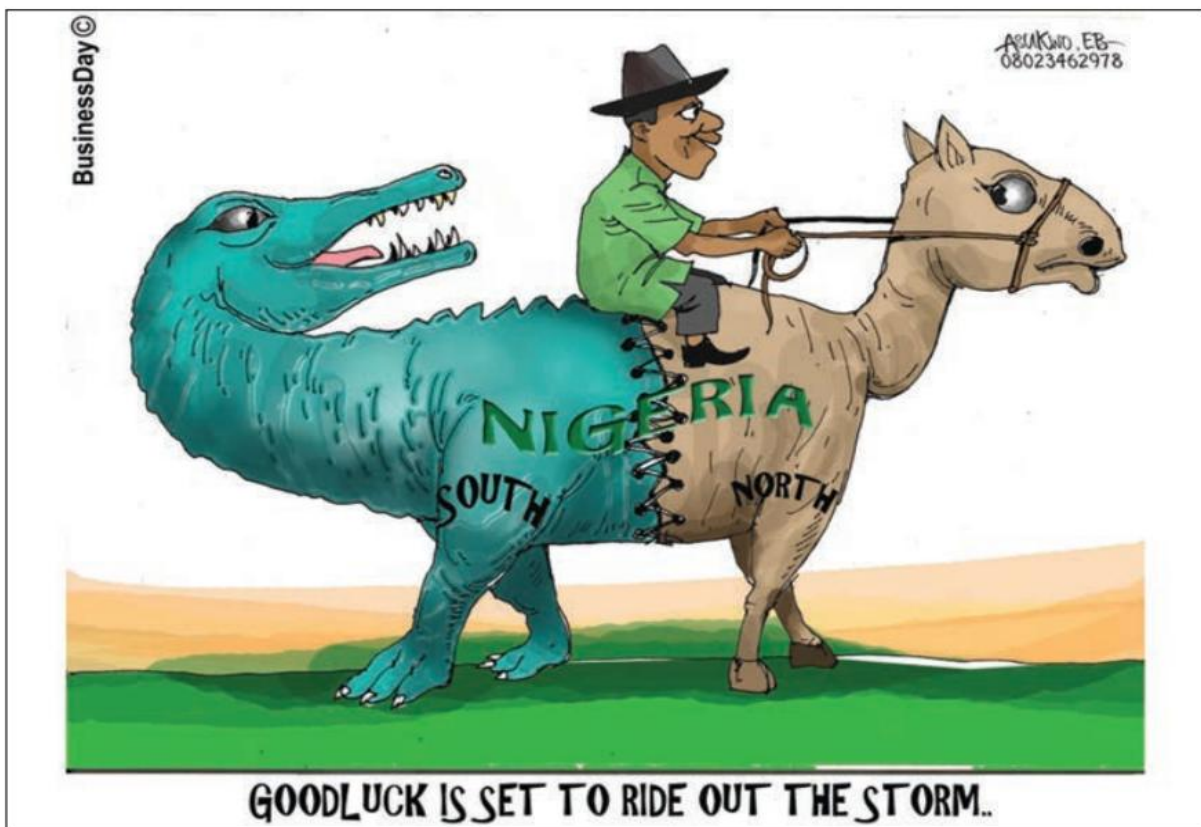


Figure 2: A political satirical cartoon symbolizing the impossible Siamese suturing of two opposing regions within the nation called Nigeria

Source: Asukwo (2011)

Signs and elements in Mike Asukwo's cartoon The identified semiotics are presented in Table 1.

Table 1: A Semiotic perspective and components of Mike Asukwo's political cartoon connotation.

1	Signifiers	Signified	Connotation
	Crocodile	Land and water reptilian	Smartly ravenous
	Camel	Desert mammal animal	Unassumingly domineering and patient
	Miniature caricature of a male figure	President Jonathans	Power broker figure
	Siamese suturing	Cajoling	Forced Unity
	Green land	Abundance	National Resources
	Identity codes	Political bias, symbolism, exaggeration, irony, labelling and analogy	
2	Identified themes and patterns	Bad political gamble	
3	Cultural Analysis	Crocodiles would thrive more in the riverine grooves of the south, where President Jonathan presumably is from, but he is seen riding a camel from the north and facing the north. The scenario thus portrays his government as a north-driven or north-centre one.	

Analysis of relationships, context and interpretation of connotations in Mike Asukwo's political cartoon

Etim Bassey Asukwo, whose pen name is Mike Asukwo, is a well-known Nigerian chief executive cartoonist for Business Day Nigeria. His cartoons are sharp, sardonic, and satirical of the political elite. Asukwo's piece *Goodluck is Set to Ride the Storm* encourages his audience to reflect on the impossible Siamese suturing of two opposing regions within the nation called Nigeria, which he symbolically represented with mammal and reptilia animals that live in opposing habitats. Poised by his political bias regarding issues affecting his place of origin—the South—Asukwo's brazen approach to this piece metaphorically illustrates how practically impossible it is for a crocodile and a camel to be cojoined or live harmoniously despite having the ability to both foster on green land. Asukwo provided a semiotic satirical Siamese suturing to exemplify the folly surrounding the foundation of the Nigerian state. His exaggerated analogy further shows

the perennial hegemony of the northern region of the country, portrayed by the forward riding posture of the camel rider towards the north (the labelled President Goodluck Jonathan), over the southern part, represented by a carnivorous reptilian (indicating the threats emanating from the region), and how frustrating this union is. Jimoh (2019) reiterated Asukwo's views above when he noted that:

Asukwo's symbolic adoption of two separate animal species from various habitats (representing the south and the north) sutured in the middle like Siamese twins shows that Nigeria's unity was flawed from the start. He argues that, even though the land is green, no meaningful movement can be accomplished because these two creatures are travelling in different directions.

Asukwo's depiction of the animal's eye-view juxtaposed with that of the rider shows the inclination of a rider with no clue to the

incompatibility of his vehicular apparatus. The miniature exaggeration of the figure of the rider also points to the *bigotry* of the Nigerian elite within the bigger context of the needs of the Nigerian state. Asukwo's political bias spared no words in directly labelling his cartoon subject. This gag cartoon provides an editorial caption that evokes name-calling and points viewers to both the subject and object of his satirical analogy.

The researchers deduced that this ironical political cartoon tackles the Nigerian leadership's ineptness and stereotypical policies in addressing the challenges of the nation that are both political, economic, and socio-cultural. The study hence ties the continual heightened inflation, increase in the vandalism of oil facilities, and youth restiveness in the southern part of Nigeria to the resultant outcomes of the Nigerian style of leadership that encourages the unequal yoke between the northern and southern parts

of the country via a national resource production, management, and distribution formula that keeps the south underserved.

The above summation, therefore, points to how the aforementioned components (political bias, symbolism, exaggeration, irony, labelling, and analogy) aid effective communication, interpretation, and understanding of political cartoons through visual metaphors and how these features lead viewers to the cartoonists' intended interpretations when enshrined. It further provides a basis and standard for critiquing political cartoon pieces. The researchers opine that modern practitioners should try to approach their political cartoon creation process with these components in mind as opposed to the proliferated political cartoon pieces observed both online and offline in the Nigerian sociopolitical cartoon space.

Semiotic analysis of Mustapha Bulama's cartoon

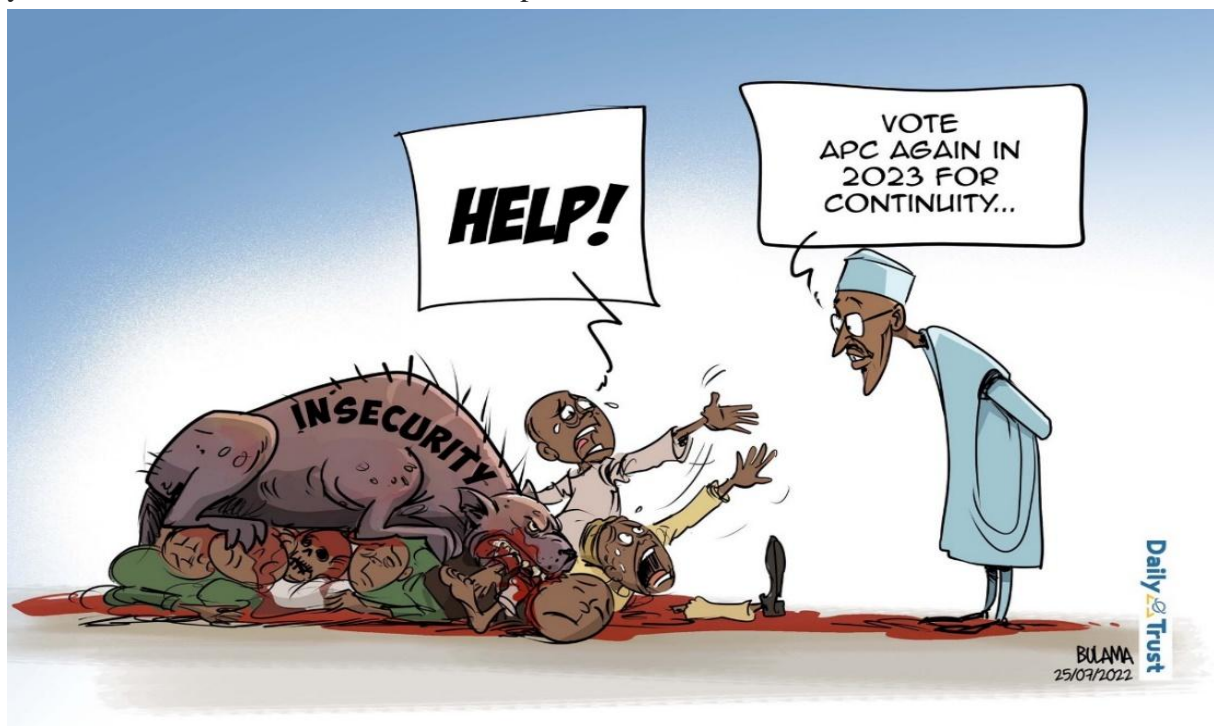


Figure 3: A satirical political cartoon showing a critic of the ruling party and its leadership on matters regarding national security

Source: Bulama (202)

Signs and elements in Mustapha Bulama's cartoon

The identified semiotics are presented in Table 2.

Table 2: A Semiotic perspective and components of Mustapha Bulama's political cartoon connotation

1	Signifiers	Signified	Connotation
	Ravenous beast	Insecurity challenges	Government losing the war on insecurity
	Miniature caricature depiction of helpless and gobbled humans	Helpless Nigerian masses	Wailings, deaths, sorrow, and cries of the victims of terrorism and insecurity in Nigeria
	Miniature caricature of a standing male figure	Former President of Nigeria- (2015-2023)	Power consolidation is the main focus of political officeholders and power grabbers.
	Speech balloon text	Masses needs vs Government need	Insensitivity of leadership to the plight of the citizenry
	Green, white and green attire	Nigeria national identity	Implied national crisis
	Identity codes	Political bias, symbolism, exaggeration, irony, labelling and analogy	
2	Identified themes and patterns	An insensitive government	
3	Cultural analysis	Bulama cynically inferred that insecurity in Nigeria has become a national crisis that cuts across ethnicity, religion, and cultural differences.	

Analysis of relationships, context and interpretation of connotations in Mustapha Bulama's political cartoon

Unlike Basse Asukwo, who had his foundations in fine and applied arts, Mustapha Bulama is a self-taught cartoonist from the northern part of Nigeria with a speciality in political cartoons and children's book illustrations but principally provides editorial cartoons and illustrations for the Nigerian Newspapers Daily Trust and Aminiya, both published by Media Trust Limited. Mustapha Bulama's *political bias* stems from his years of activism against bad leadership, and this has become a key ingredient in understanding his political cartoons. In Figure 3 above, Bulama's political cartoon piece is a hard punch on the indolence of the immediate past regime of President Muhammadu Buhari (2015–2023) and its laidback approach to insecurity challenges in Nigeria. Fueled by the anger emanating from the incessant terrorist attacks in the northern part of Nigeria, Bulama

vividly illustrated monstrous beast-labelled *insecurity* gobbling humans; this exaggerated semiotic imagery portends the veracity of the carnage of insecurity in the northern part of Nigeria.

Bulama, like Basse Asukwo, used symbolism in the adaptation of the beast-crushed humans to convey the suffering masses and their appeal to the government, which he depicted with a caricature depicting the former President looking uncaring about the misery of the masses. The irony of intentions is noticed in the speech balloon response, which pitches political gains against the masses' cry for help. Bulama subtly passes a cryptic message to his viewers that voting for the current political party in the next election (Vote APC again in 2023 for continuity) will only spell doom judging from current realities. His analogy regarding governance and leadership deliverables appears punchy, satirical, unswerving, and vividly unambiguous. His use of political bias, symbolism, exaggeration, irony,

labelling, and analogy as key ingredients in the creation of his political cartoon is equally apt.

Findings

Lee and Goguen (2003), in their paper "A Semiotic Analysis of Political Cartoons", opine that signs draw meaning and significance from the way they interact with other signs in any given semiotic system, and that this allows concepts to be contrasted against each content within a given system. By implication, the contrasting of concepts against content within a given political cartoon helps viewers arrive at an analysis of the entire semiotic component used.

Findings from the adopted cartoons and the semiotic connotation deduced from Figure 1 and Figure 2 above descriptively showcase:

1. The use of political bias, symbolism, exaggeration, irony, labelling, and analogy as key ingredients in the creation of concepts and contents for political cartoons, as seen in Mike Asukwo and Mustapha Bulama cartoons (Goodluck is Set to Ride the Storm and My Today Cartoon | Help!), This is the focus of this research.
2. Both Cartoons "Signifiers" and "Signified" fundamentally were represented using semiotic concepts: the Siamese suturing of two opposing regions symbolically represented by a mammal and reptilia animal that live in opposing habitats and the representation of monstrous beast-labelled insecurity gobbling humans who longed for help but instead got a vain response from their political saviour, which conveyed meanings that went beyond the use of visual metaphors and thus became a language that readers and viewers could understand easily because it provided political bias, symbolism, exaggeration, irony, labelling, and analogy that viewers could infer.
3. The connotations of both cartoons also pointed to the apathy and recklessness of government as an agency of power.

Asukwo's cartoon in Figure 1 points us to the enigma that cuts deep into the foundation of our nation as a people and the evasive approach to dealing with the causative factors of national ills by the government; Bulamahs' cartoon, on the other hand, showcased the inferred consequences of Asukwo's analogy and the plight of the masses in the face of a selfish government. This corroborates the function of visual metaphors and how they contrast concepts with content to arrive at meanings. (Lee and Goguen, 2003). More so, the use of symbolism, exaggeration, irony, labelling, and analogy allows the cartoonist to aid the viewer in arriving at a political view of the political situation.

4. These critiques and analyses further provide answers to the research question stated earlier in this paper. It itemised political bias, symbolism, exaggeration, irony, labelling, and analogy as significant components of political cartoons and stated how they influence the features of any political cartoon practice.

This research paper further shows thematic findings as follows:

Empirical basis: The analysis of two existing published and documented political cartoons by Etim Mike Asukwo and Mustapha Bulama served as empirical data for this research. The cartoons were comparatively analysed and interpreted to validate the influence of political bias, symbolism, exaggeration, irony, labelling, and analogy in political cartoons.

Objective and unbiased: Political bias, symbolism, exaggeration, irony, labelling, and analogy aided objective interpretations of the political cartoons; the qualitative semiotic analysis equally helped to arrive at a subjective meaning to the characteristics of the political cartoons.

Relevance: Findings proved that the components listed (political bias, symbolism,

exaggeration, irony, labelling, and analogy) are essential and relevant to both the interpretation and illustration of a viable political cartoon.

Contextualized: The context of the research and the available data obtained in this study points to the style of governance and leadership in Nigeria and the authority's attitude towards the masses. This is expressed in the supporting data and its analysis in Tables 1 and 2.

Interpretation: Interpretations of selected cartoons are based on the application of political bias, symbolism, exaggeration, irony, labelling, and analogy with the symbolism inherent in the political cartoon pieces.

Contribution to Knowledge: This research thus establishes the important role political bias, symbolism, exaggeration, irony, labelling, and analogy play in the creation of political cartoons and stresses its application in contemporary studies and practice in Nigeria's political cartoon space.

Conclusion

Political cartoons as artistic caricature illustrations make fun of politicians and the sociopolitical terrain of society by emphasising its political shortcomings and elite impropriety. It uses political bias, symbolism, exaggeration, irony, labelling, and analogy to sell the cartoonist's viewpoint to viewers. These one-panel cartoons provide comments on current events and policy as well as aid in defining and documenting hot-button issues in political debate, giving readers a clear picture of the political landscape at a given moment and helping the artist humorously present controversial issues.

Political bias, symbolism, exaggeration, irony, labelling, and analogy are fundamental components that the cartoonist adapts to foster viable political cartoon pieces. Hence, practitioners need to possess good knowledge about them.

The findings of this research suggest that when effectively deployed, political bias, symbolism, exaggeration, irony, labelling, and analogy can help dignify the contrasting of semiotic objects against the contents within the visual metaphor and analogy presented by the artist. Thus allowing viewers to conceive the right meaning and interpretation of any political cartoon piece.

It is anticipated that the knowledge in this article will help professionals create political cartoons that are more potent and empower cartoon educators in Nigeria to teach political cartoon lessons better.

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