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US Foreign Policy during the Presidency of Trump: A Multimodal Discourse Analysis of Selected Political Cartoons in Al-Ahram Weekly

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ABSTRACT

The present study investigates how US foreign policy during the presidency of Donald Trump is represented in the Egyptian political cartoons published in Al-Ahram Weekly Newspaper in Egypt. Political cartoons represent an influential means of expression as they use an accessible means of visual communication and represent current political events in an ideologically shaped way. They are multilayered, with a variety of verbal and non-verbal elements, and they use humor to express the viewpoints in a light manner and avoid censorship. This study analyzes a corpus of twenty cartoons published in Al-Ahram weekly newspaper from January through December 2018. Based on a multimodal discourse analysis, the study finds that political cartoons reflect major global political issues as well as people's reactions towards them. This is achieved by using various means such as represented participants, objects and settings. It is recommended that further studies tracking political cartoons under different circumstances be applied.

Introduction

Political cartoons are important genre for study. As highlighted by Mateus (2016), "although not always acknowledged, cartoons are a key element of political communication" (p. 195). Oluremi & Ajepe (2016) highlight the importance of political cartoons as "one of the most important weapons in a newspaper's armory of political analysis" (p. 6). Political cartoons are effective form of communication as they are accessible to both literate and illiterate people (Issa, 2016). They represent "various political, cultural and social events in an ideologically shaped viewpoint" and help in releasing tension, as they are a source of social entertainment (Al-Masri, 2016, p. 45). Moreover, political cartoons shed light on the current political landscape and define the current significant issues that are debatable. They "can be seen as argumentative artifacts visually" as they tackle "current political events or personalities" (Mateus, 2016, p. 205).

Political cartoons have been identified as being an effective tool of persuasion. As indicated by Saygin (2017), political cartoons "are both informative and persuasive and they offer people narratives about social problems" (p. 81). Also, Falah et al. (2006) maintain that political cartoons are effective persuasive tool that appeals to people because it uses elements of amusement. Besides being persuasive, political cartoons can open the door to discussing political issues to effect change. Palmeri (2009) indicates that cartoons enable ideas to be embedded in discourse through images that open debate on political issues and changing society. Similarly, Greenberg (2002) states that "political cartoons provide meta-language for discourse about the social order by constructing idealizations of the world" (as cited in Saygin, 2017, p. 81). Another important aspect of political cartoons is that they record history and events through ages. Swanick (2018) maintains that political cartoons "offer a contextualized and highly visual understanding of events that have shaped history" (p. 2). In a similar vein, Calogero and Mullen (2007) indicate that political cartoons "provide a unique form of historical record, capturing and reflecting the prevailing sentiments and opinions of their intended audience" (pp. 108, 109). As such, the importance of studying political cartoons cannot be underestimated.

Since there are various definitions of political cartoons, the present study adopts the definitions offered by Douglas and Malti-Douglas (1994) as well as Padilla (2019). Douglas and Malti-Douglas (1994) define political cartoons as: "an image, usually combined with words … [and is] generally a direct commentary on current events" (p. 60). Similarly, Padilla (2019) asserts that a political cartoon is a specific type of humorous and multimodal communication that aims at entertaining people as well as convincing them as cartoonists use certain tools to express his views in a "disguised and persuasive way".

Political cartoons are important because they challenge authorities. As outlined by Calogero and Mullen (2007), political cartoons are "a form of visual news discourse that frame and communicate social inequities, ideological positions, and political beliefs" (p. 108). Similarly, Cervantes-Altamirano (2012) states that an important feature of political cartoons is exposing decisions and mistakes of political leaders for judgment. Furthermore, Edwards (1995) maintains that political cartoons can identify significant issues of political discourse and "create a record of that discourse as a sort of snapshot of the political climate" (p. 33). Such images create historical and sociological artifacts of events (Goguen, 1999, p. 270). Therefore, political cartoons can be used as a lens through which people can view and interpret political history (Fischer, 1996, Hess & Northrup, 1996). In addition to recording history, political cartoons may "frame" the phenomena by embedding the topic in question in the context of daily life (Greenberg, 2002, Morris, 1993). They reveal "the interrelationships of people, events, and power" (DeSousa & Medhurst, 1982) (as cited in Abdul Jabbar, 2009, p. 54). Examples of such studies include; the analysis of political cartoons that depict the U.S. war on Iraq in 2003 (Falah et al. 2006), the investigating the "facial prominence" of George W. Bush in political cartoons as an indication of power and dominance (Calogero & Mullen, 2007), the depiction of the first lady in Mexican political cartoons (Cervantes-Altamirano, 2012), the communicative power of Portuguese cartoons (Mateus, 2016), the representation of migration and refugees in political cartoons (Saygın, 2017), as well as banned political cartoons from late Ottoman and Republican Turkey (Swanick, 2018).

It is important to note that political cartoons challenge authorities through the use of exaggeration, satire, and humor. Palmeri (2009) points out that exaggeration and satire are among the key features of political cartoons. Satire is vital as it empowers the message delivered by the cartoon. Abdul Jabbar (2009) states that what makes political cartoons more effective is the good balance between "telling things that seem real and true, and using wild imagination, exaggeration and humor" (p. 53). Moreover, Tsakona (2009) suggests that political cartoons employ "humorous mechanisms, such as exaggeration, contradiction, and metaphor to create humor via both verbal and visual means" (p. 1186). Furthermore, the use of humor enables cartoonists to deal with taboo issues. As such, political cartoons are considered "a safe mode" where cartoonists can express accusations and criticize political leadership (Conners, 2005). Examples of these studies include those that investigate political humor in selected Nigerian political cartoons (Oluremi, 2019), the employment of memes and political cartoons by Romanian satirists (Soare, 2019), as well as examining humor in political cartoons that deal with Referendum on the European Constitution in 2005 in the English and Spanish press (Marin-Arrese, 2008).

The above discussion outlined the importance of political cartoons as a genre that is worthy of study. It showed that political cartoons reflect and record the important events that take place on the political arena as well as the reactions of the people towards them. One merit of political cartoons is that they are a "safe mode" for challenging authorities and criticizing leaderships as they are multimodal communication that rely heavily on exaggeration, humor, and satire. As such, the multimodal elements of political cartoons should be investigated.

Analyzing Multimodal Elements of Political Cartoons

Since political cartoons rely heavily on symbols and icons, some studies tackle the semiotic aspect of cartoons. Mazid (2008) investigates semio-linguistic and visual rhetorical tools to examine Arabic political cartoon "construction" of George W. Bush and Osama bin Laden during post 9/11 "war on terror". Along similar lines, Abdul Jabbar (2009) conducts a semiotic study to offer a "semiotic model" for analyzing political cartoons at micro and macro levels. Moreover, Pham (2013) deals with political cartoons of

"European Union on the 2004 enlargement and the 2009-2012 Eurozone debt crisis". Issa (2016) deals with Arabic political cartoons that tackle Charlie Hebdo satirical cartoons that mock Prophet Muhammad. In a similar vein, Sadam (2016), tackles Arabic political cartoons that depict the mocking cartoons of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) by Charlie Hebdo magazine and highlights the prejudice and double standards of the international community and leaderships in the Arab world. Rehman (2018) analyzes selected American cartoons on Islam to unveil the ideologies promoted about Islam and Muslims. Ghilzai (2020) applies a semiotic analysis of political cartoons as they offer a profound understanding of political issues as they deliver the message concisely and humorously.

Besides the semiotic aspect, the cognitive aspect of political cartoons is investigated in the literature. Negro (2010) applies a cognitive approach to study humor in political cartoons on French politics and conducts a cognitive linguistic analysis of humor in political cartoons. Furthermore, Padilla (2019) conducts a cognitive pragmatic study of political cartoons on Greek debt crisis and investigates communication between the cartoonist and readers.

Linguistic aspects as well as pragmatic aspects are also analyzed in some research of political cartoons. Sani et al. (2012) investigate how language is used in Nigerian cartoons to construct satire and call for social and political reform in the country. The study provides insight on the use of language in media discourse to create satire. Oluremi and Ajepe (2016) deal with the pragmatic aspect of Nigerian political cartoons before 2015 elections. The selected cartoons depict the two candidates running for the elections and finds out that Nigerian cartoonists have utilized images to satirize and condemn political figures.

Visual metaphor in political cartoons is tackled by El Refaie (2003) who investigates the 'grammar' of visual metaphor in Austrian newspaper cartoons. Schilperoord and Maes (2009) tackle visual metaphoric conceptualization in editorial cartoons and argue that visual metaphor is persuasive, and it has a multimodal nature as it uses both visual and verbal signs. Gajanayake (2014) examines message delivering in Sri Lankan political

cartoons and applies visual metaphor analysis, to unveil the strategies used to deliver the message encoded in the cartoons. Similarly, Baek (2016) investigates visual metaphorical conceptualization of Syrian refugees' crisis in political cartoons in 2015. Furthermore, Krstić et al. (2019) sheds light on visual metaphor and authoritarianism in Serbian political cartoons to show cartoons serve as "a counter-discourse and an instrument of counter-power to the regime and the media under the regime's control" (p. 21).

Because political cartoons rely on imagery as well as wording to communicate their messages, it is important that studies of political cartoons analyze their multimodality. Kress and Van Leeuwen (2001) define "multimodality" as "the use of several semiotic modes in the design of a semiotic product or event" (p. 20). O'Halloran (2011) argues that MDA involves a shift from the study of language alone to the study of the integration of language with other resources (p. 121). Such "resources" are referred to as "semiotic resources", "modes" and "modalities" and involve "language, image, music and gesture, which integrate across sensory modalities (visual, auditory, and tactile) in multimodal texts, discourses, and events" (O'Halloran, 2011, p.121). As such, the multimodal approach stresses the fact that meaning is not only communicated by language but also by many other modes such as images, gesture, posture, gaze, and color.

Nevertheless, studies of political cartoons that employ multimodal discourse analysis are scarce. One such study that addresses both verbal and non-verbal elements of political cartoons is Al-Masri (2016), who applies a multimodal discourse analysis to study Jordanian editorial cartoons drawn by Emad Hajjaj from 2008 to 2014. He stresses the importance of the three types of contexts for understanding the message being conveyed by the cartoon: macro-context, micro-context and dynamic context. Similarly, Sarwat and Naveed (2018) apply a multimodal critical discourse approach to examine the ideological representations of the relations between Pakistan and Iraq in political cartoons in 2001. His study draws on Machin (2007) along with van Leeuwen's framework for re-contextualization (2008) and Fairclough's (2003) framework for visual and linguistic analysis of the political cartoons to explore the hidden ideologies.

The present study addresses the dearth of multimodal studies of political cartoons, through an analysis of how Egyptian political cartoons depict American foreign policy in 2018, during the presidency of Donald Trump. The year 2018 is selected because President Trump began his presidency inauguration in 2017 and his foreign policy cannot be clearly determined during the first year of taking the office. However, the second year of his presidency can be investigated through the use of political cartoons as it reflects his policies and resolutions regarding key issues taking place all over the world.

Methodology

The study analyzes twenty English cartoons published from January 2018 to December 2018 by Al-Ahram Weekly newspaper. Al-Ahram Publishing House was founded on the 5th of August 1875 and is the second oldest newspaper after al-Waqa'i`al-Masriya (The Egyptian Events, founded 1828). It is majority owned by the Egyptian government". Al-Ahram Weekly, the English version of Al-Ahram newspaper, was established in 1991 by Al-Ahram Publishing House in Cairo (Mohammed, 2017, pp. 109, 110). This newspaper was selected because it is an influential newspaper that has wide readership in Egypt. The Middle East Institute described Al-Ahram, in 1950, as "being to the Arabic-reading public within its area of distribution, 'What The Times is to Englishmen and The New York Times to Americans', however it has often been accused of heavy influence and censorship by the Egyptian government" (Arab.Org website).

The study applies an eclectic approach that draws on O'Halloran (2011), Kress and Van Leeuwen (2001), Van Dijk (2008), Machin (2007), Calogero and Mullen (2007), as well as Van Leeuwen (2008). The analysis investigates the content of the analyzed cartoons by investigating the macro context (Van Dijk, 2008), then it examines the four carriers of connotation which are participants, setting, poses and objects (Machin, 2007), facial prominence (Calogero & Mullen, 2007) and over-determination (Van Leeuwen, 2008).

The theory of contexts views context as "a special kind of mental model of everyday experience" (Van Dijk, 2008, p. 71). The theory identifies three sub-categories of contexts:

- The macro-context which refers to the socio-cultural mode or the general knowledge shared between the cartoonist and his readers. It includes a set of values, beliefs, metaphors, historical awareness and ideologies shared among a community of speakers.
- The micro-context which refers to the verbal mode of the cartoon.
- The dynamic context, refers to the visual mode. (Van Dijk, 2008, p. 56).

Machin (2007) identifies the following carriers of connotation in political cartoons: participants, settings, poses and objects. The first carrier of connotation is "participants" which focuses on how people are depicted in political cartoons and what they are doing. Settings is the second one and it is a vital carrier of connotation as they are used to connote "discourses and their values, identities and actions" (p. 31). As for poses, they are referred to by Machin (2007) as "a semiotic resource that can be used for their meaning potential. We must pay careful attention to these when we wish to understand what kinds of people are depicted in the image" (p. 31). Objects transform "meanings that connote the particular context and work in combination with other semiotic resources to communicate meanings". In a similar vein, Kress and Van Leeuwen (2006) point out that "visuals involve both represented participants (those people, places and things depicted in the visual), and interactive participants (the producers, and the receivers of the visual)" (as cited in Kibly & Lennon, 2018, pp. 15, 16).

Another significant aspect in the framework of analysis of political cartoons is "facial prominence and "overdetermination". As outlined by Calogero and Mullen (2007), "facial prominence" evokes stereotypes related to head size as the head is usually associated with rational thinking. For Van Leeuwen (1996), exaggeration of certain features is referred to as "over-determination". Overdetermination is used to represent certain points of views that cannot be stated explicitly because of political censorship.

Findings and Discussion

In this section the data of the study is analyzed according to the tools of analysis outlined in the previous section. The selected cartoons deal with a number of issues (i.e. macro contexts) regarding U.S foreign policy. It contains six issues or themes which are: the Trump foreign policies, USA bias to Israel, USA & Syria, USA & China, USA as a major power & the Middle East, USA with Iran, Iraq & Libya. Each one of these issues has its carriers of connotations (i.e. participants, setting, poses and objects) that are used skillfully to encode the intended message.

Trump Foreign Policy

The first issue tackled by the selected corpus is "Trump foreign policies" as displayed in figure 1 and 14. Cartoon number 1 depicts President Trump with a question mark on his head and many exclamation marks at the back to allude to his "ambiguous policies". This is indicated by McIntosh (2020) who comments on Trump's administration saying, "it will constantly and deliberately engage in major initiatives in multiple different areas as a means to obfuscate and confuse public actors" (p. 371). Similarly, Black (2018) argues that one of major characteristics of Trump's administration "is that consistency, continuity and clarity are extremely hard to see, not least when it comes to the Middle East" (p. 22). This supports what is portrayed by the cartoon. Figure 14 alludes to "Trump foreign policies" which add fuel to the fire. McIntosh (2020) states that the Trump administration "poses a number of challenges for analysts of politics" (p. 363).

The represented participants of this issue as depicted in figure 1 is President Trump. It is worth noting that the most frequently depicted participant in the analyzed data is former president Trump as he appears eight times in figures 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 8, 12 and 18. In figure 1, Trump's head is portrayed with a huge question mark in order to encode his ambiguous policies and allude to the state of uncertainty that the world is experiencing since the beginning of his presidency. As highlighted by McIntosh (2020), "The Trump administration's politics collapse the past and future, leaving only an indefinite present" (p. 367).

To encode this message, a number of objects are used. The question mark and the exclamation marks are utilized in figure 1 with Trumps head to refer to his strange and unexplainable policies. This is supported by McIntosh (2020) who states that "political observers have noted how the Trump administration has manipulated time and politics such that the rate of significant events and crises appears to be accelerating at an unmanageable and irresistible pace" (p. 383).

Moreover, in figure 14, Lady Liberty who is supposed to carry the torch that symbolizes enlightenment that she sends to the entire world, is depicted to be lighting a bomb. In her left hand, she is holding a tablet that has the name "Trump" instead of the date of the Declaration of Independence adoption. This alludes to the fact that Lady Liberty is following the agenda of Trump who is endangering the history of the United Stated. As outlined by McIntosh (2020), "In the case of the Trump administration, the situation is flipped. America's "past" is precisely what is under threat. The present state of contemporary politics and society challenges and threatens the realization of this past in the present" (p. 375).

USA Bias Towards Israel

The second issue in the cartoons under analysis is that of the "American bias towards Israel" regarding the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. This is a prevailing issue as it is dealt with in nine cartoons of the selected data (i.e. cartoon number 2, 4, 7, 8, 9, 10, 13, 15, 19). As outlined by Black (2018), one of the main elements of the "big picture of the current American posture across the region… is open bias towards Israel over the Palestinians" (p. 23). This issue is dealt with from many perspectives. In cartoon number 2, Trump is depicted as a match head that is making matters worse in the occupied Palestine which is under fire. In cartoon number 4 Trump is portrayed as setting fire in the rope that carries the symbol of peace to refer to the USA bias towards Israel. In cartoon number 7, the topic referred to is the decision taken by Trump to move the US Embassy to Jerusalem after declaring it to be the capital of Israel. This decision was extremely shocking to the Arab world as it is considered recognition of "Israel" as a state. Liebermann (2017) states that "If the United States moved the embassy to Jerusalem, it would mean that the US effectively recognizes Jerusalem as the capital of Israel. That would

overturn 70 years of international consensus, and, many argue, would effectively signal the end of moves to achieve peace between Israelis and Palestinians". Both Figures 8 and 9 allude to using "Veto" by Trump administration against the Palestinians more than once at the Security Council. Commenting on this incident, Besheer (2018) states that "this was the second time the Trump administration had used its veto to block a measure in the council it saw as anti-Israel. The first was in December, when the U.S. was isolated 14-1 in a vote calling for the withdrawal of the Trump administration's recognition of Jerusalem as Israel's capital". Figure 10 depicts the suffering of the Palestinian people as a result of Trump's administration foreign policies. Furthermore, figure 13 deals with the Israeli nation state law that is one of the outcomes of Trump's unprecedented support to Israel. In figure 15, the uncertainty in the future of the Palestinian state is alluded to because each president of the USA used to tackle the issue from a different perspective and take it to a different direction. The suffering of the Palestinian people is depicted in figure 19 as both USA and Israel are hindering any progress of the Palestinian people.

The represented participants who evoke this issue are President Trump as displayed in figures 2, 4, and 8, a Palestinian boy, a Jewish man as well as a Palestinian man. In figure two, Trump is depicted as a match head which is making a fire in the occupied Palestine to allude to Trump administration's bias towards Israel. In figure four, Trump is portrayed standing and wearing Uncle Sam's suit and hat. This is one of the "symbols of patriotism" and is a "personification of the government of the United States of America" (Bell, 2014). As outlined by Bell (2014), Uncle Sam refers to a person called Sam Wilson who was a businessman during the War of 1812. Uncle Sam "was officially adopted as a national symbol of the United States of America in 1950" (Bell, 2014). Trump is holding fire in one of his hands and a rope that has the symbol of peace (i.e. the dove) and there is a solider at the other end of the rope. He looks determined to set fire in that rope to burn the dove and destroy the peace process. In figure 8, Trump is depicted while wearing a classic suit and holding a gun that has just shot a bullet. He is kneeling as if he is checking on a Palestinian martyr who has been bleeding to death.

Moreover, in figure 10 a Palestinian boy is sitting on diadem (i.e. crown) of the Statue of Liberty and holding the Palestinian flag. The boy looks miserable and wretch as he is wearing worn out outfit and his trousers are too loose to cover his body. The misery of the Palestinian boy is evident as he is bare foot, and it seems that the crown of the statue of liberty is thorny as if it is increasing his suffering. This boy is a vivid representation of the suffering of the Palestinian kids because of the American policies and its bias towards Israel.

Furthermore, in figure 13 the represented participant is a Jewish person who is driving a tank that is destroying "Occupied Palestine". He is depicted as a typical Jewish man who has a large nose, a long beard and is wearing a Jewish hat and eyeglasses. He looks cruel and indifferent person. This Israeli anonymous person is a representative of the Israeli aggression in the "Occupied Palestine" as he alludes to the atrocities committed by Israel.

Finally, a Palestinian man appears in figures 8, 15 and 19. In figure 8, a Palestinian martyr is wrapped in the Palestinian flag and as he has been bleeding till death. This refers to the Israeli atrocities in the Occupied Palestine and as a result of Trump's administration bias towards Israel. In Figure 15, a Palestinian man is carrying an exaggerated question mark to allude to the unknown future that the Palestinian people are experiencing through the past decades with various presidents of the USA. The third occurrence of a Palestinian man is in figure 19. The man is leaning as he is carrying an enormously heavy burden. He also has shackles around his legs. One of these shackles has the Israeli star, while the other one is labelled "US". The man looks skinny and vulnerable. He is barefoot, but he is wearing checked black and white Palestinian Keffiyaeh which is a symbol of Palestinian nationalism.

In figure 2, the setting is that of a country whose buildings are on fire. This is labelled as "Occupied Palestine", and there is a box of matches that has the Star of David on it. According to encyclopedia Britannica, "the star was almost universally adopted by Jews in the 19th-century as a striking and simple emblem of Judaism in imitation of the cross of Christianity". The fact that the match box has the Star of David on it speaks volume about the Israeli

atrocities in the Occupied Palestine. Moreover, the head of the matchstick is represented by President Trump to refer to the "US bias towards Israel".

In addition to participants and setting, several objects are used to allude to "USA bias towards Israel". In figure 4, the dove & olive branch are used. The dove is a symbol of peace through ages. According to History Press website, this symbol dates to the era of Noah "when the flood was over, he sent a dove which returned with an olive leaf". In modern ages, Picasso made the dove of peace when he selected it to be the "emblem for the World Peace congress in 1949". The cartoon depicts President Trump getting ready to set fire in the rope that carries the dove that is carrying the olive branch along with its nest and eggs. At the end of the rope, there is a man who happens to symbolize Arabs or Palestinians. The cartoon refers to the peace process and alludes to Trump administration's bias that will destroy the peace process in the region. Moreover, the trashcan and a lamp are used in figure 7. The trashcan has the shape of Uncle Sam's cap with a piece of paper labelled US Embassy. This reflects the reaction of the cartoonists on transferring the American embassy to Jerusalem.

The Palestinian flag is used twice in the selected cartoons. In figure 8 the flag which is a symbol of patriotic feelings is used as a cover for a martyr who is drowned in his blood and seems to be a victim of the Israeli aggressing. In the Arab world, martyrdom is a great honor and those who are killed as martyrs while defending their country are usually wrapped in the flag of their country before their burial as a way of honoring them for sacrificing their lives to defend their country. The use of the gun is highly significant as it is held by President Trump to allude to the use of the Veto in the UN to support Israel's atrocities in the Palestinian territories. Similarly, in figure 9 the victory hand symbol and the Star of David are used. According to unic.edu website, the right hand symbolizes different things than the left one. Right hand symbolizes the rational, conscious and logical, as well as aggressive. As such, the victory hand symbol is used to refer to the aggression of Israel and the support provided by the USA through the use of Veto. The lexical item "Veto" is written with drops of blood to allude to the bloodshed and the martyrs killed.

In figure 10, the Statue of Liberty has a Palestinian kid on its top and it seems that the spikes of the crown are hurting the kid as they are thorny. As highlighted by Lee (2018), the statue of Liberty is a symbol of "hope, freedom and democracy". The crown of lady Liberty has seven spikes that represent the seven seas of the world or the seven continents or they "represent the rays of the sun and show that Lady Liberty is divine" (Lee, 2018).

In figure 19, the Palestinian-Israeli conflict and Trump administration bias is evoked through the use of shackles labelled with US and David Star. The Palestinian man is leaning as the burden is too heavy for him to carry. This is also evoked in figure 13 with the tank that is loaded with weapon destroying the Occupied Palestine. Moreover, the Palestinian man is wearing the Palestinian Keffiyaeh which is an icon of Palestinian solidarity. As indicated by Sheikh (2020), the Palestinian Keffiyaeh is a "cloth with complex political semiotics". She traces back the use of Keffiyaeh in political context and points out that it dates back to "1936-1939 during the Arab Revolt in Palestine". This use became more established in the 1960s as "Former President of Palestine Yasser Arafat became an icon with his distinct style of donning the cloth in every public appearance" (Sheikh, 2020).

USA and Syria

The third issue is that of the policy of the United States with regard to Syria, as shown in figures 3, 5 and 6. The importance of this issue is stressed by Barron and Barnes (2018) as they see that the way in which Trump's administration deals with the Syrian conflict "will shape regional and global politics" (p. 4). In the three figures this same issue is evoked from various perspectives. In figure 3, the cartoon refers to Trump's reaction regarding the situation in Syria. It shows that the only reaction of the American president is to post tweets on Twitter instead of taking a serious action through the United Nations. In figure 5, the cartoon casts doubt on the justifications used by President Trump as a pretext to keep USA troops there. Even though Trump declares that the reason for keeping his troops there is to destroy ISIS, the real motives are different. As highlighted by Barron and Barnes (2018), there are many interests for the United States in Syria such as preventing terrorist attacks targeting any of the USA allies, controlling weapons of mass destruction, as well as containing the influence of the United States enemies

in the region such Iran & Russia. Therefore, the issue of USA and Iran is closely related to that of Syria. This is also reiterated by figure 6 which refers to the destruction of Syria, among other Arab countries, because of the USA policies. As pointed out by Black (2018), "Trump's inimitable style has attracted more attention than the substance of his decisions at home and abroad. Twitter storms and bouts of bombast and bragging come and go but they tend to obscure underlying truths" (p. 22).

The participants depicted to allude to this issue are the cowboy and President Trump. The cowboy symbolizes Americans as shown in figure six. Grigsby (1980) states that "the cowboy as he has been immortalized in American mythology that is of overriding cultural importance" (p. 95). The cowboy is holding two ropes and manipulating it. The two ends of the rope have the Israeli star to allude to the fact that Israel is manipulating the American policies regarding the Arab countries such as Iraq, Libya and Syria. The cartoons also shows that the cowboy has accomplished the task regarding these three countries (Iraq, Libya, and Syria) and is currently working on applying the same agenda with Iran. In figure three, Trump is depicted as Twitter Bird to refer to his tweets regarding the Syrian conflict. Moreover, in Figure five Trump is standing at the Syrian borders while wearing Uncle Sam's suit and hat. He is giving his back to Syria while carrying ISIS members on his shoulders to allude to the protection provided by the Trump administration.

As for the objects used, Twitter Bird (logo) which is used in figure 3 is significant. It alludes to the extensive use of Twitter by Trump. As highlighted by Tweetbinder website, Trump used his Twitter account extensively to speak his mind or declare his coming steps. According to the website, Trump shared nearly "47K original tweets since 2009". This cartoon refers to the aggression against Syria and the reaction of the American president to it. It criticizes the reaction of Trump in an implicit manner. The cartoon uses another symbol which is the globe that looks grumpy and disgusted because twitter bird is dropping feces on it.

USA and China

The fourth issue tackled by the cartoons is that of USA and China trade war. As indicated by Sawnson (2018), "Mr. Trump's threats have been met with vows from China to retaliate". This war of words between the two presidents was depicted as a wrestling match where they both challenge one another as displayed in figure 12.

Since the two rivals in this regard are President Trump and the Chinese President, the two are the represented participants in figure 12. President Trump is depicted while wearing shorts, socks, and shoes, and sitting on a chair getting ready to start wresting with the Chinese President. This denotes the then on-going war of words between Trump and the Chinese president. It also unveils the impression taken regarding this war in the Middle East as it seen as if Mr. Trump is taking the trade-war personally. As outlined by Vaswani (2019), even though Trump believes that his strategies are working and that Beijing is suffering, "The International Monetary Fund has warned that the US-China trade war is the biggest risk to the global economy". On the other hand, the Chinese President is depicted wearing shorts, socks, and shoes, and sitting on a chair getting ready to start wresting with the American President Trump. Moreover, the word "China" is written on his body to identify him. This label is significant as it shows that his rival, Trump, in wresting is well-known as his name is not written.

USA and the Middle East

The fifth issue is that of USA as a major power and the Middle East. This is represented in cartoons number 11, 16, 17, 18 and 20 and is tackled from different perspectives. In figure 11, the economic aspect is evoked as it depicts the people as prisoners who are negatively affected economically. Figure 16 alludes to the political power of the United States, while figures 17 and 18 allude to the deprivation of the resources of the Middle East because of the policies of the USA. Finally, figure 20 deals with the Middle East as a victim of the conflicts between the democratic and the Republican parties. As outlined by McIntosh (2020), "the Trump administration is likely to become even more extreme, violent, and engaged in the pursuit of their personal interest, particularly in the global space" (p. 383).

In figure 11 participants are a group of imprisoned people behind the bars of the USA one-dollar bill. Those people look disappointed and suffering. The way they are depicted alludes to the economic problems that are prevailing because of the policies adopted by Trump administration. However, in figure eighteen, Trump is standing while wearing Uncle Sam's suit and hat. He is depicted as looking at the entire world which is in complete darkness, and he has a power plug to lighten his own country. In figure 20. A skinny barefoot Arab man is about to get smashed under a fight between the Democratic and the Republican parties. As highlighted by Bandow (2020), "Republican hawks in the United States seem determined to be in conflict with everyone all the time". He argues that they "should stop, at least for the moment, creating more enemies". From the perspective of Arabs, conflicts that take place internally between the parties of the United States usually affect the Arab world. As such, reference is made to the suffering of the Arab world as a result of the political struggle in the United States. The Arab man is a representative of the entire Arab world and the dire consequences they bear because of the internal struggle between the two parties in the US.

A number of objects are used to refer to the dominance of the United States such as the big turkey, the chopper and the plug. The turkey is used in figure 16 with the map of the world. According to the History vault website, the turkey is "largest ground nesting bird native to the North American continent, and one that became an early symbol of the New World to the first European settlers". The use of the turkey here with a sign showing that this is the map of the world and legend that points out that the entire world belongs to the United States speaks volume about the treasures of the world and shows that the entire world is controlled by the USA. The fork that will be used to divide the turkey has the $ dollar sign to allude to the dominance of the United States. In figure 17, the chopper that is carrying oil barrel is a USA chopper, while the hand that is seeking help and assistance is that of the Middle East. In Figure 18, the plug is labelled as US plug and is spreading light in the United States, while Trump is looking at the rest of the world which is suffering from darkness.

USA and Iran, Libya, and Iraq

The last issue relates to Iran, Libya and Iraq as displayed in cartoon number 6. Figure 6 refers to the USA intervention and destruction of Iraq, Libya & Syria and alludes to the fact that now its Iran's turn. This attested to what is stated by Black (2018). He indicates that one of the major elements of the American policy in the Middle East region is "a declared determination to confront Iran" (p. 23). Along similar lines, Freedman (2017) states that the Trump administration "has stepped up the pressure on the Iranian leadership by imposing more sanctions because of its continued missile testing" (p. 284). Furthermore, the United States has withdrawn from "multilateral deal that froze the Iranian nuclear program" (McIntosh, 2020, p. 379).

Facial prominence and over-determination are utilized in the selected data. In figure 12, Trump's face is exaggerated to refer to the accelerated policies he adopted and the war of words that is ongoing between Trump and the Chinese president. Saygın (2017) states that "Cartoon is a humor and visual communication art and has the characteristics of identifying a situation by exaggerating it. It exaggerates reality to make people think about it" (p. 80). In figure 15, the question mark that is carried by a Palestinian man is exaggerated. This is highly significant as it refers to the unknown future of Palestine with the various presidents of the USA and their different policies regarding the Middle East peace process. As such, to be able to understand the encoded message in the cartoon, readers should be aware of the up-to-date affairs (Abdul Jabbar, 2009).

Conclusion

Political cartoons are an important genre that is worthy of study as they are one important way of recording history and documenting important events and opinions. The study has applied an eclectic multimodal discourse analysis to examine twenty political cartoons that deal with US foreign policy during the Presidency of Trump. The selected cartoons are published in Al-Ahram Weekly during 2018. The present study offered content analysis of the "issues" dealt with in the analyzed data. The analysis yielded a number of results. First of all, it proved that political cartoons reflect aspects "of social, cultural or political life in a way that condenses reality and transforms it in a

striking, original and/or humorous way" (El Refaie, 2009, p.175). Secondly, the analyzed corpus showed that political cartoons dealt with all the major political issues that took place during the year (2018) with regard to US foreign policy. Thirdly, the analysis showed how various carriers of connotation such as participants, poses, setting and objects are employed to connote various values, identities and actions. Moreover, the strategy of exaggeration and facial prominence are also used to allude to the prevailing "uncertainty" regarding Trump's administration foreign policy. One interesting observation is that the most recurring represented participant in the selected corpus is the former US President Donald Trump.

The present paper invites future studies to analyze political cartoons on US foreign policy in other countries, if any, to investigate the similarities and differences between their depiction in Egypt and elsewhere and compare the ideologies encoded in such cartoons. Studies might also be applied to compare political cartoons dealing with Trump and Biden's foreign policies to examine the different prevailing issues and reactions regarding the policy of each president.

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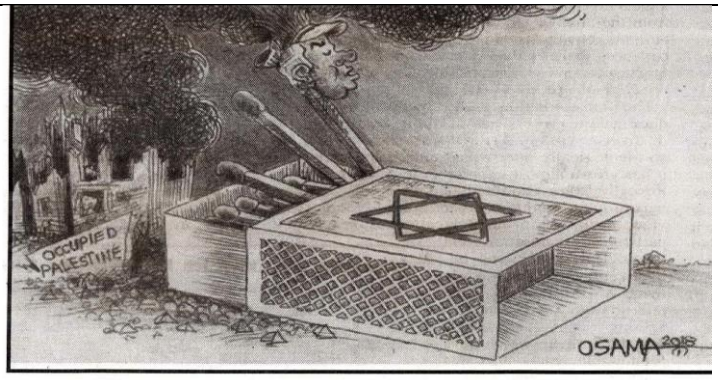
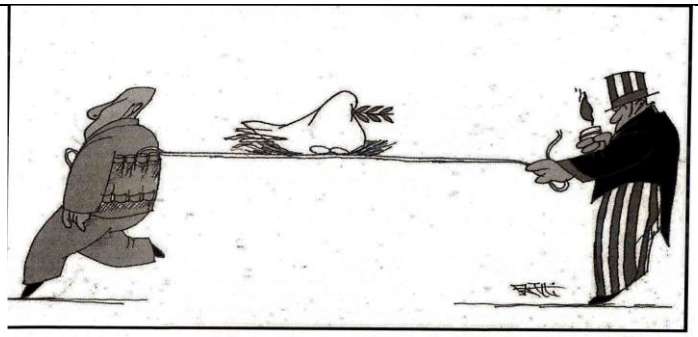
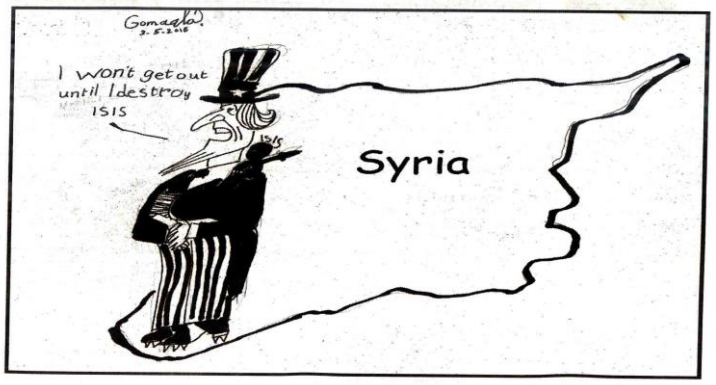
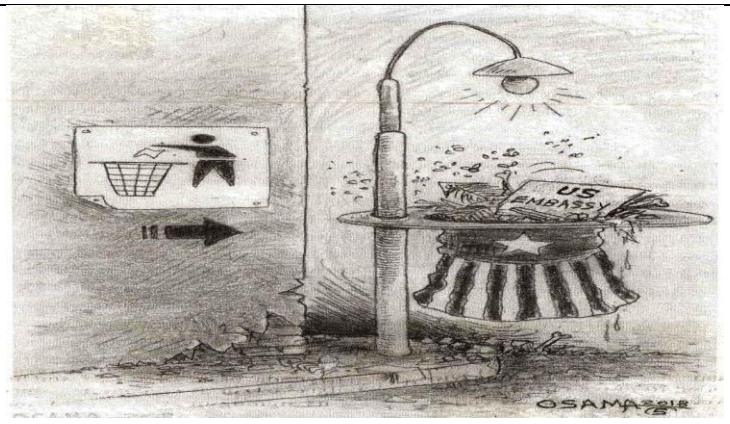
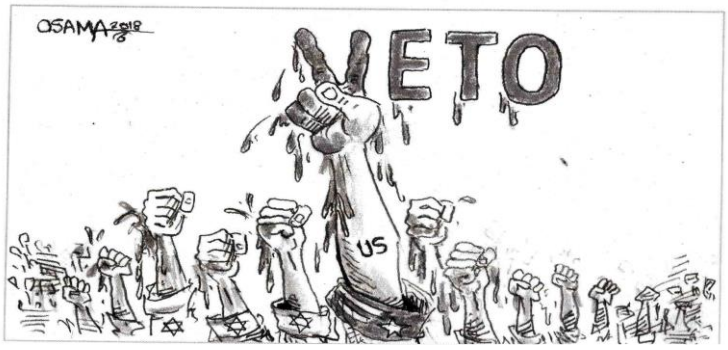
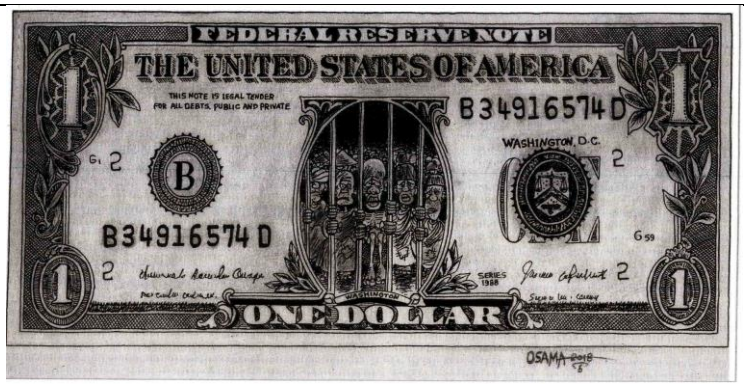
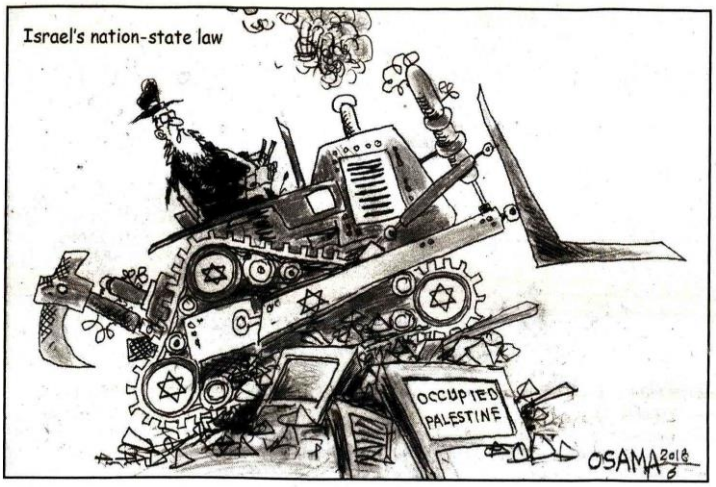
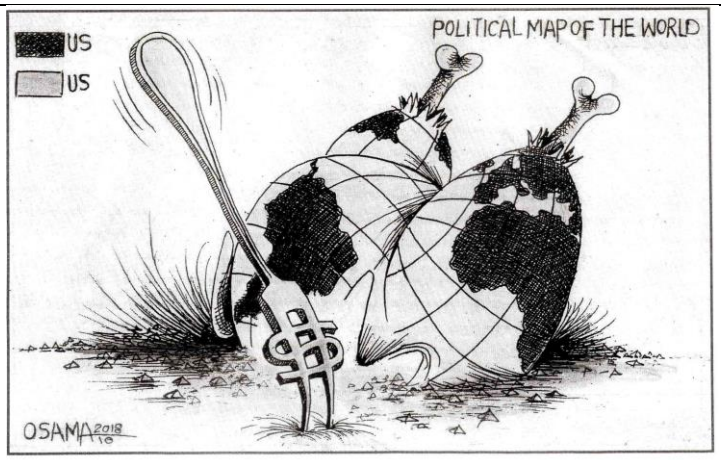
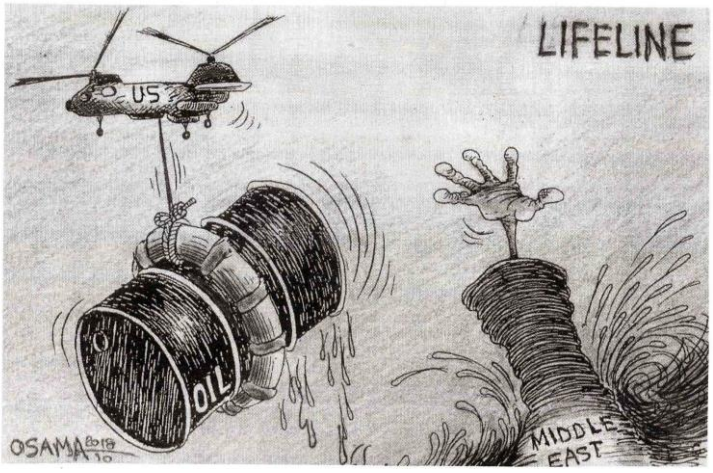
Appendix

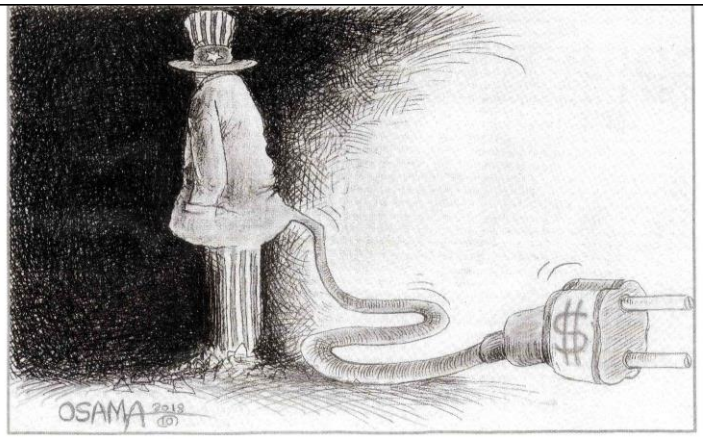
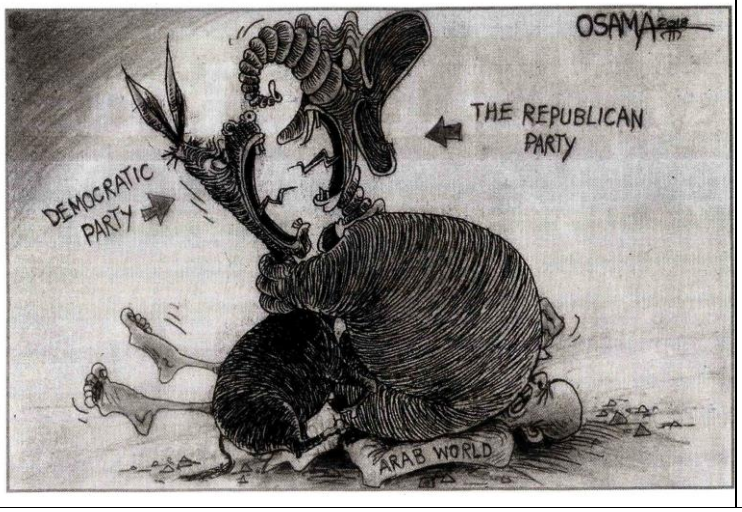
No	Cartoon	Date & Issue
1		18-24 January 2018
2		25-31 January 2018
3		19-25 April 2018

4		26 April -2 May 2018
5		3-9 May 2018
6		31 May 6 June 2018
7		24-30 May 2018

8		7-20 June 2018
9		7-20 June 2018
10		21-27 June 2018
11		28 June – 4 July 2018

12		12-18 July 2018
13		2-8 August 2018
14		27 September – 3 October 2018

15		4-10 October 2018
16		11-17 October 2018
17		18-24 October 2018

18		1-7 November 2018
19		15-21 November 2018
20		29 November - 5 December 2018