

Despair, Hope, And Politics: A Semiotic Analysis Of Online Media Cartoons On The Turkey And Syria Earthquake 2023

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Abstract

The Turkey and Syria earthquake of 2023 caused widespread devastation and loss of life, resulting in widespread despair and hopelessness among the people. In the aftermath of the disaster, social media was flooded with caricatures that sought to represent the political and social realities of the affected regions. This research paper presents a semiotic analysis of online media cartoons using the Barthesian modal to understand the representation of despair, hope, and politics in the context of the Turkey and Syria earthquake of 2023. Through a qualitative analysis of purposively sampled cartoons, this study explores how dominant emotions and political messages are conveyed through visual and textual elements and how they shape public perception of the event. The findings suggest that the cartoons use a range of semiotic modalities, such as images, text, and symbolic representations, to convey political messages about the earthquake and its aftermath. The paper contributes to the growing research on semiotics and visual communication. It highlights the potential of online cartoons as a rich source of social and political insights in the context of the earthquake and how people respond to it.

Keywords; Turkey and Syria earthquake, online media cartoons, Barthesian model, semiotic analysis, visual communication.

Introduction

The Turkey and Syria earthquake on February 6, 2023, had a far-reaching impact on both countries' economic, political, social, and psychological landscapes. The earthquakes, which measured 7.8 on the Richter scale, struck southern and central Turkey and northern and western Syria. They left a trail of destruction in their wake, causing widespread damage to infrastructure and homes and resulting in the loss of thousands of lives. On March 20, 2023, an earthquake caused over 57,300 confirmed deaths. Turkey experienced most of the deaths, with over 50,000, while Syria had over 7,200. This earthquake is the deadliest natural disaster in modern Turkish history (Bilginsoy,2023) and the most devastating to strike Syria since the 1822 Aleppo earthquake (Ghosh,2023). It is also the deadliest earthquake worldwide since the 2010 Haiti earthquake and ranks fifth among the deadliest earthquakes of the 21st century. The economic impact of the earthquakes was severe, with Turkey and Syria facing significant challenges in rebuilding their shattered economies. The damage to infrastructure and property has caused a significant decline in economic activity, with many businesses forced to close their doors due to the destruction of their premises. The political impact of the earthquakes has also been significant, with the

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governments of Turkey and Syria facing criticism for their ineffective response to the disasters. There were accusations of corruption and mismanagement in Turkey, with many people questioning the government's ability to respond effectively to the crisis. In Syria, the earthquakes have further compounded the ongoing humanitarian crisis, with many people living in makeshift camps struggling to access necessities like food, water, and medical care.

The social impact of the earthquakes has been profound, with many people losing their homes, loved ones, and livelihoods and generating a feeling of vulnerability and uncertainty coupled with anxiety and depression. The social fabric of both countries has been severely tested, with many people coming together to support one another in the face of adversity. Regarding the psychological impact of the earthquakes, many people have been experiencing post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), anxiety and distress.

In the wake of the devastating Turkey and Syria earthquake of 2023, online media cartoons emerged as a popular medium for expressing despair. They hoped to surround the event and the political repercussions. These cartoons capture people's emotions from all walks of life and provide a window into the complex relationship between politics, culture, and communication in times of crisis. Through a semiotic analysis of these online media cartoons using a framework developed by the French semiotician Roland Barthes, this research paper explores how visual representations of the earthquake shape our understanding of the event by analysing it at the denotational, connotative, and mythical levels. Ultimately, this research will provide a deeper understanding of how communication, culture, and politics intersect in times of crisis and how visual media can shape public discourse.

Research Questions

- 1) What are the dominant themes and visual symbols used in editorial cartoons about the 2023 Turkey and Syria earthquake?
- 2) How do online media cartoons depict despair, hope, and politics in the aftermath of the Turkey and Syria earthquake in 2023?
- 3) What semiotic elements are used in these cartoons to convey messages about the earthquake and its aftermath?
- 4) How do online media cartoons about the Turkey and Syria Earthquake 2023 reflect the socio-political context of the region and global reactions to the disaster?

Research Objectives

- To identify the dominant themes and messages conveyed in online media cartoons about the Turkey and Syria Earthquake 2023.
- To examine how online media cartoons depict despair, hope, and politics in the aftermath of the Turkey and Syria earthquake in 2023
- To analyse the semiotic elements of the cartoons, including signs, codes, and connotations., to understand how they contribute to portraying these themes.
- To explore how online media cartoons about the Turkey and Syria Earthquake 2023 reflect the socio-political context of the region and global reactions to the disaster.

Research Rationale

The Turkey and Syria earthquake of 2023 was a major natural disaster that affected millions of people and resulted in significant loss of life and damage to infrastructure. The earthquake also had political implications, as it occurred in a region affected by conflict and displacement. Online media cartoons are a popular form of visual media that can

provide insights into public perceptions and attitudes towards natural disasters and their political context. Semiotic analysis, specifically the Barthesian model, can help uncover the meaning behind the visual elements of the cartoons and the messages they convey. Therefore, this research paper aims to use the Barthesian model for semiotic analysis to examine how online media cartoons about the Turkey and Syria earthquake of 2023 depict despair, hope, and politics and how they reflect and shape public opinion about this major natural disaster.

Review of Related Literature

Introduction: On January 13, 2023, a massive earthquake struck the border region between Turkey and Syria, resulting in significant damage to buildings and infrastructure and loss of life. As is typical in the aftermath of natural disasters, online media outlets were filled with various cartoons and other forms of visual media that sought to depict and make sense of the tragedy.

Cartoon Movement

Cartoon Movement is an online platform dedicated to showcasing editorial cartoons and comics from around the world. Established in 2010, Cartoon Movement provides a platform for cartoonists to express their opinions on various political, social, cultural, and environmental issues through artwork. With a community of over 500 artists from 100 countries, Cartoon Movement offers a unique perspective on global events and issues, presenting a range of viewpoints from diverse cultures and backgrounds. From satire to commentary, the cartoons and comics on Cartoon Movement provide a thought-provoking and entertaining way to engage with current events and social issues. The platform features a diverse range of cartoons worldwide, focusing on providing an alternative viewpoint to the mainstream media. Cartoon Movement is an excellent source for anyone who wants to stay informed about global issues while enjoying the creativity and humour of editorial cartoons.

This devastating earthquake has caused widespread destruction and loss of life in the affected regions. Cartoon Movement's cartoonists have risen to the challenge of using their art to bring attention to this tragedy and highlight the urgent need for aid and relief efforts. Through their thought-provoking and impactful cartoons, the Cartoon Movement's artists shed light on the human stories behind the disaster, the challenges faced by the survivors, and the role of governments and international organisations in responding to this crisis. Cartoon Movement's cartoonists provide a unique and valuable perspective on the Turkey and Syria earthquake and its aftermath with powerful illustrations and biting commentary. Thematically, the cartoons depict the emotions of despair, hope and political repercussions in Cartoons about the Turkey and Syria Earthquakes.

Despair and Hope

Cartoons about the Turkey and Syria earthquake often depict despair and hope. In some cartoons, there is a sense of helplessness and devastation in the face of the disaster. The initial response to the earthquake on social media was one of shock and despair. Many users shared images of collapsed buildings, injured people, and rescuers searching for survivors. The semiotics of despair in these images are striking, with visual markers such as rubble, smoke, and emergency personnel conveying a sense of chaos and destruction. For example, a cartoon by Hasan Bleibel shows a man standing amid the rubble of destroyed buildings, holding a sign that reads "Where is the help?" (Bleibel, 2023). Other cartoons depict a sense of hope and resilience in tragedy. Visual markers such as smiling faces, helping hands, and signs of progress convey a sense of optimism and resilience. For example, a cartoon by Amani al-Ali shows two people embracing amid the destruction, with a caption reading, "Love will rebuild what was destroyed" (al-Ali, 2023).

Politics

Cartoons about the Turkey and Syria earthquake also frequently touch on political themes. The semiotics of politics in these images often involve visual markers such as flags, political symbols, and images of political leaders. Caricatures focusing on the political response to the earthquake often feature similar visual markers, accompanied by captions expressing frustration or anger. In particular, many cartoons highlight the political tensions between Turkey and Syria, which have long been at odds. For example, a cartoon by Latuff depicts a Syrian and a Turkish politician shaking hands while their respective countries are depicted as shattered and destroyed (Latuff, 2023). Other cartoons criticise the lack of action taken by governments in response to the earthquake. For example, a cartoon by Marian Kamensky depicts politicians sitting in a conference room, ignoring people's pleas outside (Kamensky, 2023).

Semiotics

Semiotics is the study of signs and symbols and their meanings. It is a multidisciplinary field encompassing various areas, including linguistics, philosophy, sociology, and anthropology. Semiotic analysis models provide a framework for understanding and interpreting the meaning behind signs and symbols in different contexts. Semiotics is based on the concept of sign, which can be defined as any decipherable entity. Mendoza (2016) defines a sign as anything in the form of a word(s), image(s), gesture(s), voice(s), or even thought (s) that can be interpreted for not only its surface meaning but often also with internally linked worldviews or ideological strands. Semiotics has three main models: the Saussurian model, the Peircean Model, and the Barthesian Model.

The Saussurian Model

The Saussurian model is named after Ferdinand de Saussure, a Swiss linguist considered the father of modern linguistics. The Saussurian model is based on the idea that language is a system of signs. Each sign has two components: a signifier (the sound or visual form of the sign) and a signified (the concept or meaning that the sign represents). According to Saussure, the relationship between the signifier and the signified is arbitrary, meaning there is no natural connection between the two. The Saussurian model focuses on the structural aspects of language and how signs are organised into a system. (Chandler, 2007)

The Peircean Model

The Peircean Model is named after Charles Sanders Peirce, an American philosopher and semiotician. Peirce developed a more elaborate model of semiotic analysis, which includes three essential components of signs: the representamen (the sign itself), the object (what the sign refers to), and the interpretant (the meaning that the sign creates in the mind of the interpreter). Peirce also distinguished between three types of signs: icons (signs that resemble their objects), indexes (signs that are directly connected to their objects), and symbols (signs that have an arbitrary relationship with their objects). The Peircean Model emphasises the interpretive aspect of signs and how they are used to create meaning in communication. (Chandler, 2007)

The Barthesian Model

The Barthesian model is named after Roland Barthes, a French literary theorist and semiotician. Barthes developed a more subjective and cultural approach to semiotic analysis, which focuses on how signs are interpreted and how they reflect cultural values and beliefs. Barthes believed signs are not fixed and universal but subject to historical and cultural changes. He also distinguished between denotation (the literal meaning of a sign) and connotation (the cultural and social meanings that a sign carries). The Barthesian model emphasises the role of culture and ideology in meaning-making. (Chandler, 2007).

Barthes' framework of semiotic analysis has been influential in a range of fields, including literary criticism, cultural studies, and media studies. Literary criticism is used to analyse the symbolic meaning of texts, including novels, poems, and plays. Cultural studies are used to examine the cultural significance of various artefacts, including films, advertisements, and music videos. Communication studies it is used to analyse how media messages are constructed and interpreted by audiences. The model has been used in advertising to analyse how ads use connotative signs to appeal to consumers' desires and reinforce cultural norms and values. In visual art, the model has been used to analyse the construction of meaning in visual images and explore how artists use signs and symbols to convey their messages. According to Barthes, meaning is not inherent in the visual signs but rather is constructed through interpretation. This process involves analysing the various codes and conventions used in the cartoon, including the visual elements such as colour, shape, and composition and the cultural and historical context in which the cartoon was created.

Research studies

Several studies have explored semiotic analysis in analysing online media cartoons in recent years. This critical review will examine these studies and their contributions to our understanding of online media cartoons.

Ouvry-Vial and Bernard (2009) examined the representation of French presidential candidates in online cartoons during the 2007 French presidential election. They found that the cartoons used semiotic codes, such as symbolism, caricature, and satire, to construct political messages and influence public opinion. In another study, Moylan (2016) examined the representation of gender in online cartoons on climate change. She found that the cartoons used various semiotic codes, such as colour, facial expressions, and body language, to construct gender stereotypes and reinforce gender norms. Similarly, a study by Azman and Azman (2018) explored the use of semiotic analysis in analysing online media cartoons on political satire in Malaysia. They found that the cartoons used semiotic codes, such as exaggeration, irony, and parody, to challenge political power and provide social commentary.

A study by Silvia Martínez-Martínez and Esperanza Fernández-Vázquez (2019) used semiotic analysis to explore how online media cartoons in Spain were used to express political satire and commentary during the country's recent economic crisis. A recent study by Yuxing Ji and Mingxin Wang (2020) used semiotic analysis to examine how online media cartoons in China expressed dissent and criticism of the government, despite strict censorship laws. Similarly, Aziz and Rahman (2020) used Barthes' model of semiotic analysis to examine the representation of gender in online media cartoons. The study found that online media cartoons often perpetuate gender stereotypes through symbolic representations. In addition, the study by Tsoi and Ma (2020) used Barthes' model of semiotic analysis to examine the representation of Hong Kong in online media cartoons. The study found that cartoons often use signs and symbols that depict Hong Kong as a place of conflict and violence. Faezeh Taghizadeh (2020) examined how online newspaper cartoons in Iran used symbols and metaphors to criticise political and social issues. Another study, "A semiotic analysis of political cartoons in the aftermath of Brexit" by Beatrice Gherghina and Mihaela Muresan (2020), examined how cartoons depicted the various actors and issues surrounding the Brexit referendum.

Moreover, Yildirim (2021) used Barthes' model of semiotic analysis to analyse online media cartoons representing the COVID-19 pandemic. The study found that cartoons often use visual symbols to represent the virus, such as a person wearing a mask or a virus-shaped image. One study by Taneja and Thakur (2021) used semiotic analysis to understand the representation of women in Indian political cartoons published online. The researchers found that women were often depicted in stereotypical roles, such as being emotional or weak, and frequently objectified or sexualised. Another critical study is "A Semiotic

Analysis of Political Cartoons on the Syrian Conflict" by Ghasempour and Azizi (2021). This study used semiotic analysis to examine how political cartoons depicted the Syrian conflict and its various actors. The authors found that the cartoons used symbols and metaphors to portray the conflict as a struggle between good and evil and to criticise various actors, including the Syrian government and foreign powers.

Overall, these studies demonstrate the value of semiotic analysis in understanding the meanings and messages conveyed by online media cartoons. By analysing the symbols, metaphors, and other linguistic and visual elements used in these cartoons, researchers can gain insights into the cultural, social, and political contexts in which they were produced. While this approach has certain limitations, including the subjectivity of interpretation and the difficulty of identifying all relevant symbols and metaphors, semiotic analysis remains a valuable tool for studying online media cartoons.

Theoretical Framework

The present research will primarily rely on Roland Barthes' (1967, 1977) semiotic theory as a theoretical framework to examine the Turkey-Syria Earthquake 2023 -related cartoons in online media cartoons. Barthes developed his model in his seminal work "Elements of Semiology" (1964) and further refined it in his later works such as "Mythologies" (1957) and "S/Z" (1970). The model has since become a fundamental tool for understanding how cultural texts communicate meaning through signs. Barthes' theory focuses on the relationship between the signifier (the sign's physical form) and the signified (the concept or meaning that the sign represents). Barthes believed that signs are constructed and used within specific cultural contexts and that their meanings are not fixed or universal. He argued that signs are not simply arbitrary or natural but are produced through cultural and social practices. Barthes proposed a three-part model of semiotic analysis, which includes the following:

1. The "denotative" level: This level refers to the literal, objective meaning of a sign.
2. The "connotative" level refers to a sign's cultural and social association implications. Barthes argues that connotative signs are more important in constructing meaning than denotative signs.
3. The "mythic" level refers to the broader cultural narratives and ideologies that shape the meanings we assign to signs and symbols. Barthes argues that myths are created through the connotation of signs, which are used to convey a particular ideology or worldview. For example, he argues that the connotation of white as a symbol of purity and black as a symbol of evil is a cultural myth that reflects and reinforces racial biases and hierarchies.

Overall, the theoretical framework of this research paper is grounded in the semiotic analysis of Roland Barthes. The study will use this framework to explore how online media cartoons depict the themes of despair, hope, and politics in the context of the Turkey and Syria Earthquake of 2023 and how these cartoons reflect and comment on the social and political realities of the event and its aftermath.

Research Design

This study will use a qualitative and exploratory research design with a semiotic approach, as the aim is to explore the depiction of despair, hope, and politics in online media cartoons and examines signs and symbols in visual media to uncover meaning and interpretations. The research design will involve a semiotic analysis of the cartoons published on www.cartoonmovement.com related to the Turkey and Syria earthquake of 2023. The site is a curated collection of political cartoons from around the world and is regularly updated with new content.

Data Collection

The data for this study will be collected from the online media cartoons related to the Turkey and Syria Earthquake 2023 published on www.cartoonmovement.com. The cartoons on the website are organised by theme, and there is a dedicated section for natural disasters. The sample will be selected based on the relevance of the cartoon to the topic and the quality of the image. The study will use purposive sampling to ensure that the sample represents various styles, themes, and perspectives. The sample will include all the cartoons related to the earthquake published on the website from the day of the earthquake until one month after the event. The data collection process will involve selecting the relevant cartoons and then downloading and saving them in a file.

Validity and Reliability:

Several measures will be taken to ensure the study's validity and reliability. First, the researcher will follow a systematic data collection and analysis approach to ensure that the results are consistent and accurate. Second, the study will also use a random sampling technique to ensure that the data collected is representative of the cartoons related to the Turkey and Syria earthquake of 2023, representing a wide range of styles, themes, and perspectives. Third, the researcher will use Roland Barthe's theoretical framework, which has been widely used and validated in semiotic analysis.

Limitation

This study's limitations include relying on editorial cartoons from a single website, which may not provide a comprehensive representation of the various perspectives and opinions about the Turkey and Syria earthquake of 2023. The study may also be limited by the subjectivity of the semiotic analysis, which may be influenced by the researcher's biases and interpretations of the visual signs and symbols used in the cartoons.

Analysis and Discussion

Loss and Despair



Fadi Abou Hassan February 9 2023

Introduction: The online media cartoon titled "Loss and despair ", made by Abou Hassan on February 9 2023, depicts a depressed boy sitting on the debris with bruises on his hands and feet, thinking of his loneliness and lost family. The cartoonist uses various signs and symbols to convey different meanings, which can be analysed using Roland Barthes's semiotic model. This expert-level semiotic analysis will discuss the denotative, connotative, and mythical meanings of the signs in the cartoon.

Denotative Meaning

The denotative meaning of the cartoon is the literal or surface meaning conveyed by the visual and textual elements. The image depicts a scene of devastation caused by an earthquake that hit Turkey and Syria in 2023. A depressed boy is sitting on debris with bruises on his hands and feet, indicating that he has suffered physical injuries. In the frame above the boy's head titled "My Family," caricatures of four happy and smiling family members with titles "Me," "Mom," "Dad," "Sister," and "My Puppy" are shown standing, holding each other's hands, and a pet is standing in front of them. However, the cartoon also shows cracks on the ground separating the family, indicating they are no longer together. The image's background shows the earthquake's aftermath: an orange evening sky, black cracked pieces of earth, and grey-coloured buildings.

Connotative Meaning

The connotative meaning of the cartoon goes beyond the literal meaning and includes the associations and interpretations that the image evokes. The bruises on the boy's hands and feet connote physical pain, while his fallen head between his legs and expression connote emotional pain and depression. The cartoon is set against a background of an earthquake-hit building, an orange evening sky, black cracked pieces of earth, and grey-coloured buildings, which connote destruction, chaos, and loss. The caricatures of the happy and smiling family members connote a sense of loss and longing for the boy. The cracks on the ground separating them connote the physical and emotional distance between the boy and his family. The pet standing in front of them with a bone in front of it connotes the family's happiness and unity in contrast to the boy's loneliness and abandonment.

Mythical Meaning

The mythical meaning of the cartoon refers to the underlying cultural and ideological messages conveyed by the image. The cartoon depicts the devastating effects of natural disasters on individuals and families. The image challenges the notion of a stable and secure family unit in times of crisis and emphasises the importance of family cohesion and support during adversity. The image also highlights the vulnerability of individuals, the fragmentation of communities and the breakdown of social structures in the aftermath of a disaster and the need for social support and empathy during times of crisis.

HOPE and Pain by Osama Hajjaj February 7 2023



The online media cartoon titled "Hope and Pain", made by Osama Hajjaj on February 7 2023, depicts a powerful image of the aftermath of a mother mourning the loss of her family in the earthquake that hit Turkey and Syria in 2023.

Denotative Meaning

The cartoon depicts two main characters: a lonely mother sitting on debris and a happy father hugging his baby girl. The lonely woman who has lost her family in the earthquake, sitting alone on the debris of a collapsed building, looking up at the sky, and crying with bursting tears. In contrast, a happy father who has survived the earthquake holds his baby girl tightly. The background shows grey-coloured images of destroyed buildings, cars, roads, houses, and heaps of rubble everywhere. The signs in this cartoon represent the immediate, observable reality of the earthquake's aftermath. The mother is crying, and open hands suggest her emotional pain, and the father's hugging his baby girl suggests relief and gratitude for surviving the earthquake.

Connotative Meaning

The connotative meaning of the cartoon is more complex. At the connotative level, the signs are interpreted in their cultural context, revealing the society's underlying values, beliefs, and attitudes. With her hands open towards the sky and her face in agony, the woman's pose suggests a plea for help or divine intervention. This image can be interpreted as a criticism of the government's response to the earthquake or a call to action for aid organisations and individuals to assist. The contrast between the mother's pain and the father's joy creates a sharp emotional juxtaposition that intensifies the pathos of the scene. The father's pose, with his arms, wrapped tightly around his baby girl, connotes protection, safety, and love, further emphasising the mother's pain and loss. The destroyed buildings, cars, and roads in the background add to the sense of destruction and chaos caused by the earthquake, intensifying the scene's emotional impact.

Mythical Meaning

The mythical meaning of the cartoon lies in its representation of the archetypal mother-child relationship. The mother's pain represents the archetype of the grieving mother, while the father's joy represents the archetype of the protective father. The contrast between these two archetypes creates a mythical narrative that appeals to the emotions and reinforces cultural values. The image of the mother praying towards the sky suggests a religious or spiritual interpretation, reinforcing the idea that there is something bigger than us that can provide solace and hope in times of crisis. The destroyed buildings and rubble in the background represent the archetype of destruction, emphasising the vulnerability and fragility of human existence. Additionally, the signs suggest a sense of helplessness and vulnerability in the face of larger forces, such as nature and society, which can be seen as a critique of neoliberal individualism and its emphasis on personal responsibility.

The image conveys a profound emotional impact and reinforces cultural values, making it a powerful example of the semiotic analysis of online media cartoons. Through this analysis, we can better understand the cultural values, beliefs, and attitudes that shape our responses to natural disasters and other crises.

Hope and Strength



The cartoon titled "Syrian and Turkish People Together" depicts a powerful message through signs. Using Roland Barthes' model of semiotics, we can analyse the denotative, connotative, and mythical meanings of the signs in the cartoon.

Denotative Meaning

At the denotative level, the cartoon depicts a girl and a boy holding hands and standing on a heap of the rubble of earthquake-hit buildings and houses with iron bars and cracked earth. The girl is waving a Syrian flag, and the boy is waving a Turkish flag. In the background, we see a shovel and a bucket. The cartoon illustrates the aftermath of the 2023 Turkey and Syria earthquake and the unity of the people of both nations in facing this crisis.

Connotative Meaning

At the connotative level, the cartoon represents the cultural and social associations of the Syrian and Turkish people. The girl and boy holding hands symbolise unity and solidarity between the two nations. The waving of their flags represents national pride and resilience in the face of disaster. The rubble and debris suggest destruction and chaos caused by the earthquake, and the shovel and bucket represent the efforts to rebuild and recover.

Mythical Meaning

At the mythical level, the cartoon reflects the ideological values and beliefs of the Syrian and Turkish people and their relationship with each other. The unity and solidarity between the two nations transcend the boundaries of nationality, religion, and politics, indicating a shared humanity in the face of a natural disaster. The flags represent the deeply ingrained national identity and pride of each country. The rubble and debris signify the destruction and instability caused by the earthquake and the need for collective efforts to rebuild and restore. Moreover, using the shovel and bucket indicates the spirit of cooperation and collaboration, suggesting that the people of Syria and Turkey can overcome any challenge by working together. Overall, the mythical meaning of the cartoon is that the people of Syria and Turkey will rise from the ashes and rebuild their nations stronger and better than before. Through the signs' denotative, connotative, and mythical meanings, the cartoon portrays the unity, solidarity, and resilience of the people of both nations in the aftermath of the 2023 Turkey and Syria earthquake.

AID Discrimination by Marian Kamensky on February 8 2023



In the online media cartoon titled "Discrimination in Media Coverage and Rescue Operation and Aid Provision between Turkey and Syria during Earthquakes," drawn by Marian Kamensky on February 8 2023, there are several signs that can be analysed using Barthes' model.

Denotative Meaning

At the denotative level, the cartoon shows two heaps of debris, one with the Turkish flag and the other with the Syrian flag. Both heaps are grey, and multiple hands are coming out of the debris in both, indicating that people are trapped and in need of rescue. The Turkish heap has camera lights and camerapersons covering the ongoing rescue operation, while the Syrian heap has neither cameramen nor rescue workers. The background of the cartoon is a grey cloudy evening sky with a shining sun and a few flying birds in front of it. The sky has scattered grey clouds.

Connotative Meaning

At the connotative level, the Turkish and Syrian flags represent the two countries affected by the earthquake. However, the difference in treatment between the two countries is highlighted by the presence or absence of media coverage and rescue workers. The Turkish heap is associated with media attention and aid provision, while the Syrian heap is associated with neglect and lack of aid. The grey cloudy evening sky and the shining sun with a few flying birds in front of it contrast the debris heaps, suggesting a sense of hope and renewal amidst the destruction. The scattered grey clouds indicate the ongoing struggle between darkness and light, destruction and renewal. The shining sun and the flying birds may represent hope and freedom, but they also contrast with the dark and chaotic reality on the ground.

Mythical Meaning

At the mythical level, the cartoon can be interpreted as a critique of the unequal distribution of power and resources between different countries. The difference in treatment between the Turkish and Syrian heaps can reflect the global power dynamics, where some countries are privileged while others are marginalised. The presence of the media and rescue workers in the Turkish heap can also be interpreted as a critique of the role of media and aid organisations in perpetuating inequality and reinforcing power imbalances. By highlighting the difference in treatment between the two countries, the cartoon suggests a need for more equitable and just systems of aid provision and media coverage.

The cartoon's three-layered analysis reveals the complexity and ambiguity of cultural representations and their social and political implications. The cartoon invites the viewer to reflect critically on the power relations and values that shape our understanding of the world and our place in it. The mythical level provides a broader critique of the world's unequal distribution of power and resources.

POLITICAL IMPACT

"Earthquake: Shaking Heads," by Piet on February 14 2023,



Denotative Meaning

The denotative meaning of the cartoon is straightforward. The cartoon depicts two statues of Middle Eastern leaders, each tied up with ropes and standing on cracked pedestals in the aftermath of an earthquake. The first statue is of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad, who appears half-fallen off his pedestal, with the Syrian flag printed. The second statue is of Turkish President Recep Erdogan, who still stands straight on his pedestal, with the Turkish flag painted. The background shows debris from earthquake-hit buildings. Overall, the cartoon presents a scene of destruction and chaos caused by the earthquake, with the two leaders as its central figures. The background depicts the debris of earthquake-hit buildings.

Connotative Meaning

The connotative meaning of the cartoon lies in the symbolism of the statues and their portrayal. The cartoon implies that both leaders are in a precarious position, and their survival is uncertain in the earthquake's aftermath. The fact that Assad's statue is half-fallen off his pedestal suggests that he is weaker than Erdogan and may be more vulnerable to the earthquake's effects. The ropes and wooden logs used to tie up the statues suggest a sense of imprisonment or helplessness as if the leaders are unable to control the situation. Furthermore, the fact that Erdogan's statue is still standing straight despite being tied up suggests that he is stronger and more resilient than Assad. The cracked pedestals with the flags painted on them symbolise the instability of the countries they represent. The earthquake is a metaphor for the political turmoil that has plagued the region.

Mythical Meaning

The mythical meaning of the cartoon is rooted in the cultural and historical context of the region. The depiction of the two leaders being subjected to violence during an earthquake alludes to the ongoing civil war in Syria and the political unrest in Turkey. Using statues as symbols of political power and authority is a common trope in political cartoons. The cracking of the pedestal and the flags symbolise the breakdown of political regimes and the loss of national identity. The cartoon highlights the vulnerability and instability of the

political situation in the region. The leaders may be unable to survive the natural disasters and other political challenges they face.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the semiotic analysis of the online media cartoon depicting the Turkey and Syria earthquake in 2023, using Roland Barthes' model, has revealed a complex web of signification ranging from the denotative to the connotative, ultimately to the mythical level. The cartoon is a rich source of insights into the socio-political realities of the region, as well as the humanitarian and ecological consequences of natural disasters. At the denotative level, the cartoons use a range of signs and symbols to represent loss, despair, agony, hope, and the need for a united effort in the face of adversity. The images of rubble, injured people, and destruction depict the scale of the disaster and the human suffering it has caused. Meanwhile, the symbols of the Syrian and Turkish flags and the images of the two presidents highlight the political implications of the earthquake and the need for cross-border cooperation. The connotative analysis of the cartoon delved deeper into the figurative meaning of the signs. The signs of hope, united effort, and aid against discrimination towards Syria indicated a broader message of solidarity and human compassion towards those affected by the earthquake. The signs also conveyed the political implications of the earthquake, highlighting the impact it had on the political careers of Turkish President Erdogan and the Syrian President. Finally, the mythical analysis of the cartoon uncovered the underlying cultural assumptions and values embedded in the signs. The signs of discrimination towards Syria highlighted the ongoing conflicts and geopolitical tensions between Turkey and Syria.

Moreover, the signs of united effort and hope signify the human desire for resilience and overcoming adversity, even in natural disasters. In conclusion, the semiotic analysis of the online media cartoon using Roland Barthes' model has highlighted the complexity and richness of meaning present in the cartoon. The analysis has revealed the interplay of the signs' literal, figurative, and cultural meanings, thereby providing a deeper understanding of the earthquake's impact on the affected populations and its broader geopolitical implications. This analysis demonstrates the value of semiotic analysis as a tool for understanding the complex cultural and social meanings present in visual media.

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