Political Colors: Representation of the Political Situation on Selected Editorial Cartoons

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Abstract

The editorial cartoon is a visual commentary that expresses a satirical or critical message about current events, politics, or social issues in a concise and often humorous manner. This research analyzed the selected editorial cartoons based on their political colors regarding the representation of the political situation in the most recent election. Using the Semiology of Roland Barthes, the data gathered in The Manila Times, Philippine Star, and Sunstar. Furthermore, by utilizing visual analysis, the findings of this study showed that the analyzed editorial cartoons utilize a diverse array of signs to skilfully communicate their messages, all of which contribute to the cartoons' impactful visual style and satirical essence. Also, the data revealed that by employing diverse signs such as icons, indexes, and symbols, the examined editorial cartoons effectively criticize social and political matters. Through the strategic use of these signs, the cartoons deliver thought-provoking commentary on the complex nature of politics. Furthermore, the findings also showed that the cartoons provide astute observations on the complex dynamics of politics, skilfully critiquing both societal and political issues and shedding light on the less favorable aspects of the political landscape. A "guidebook" entitled "Decoding the Editorial Cartoons: A Semiological Analysis using Roland Barthes' Theory" was crafted by the researchers. By incorporating the booklet as recommended learning material for a Contemporary Issues subject. Several conclusions are drawn from the study's findings, as well as recommendations for use by citizens, teachers, students, and future researchers.

Keywords: *political colors, political situation, editorial cartoons, semiology, Roland Barthes*

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Introduction

The electoral situation in the Philippines can be described as dramatic, and it seems to be a severe political competition since various media are exploited and manipulated; either the purpose is to construct or to assassinate one's character. As one cannot usually express all their thoughts in narratives and opinions, one of the usual media accessible to the masses is the editorial cartoon. Those who cannot read benefit from its visual character, which allows them to see through the cartoonist's eyes and grasp the information they convey. In the best cases, the cartoon cannot be read or comprehended simply by glancing at the text or the picture. To grasp the cartoonist's message, both the text and the images must be read together. Editorial cartoons can be a suitable medium for expressing these thoughts, particularly on political issues, as it allows cartoonists to sketch out ideas that cannot be easily explained in an editorial text (Popatco, 2020).

The 2022 election left a lasting impression on every Filipino because like the editorial cartoon's hidden white and black lines the previous election featured a variety of hues each of which has a symbolic value. They are a social, political, and economic monitor of events in the country and throughout the world that represent the scene from the cartoonist's environment (Lawate, 2012). An editorial cartoon is distinguished from other cartoons in the newspaper by its currency and content. Political and social topics have long been brought up by journalists and cartoonists using editorial cartoons. It is undeniable that editorial cartoons serve as a tool for readers to get information about the current events and problems in their environment through the use of white and black colors, lines, and various picture styles. Many newspapers continue to employ editorial cartoons today as a kind of humor or satire, but many are unaware of the significant significance behind them.

The contents of the editorial cartoons were collected and only focused on the three presidential candidates in the Philippines in the 2022 election. Thus, this study explored representations of the presidential candidates of the Philippines in print media, specifically in the editorial cartoons of three of the major Philippine broadsheets: The Manila Times, Philippine Star, and Sunstar, to form an understanding of the political issues and their implications. To form an understanding of the political issues and their implications, this study aimed to tackle the significance of the political situation in the most recent election by examining the cartoons' visual form, formal elements, and themes, as well as in the context

of issues present in society. The study used the Semiology of Roland Barthes as a theory for this study.

Methodology

This study employed qualitative research, utilizing archival resources from online and printed newspaper databases, particularly The Manila Times, Philippine Star, and Sunstar. In addition to collecting editorial cartoons, archival research encompassed historical and political events to contextualize the issues depicted. Visual analysis enabled a deeper exploration of form and imagery beyond the surface level.

To analyze and interpret editorial cartoons from the three sources, these approaches were employed. The aim was to scrutinize signs presented in editorial cartoons regarding the 2022 Philippine presidential candidates using Barthes' Semiology. The selected cartoons centered on Domagoso, Marcos, and Robredo and were chosen from trusted newspapers.

For this visual analysis, a questionnaire wasn't suitable due to the method's qualitative nature. Instead, selected editorial cartoons from The Manila Times, Philippine Star, and Manila Bulletin were used. Online resources enriched the framework for analyzing political situations in the 2022 election. This approach laid the groundwork for potential future analysis.

Visual analysis, a qualitative technique, was chosen to discern the implications of editorial cartoons on the 2022 presidential candidates. The researchers observed and interpreted editorial cartoons from the three sources, applying Barthes' Semiology – particularly denotation and connotation – to establish main claims based on signs' interpretations.

The study encompassed the seven months leading up to the 2022 Philippine election. The focus was on identifying signs in editorial cartoons about the presidential candidates from The Manila Times, Philippine Star, and Sunstar. Ethical considerations were upheld, with the focus on the visuals and symbols rather than the cartoonists' personal information.

Primary sources, including respected newspapers like The Manila Times and Philippine Star, formed the foundation of this study. While limitations existed – such as

limited availability and temporal scope of cartoons – the researchers maintained neutrality, analyzing symbols objectively. Their goal was to provide a solid understanding of candidate representation within the given timeframe.

Results

Based on the gathered data, the following findings were revealed:

On the signs represented in the editorial cartoons. The editorial cartoons analyzed in this collection incorporate various signs to convey their messages. These signs include the King, Rooks, Bishops, Horses, Pawns, the chessboard, the Peso sign, bag, man, speech bubble, tax, evaders, political handlers, podium, red collar, lightbulbs, violet background, circular shape, VP Leni, large pink bear, small man, big man, red, blue, white colors, star, orange hue, gray color, bright pink shoes, pants, and a dress, dark shadow, red rubber shoes, sando, and shorts, bumps, uphills, and downhills, four-wheeled wagon, microphone, scale, two paths, guitar, hat, red, white, and blue colors, white and black panda, red rose, pink stars, salakot, and barong, carved blade, stone, black shadow, chain, gold, and coins, cloudy, brown and yellow color.

On the meanings of icons, indexes, and symbols expressed in editorial cartoons. The analyzed editorial cartoons employ a diverse range of signs to convey their messages. These signs encompass icons such as chess pieces, representing power dynamics and strategic maneuvers in politics. They also include symbols like the Peso sign, podium, and scale, which highlight issues of corruption, the influence of political handlers, and the pursuit of justice. Additionally, visual elements such as colors, shapes, and cultural symbols evoke emotions, comment on leadership and national identity, and address themes of complexity and oppression. These strategic uses of signs effectively communicate nuanced messages, critique societal and political issues, and shed light on the intricacies of the political landscape.

On how they are represented in editorial cartoons. In the examined editorial cartoons, the presidential candidates are represented using a wide array of signs and symbols that carry specific meanings. The use of chess pieces symbolizes power dynamics and

strategic maneuvers in politics, while symbols like the Peso sign, bag, speech bubble, and more highlight issues related to corruption, taxes, and public perception. Depictions of political handlers and podiums signify behind-the-scenes influence and the significance of public speaking. Various visual elements evoke emotions and convey themes such as creativity, enlightenment, and complexity. Symbols like VP Leni, a large pink bear, contrasting sizes, and patriotic colors represent political figures, leadership, affiliations, and national identity. Colors, shadows, and contrasting elements evoke moods and risks. Symbols such as red rubber shoes, obstacles, and a microphone depict challenges and communication in politics. The presence of a scale symbolizes justice and fairness, while the two paths represent different choices and outcomes. Cultural symbols express affiliations and national pride, and symbols of power, wealth, and corruption shed light on darker aspects of politics. The use of color contributes to the overall mood of the cartoons. Through these symbols, the editorial cartoons effectively critique societal and political issues, providing commentary on the complexities of the political landscape.

On creating a booklet that will serve as the criteria for analyzing editorial cartoons. Editorial cartoons are a powerful medium for expressing opinion and commentary on contemporary issues. Analyzing these cartoons can provide valuable insights into social, political, and cultural matters. This booklet aims to serve as a comprehensive guide for educators and learners to effectively analyze editorial cartoons. By using this criteria booklet, students can develop critical thinking skills, enhance their understanding of current events, and engage in meaningful discussions about complex topics. The booklet consists of an introduction, an understanding of editorial cartoons, semiology, steps to analyze editorial cartoons using semiology, and the analyzed editorial cartoons made by the researchers. It provides the result of the analysis of selected editorial cartoons in the Philippines.

Conclusion

The analyzed editorial cartoons visually represent the Philippine political landscape, addressing power dynamics, accountability, alliances, public perception, and opposition to Marcos Jr.'s candidacy. They convey messages on democracy, human rights, political responsibility, and potential outcomes. Symbolism such as chess, tax evasion, handlers,

debate invitations, alliances, and opposition effectively communicate complex ideas. Colors, shadows, and symbols enhance impact, conveying emotions, uncertainties, and international involvement. These cartoons deepen understanding of Marcos Jr.'s candidacy and the broader political landscape in the Philippines.

The analyzed editorial cartoons reveal underlying messages and themes, depicting Philippine politics, public sentiment, and concerns about Marcos Jr.'s candidacy. Symbols like chess, tax evasion, handlers, debate invitations, alliances, and opposition capture multifaceted politics, emphasizing transparency, accountability, power dynamics, and public perception. Colors, visual cues, and symbolism convey emotions, risks, and international influence. These interpretations deepen understanding of the complexities and challenges in Philippine politics and public opinion on Marcos Jr.'s candidacy.

The editorial cartoons effectively convey messages and themes through various visual representations. Chess imagery symbolizes power, while tax evasion is represented with money and arrows. Political handlers are shown as controlling figures, and debate invitations are depicted through formal setups. Strong alliances and vigilance are conveyed through flags and symbols. Emotions and risks are expressed through colors and shading. Power dynamics and opposition are depicted using lines and contrasting colors. The complexities of politics are shown through wagons, roads, and facial expressions. Fair confrontation and opposition are emphasized through dynamic poses and symbols. Potential outcomes are illustrated with paths and arrows. Recognizable symbols represent entities like the USA, Bongbong Marcos, and China. Diverse perspectives and legal challenges are highlighted symbolically. Marcos Jr.'s portrayal as a "savior" figure is depicted through heroic imagery, while insensitivity is conveyed through expressions and symbols. These visual representations enrich the cartoons' messages, providing deeper insights into the political landscape and public sentiment.

Creating a booklet titled "Decoding Editorial Cartoons: A Semiological Analysis using Roland Barthes' Theory" will allow more people to have access to the results of the study and might influence other researchers to undertake a similar study. The booklet created as part of this study serves as a comprehensive guide for educators and learners to effectively analyze editorial cartoons.

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