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A Cognitive Semiotic Analysis of Visual Rhetoric in Caricatures Depicting the Iran-Israel
Political Rivalry (2025)

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A Cognitive Semiotic Analysis of Visual Rhetoric in Caricatures Depicting the Iran-Israel Political Rivalry (2025)

A Thesis

**Submitted to the Council of the College of Education for Human
Sciences / Wasit University/ in a Partial Fulfilment of the
Requirements for the Degree of Master of Education in English
Language and Linguistics**

By

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Supervised by:

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2026 A.D.

1448 A.H.

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

وَمَنْ يَتَّقِ اللَّهَ يَجْعَلْ لَهُ مَخْرَجًا ﴿٢﴾ وَيَرْزُقْهُ مِنْ حَيْثُ لَا يَحْتَسِبُ وَمَنْ

يَتَوَكَّلْ عَلَى اللَّهِ فَهُوَ حَسْبُهُ إِنَّ اللَّهَ بَالِغُ أَمْرِهِ قَدْ جَعَلَ اللَّهُ لِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدْرًا



صدق الله العظيم

سورة الطلاق، الآيتان (2-3)

**In the name of Allah, Most Gracious, the Most
Merciful**

**“And whoever fears Allah – He will make for him a way out.
And will provide for him from where he does not expect.
And whoever relies upon Allah – then He is sufficient for
him. Indeed, Allah will accomplish His purpose. Allah has
already set for everything a decreed extent.”**

Almighty Allah has spoken the truth

Surah At-Talaq, verses (2–3)

(Al-Hilali & Khan, 1996)

Supervisor's Certificate

I hereby certify that the thesis entitled “A Cognitive Semiotic Analysis of Visual Rhetoric in Caricatures Depicting the Iran-Israel Political Rivalry (2025)” by (Heidar Yahia Juma'a Al-fureigy) has been prepared and written under my supervision at the Department of English/ College of Education for Human Sciences/ Wasit University, as a partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Education in English Language and Linguistics.

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Date: 28 / 6 / 2026

In view of the available recommendations, I forward this thesis for debate by the Examining Committee.

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We certify that we have read the thesis entitled “**A Cognitive Semiotic Analysis of Visual Rhetoric in Caricatures Depicting the Iran-Israel Political Rivalry (2025)**” and as an examining committee, we examined the student (**Heidar Yahia Juma'a**) in its contents, and that in our opinion, it is adequate as a thesis for the degree of Master of Education in English Language and Linguistics

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Date: / / 2026

Dedication

To my father, the strength of my life, whose love
guides me in every step.

To my mother, the heart of all that I am, whose
care and sacrifice made this possible.

To my family, my safe place, my source of love
and hope, and the roots of every dream I hold.

Heidar

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List of Abbreviations

CMTConceptual Metaphor Theory

PCsPolitical Cartoons

VRVisual Rhetoric

Abstract

This study examines the role of political caricatures as powerful instruments that shape public perception and reveal the underlying ideological dimensions of the 2025 Iran–Israel conflict. It demonstrates the utility of an integrated cognitive semiotic approach to uncover meanings that transcend superficial interpretations. This study represents a new contribution as the first to investigate political cartoons depicting the 2025 Iran–Israel conflict and the first to apply a cognitive semiotic framework to this specific geopolitical event. The study aims to highlight how this dual approach reveals deep-seated meanings and ideological positions embedded within visual humor. Additionally, it analyzes the interaction between the visual and cognitive dimensions of the selected caricatures. Furthermore, the study explores how these cartoons construct representations of power dynamics, key actors, and actions, thereby influencing audience perception. A qualitative research design was utilized to analyze a purposive sample of 10 caricatures: five depicting Israel negatively and five depicting Iran negatively. The analytical framework relies on an eclectic model combining Kress and van Leeuwen’s (2006) visual grammar and Lakoff and Johnson’s (1980) Conceptual Metaphor Theory. The findings indicate that this integrated approach successfully uncovers how caricatures communicate concise yet powerful ideological messages. Moreover, the interaction of cognitive and visual elements allows abstract political concepts to materialize visually, guiding viewers toward specific interpretations. These visuals alter audience perception by illustrating shifting power dynamics, frequently portraying figures such as Benjamin Netanyahu, Donald Trump, and Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei as victims, aggressors, or dependents.

CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

1.1 Background

War is a political decision whereby governments use their military power to determine which side is stronger and can therefore impose its authority on the other side when these governments are incapable of settling a disagreement over the rights they have, responsibilities, or ambitions (Sorel, 1912). In this vein, Aron ,(1966) clarifies an unavoidable consequence of war as being responsible for the survival or disappearance of nations.

Moving from the notion of war itself to its representation, the media plays a significant role in revealing the way in which such conflicts are comprehended. Bakhtin (1990) states that we can obtain an alternative viewpoint on a subject through an artistic representation. This idea applies strongly to caricatures, which are widely used in the media to depict political events, rivalries, and conflicts. In this context, caricatures are not drawings made randomly, but they are signs of a highly structured systems, and they express complex meanings in a simple, but nevertheless powerful way. Therefore, understanding these meanings requires considering them in a cognitive semiotic perspective. Duchak (2014) explains that visuals are associated with the cognitive aspects of human, meaning that people naturally process and interpret visual signs. A cognitive semiotic approach, thus, would help in revealing the way in which viewers connect the visual elements in a given caricature to a deeper and richer meanings, especially in the context of Iran-Israel conflict.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

The 2025 conflict between Iran and Israel attracted a global attention and it was widely represented in various forms of media, especially in the form of caricatures, that are considered powerful by many scholars because they use simple images and symbols to express complex ideas and stances, especially the political ones.

However, despite the importance of this conflict, there are no recent academic studies that focus on how it is represented visually in caricatures, as most previous research studies have examined older political conflicts or general political themes, which means that this specific conflict remains underexplored in the literature. This creates a clear research gap, as we still do not fully understand how caricatures depict and interpret the 2025 conflict of Iran and Israel.

In addition, other studies in this area usually concentrated on only one method of analysis. For instance, some researchers use a semiotic framework to investigate images and visual meaning. Others employ cognitive approaches to understand how people conceptualize and interpret ideas. However, this is the first study that combines these two approaches together in considering this conflict.

Therefore, two main gaps attempted to be filled in this study. First, it is the first study to examine how the 2025 conflict between Iran and Israel is represented in caricatures. Second, it is the first to use a combined cognitive semiotic approach for this conflict, bringing together "visual grammar" and "conceptual metaphor theory". Accordingly, by doing so, the study aims to provide a clearer and more complete understanding of how caricatures create meaning, influence people's thinking, and reflect different political views about the rivalry of these two countries.

1.3 Research Questions

The study attempts to answer these questions:

1. How does a combined cognitive semiotic approach help in understanding the deeper meanings and ideological messages in caricatures about the 2025 Iran-Israel conflict?
2. How do cognitive and visual elements interact in caricatures to construct particular ideological perspectives about the 2025 Iran-Israel conflict?
3. How do these caricatures represent power relations, actors, actions and shape the perception of the viewers?

1.4 Research Objectives

The study aims to achieve these objectives:

1. Investigating how a cognitive semiotic approach can be used to reveal deeper meanings and ideological stances in the caricatures of the 2025 conflict between Iran and Israel.
2. Analyzing how visual elements and cognitive elements interact in caricatures to construct ideological perspectives about the 2025 Iran–Israel conflict.
3. Examining how these caricatures represent power relations, actors, and actions, and how these representations influence audience perception.

1.5 Procedures

1. Providing a literature review on the overall elements regarding the topic of the study.
2. Choosing an integrated approach, namely, a cognitive semiotic approach, which employs visual grammar and conceptual metaphor theory to analyze the given data.
3. Selecting 10 caricatures divided into two sets, where each serves a specific purpose.
4. Conducting the analysis qualitatively.
5. Developing discussions to the results and conclude with recommendations for further research.

1.6 Limits

This study is basically based on 10 caricatures that are related to the geopolitical conflict between Iran and Israel, and it is also limited to a specific period of time. The study is limited to caricatures produced during the year 2025. Additionally, the interpretation of the selected caricatures may vary due to different cultural backgrounds of the audience.

1.7 Significance of the Study

The significance of this study lies in its examination of how caricatures function as a visual tool capable of shaping public understanding of the conflict between Iran and Israel. The analytical framework employed in this study contributes to demonstrating the importance of visual elements in reflecting and reinforcing ideological positions and their impact on the audience. Additionally, it reinforces the idea that the realm of war is not limited to the military sphere, but it also encompasses the media representation and discourse, thereby contributing to a richer understanding of visual communication and cognition in this time of conflict.

Chapter Two

Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

This chapter reviews studies relevant to the cognitive semiotic analysis of visual rhetoric in political caricatures depicting the Iran and Israel conflict. It aims to establish the theoretical background necessary for understanding how meaning is constructed in political caricatures, specifically those related to that conflict. The chapter begins with cognitive semiotics, concentrating on its definition, its scope, and the role of cognition in interpreting signs of semiotic. It explains how cognitive processes such as perception and conceptual metaphor contribute to meaning-making in visual representations. The chapter then examines visual rhetoric in political cartoons, it highlights common strategies such as hyperbole, irony, metaphor, and satire, and their persuasive effects.

Next, the chapter reviews a semiotic approach to the analysis of political caricature, the thing that provides specific tools for interpreting visual and symbolic meanings. It also contextualizes the study within the Iran-Israel conflict in 2025, and emphasizes the role of caricatures in political discourse. Finally, the chapter reviews the related previous studies to identify research gaps and justify the current study.

2.2 Cognitive Semiotics

To provide a comprehensive clear definition of cognitive semiotics, it is first necessary to examine its constituent components and how they work together within a single framework to contribute to explaining and understanding something. This starting point is important because this field itself is an interdisciplinary one, and therefore its overall definition may not be grasped completely without recognizing the foundations on which it is built, which helps to see how their interplay paves the way to a new standpoint that neither field could fulfill alone. Starting with semiotics that Eco (1976) has defined as “everything that can be taken as a sign” (p.7).

In this vein, Chandler (2007) illustrates that signs can be noticed in various forms whether in speech, the language of the body or in a visual form. Keeping this notion

in its generality. However, according to Parsa (2009) images, sounds, and even words can be considered as signs.

In a book devoted to a theory of semiotics, Eco (1976) examined the role that culture plays in the perception of signs. He clarifies:

"If every communication process must be explained as relating to a system of significations, it is necessary to single out the elementary structure of communication at the point where communication may be seen at its most elementary terms. Although every pattern of signification is a cultural convention, there is one communicative process in which there seems to be no cultural convention at all, but only . . . the passage of stimuli. This occurs when so-called physical "information" is transmitted between two mechanical devices". (p. 32)

Cowels (2011) highlights the anatomical linkage between the brain, which governs cognition , and vision, which is the basis for perceiving visual objects, where he states that the visual cortex, which processes information from the eyes and enables us to identify the identity, location, and movement of things, is part of the cerebrum which is a region of the brain in charge of many basic aspects of cognition. This link explains how the visual perception provides the foundation for sign interpretation and meaning construction, as they both contribute to the process of making meaning. As stated by Sonesson (2012), Semiotics is interested in embracing cognitive science's methodology, which entails putting its own research problems to the test.

The way people assimilate visual scenes is not merely a result of what is seen but also of how they interpret and process those visual signs cognitively. Harley (2014) states that "Studies of eye movements in the visual world paradigm tell us something about how people formulate descriptions of visual scenes". (p.402), by showing how meaning is built through the interplay of visual signs and cognitive frameworks, Harley is therefore reflecting a relation to cognitive semiotics.

Zlatev (2012), clarifies how cognitive semiotics differs from other approaches due to the incorporation of the following characteristics: "(a) integration of theoretical and empirical research; (b) ontological pluralism and methodological

triangulation; (c) influence of phenomenology; (d) focus on dynamism and (e) the ambition of true transdisciplinarity"(p2). According to Zlatev (2012), cognitive semiotics is an evolving discipline that its main concentration takes account of the interdisciplinary exploration of meaning by relying on the expertise of scholars from the fields of semiotics, philosophy, linguistics and developmental and comparative psychology.

Bringing together the theories and findings of semiotics and cognitive science is the primary goal of cognitive semiotics. These include, perhaps most significantly, semiotics' preference for various forms of meaning, its concern in change and progression, and cognitive science's reliance on empirical methods (Sonesson, 2012). Overall, cognitive semiotics seeks to offer fresh perspectives on the characteristics and customs of humans and other species that generate meaning. (Zlatev , 2012).

2.2.1 The Role of Cognition in Semiotic Interpretation

In examining the relationship between semiotics and cognition , a central and basic insight is that, the interpretation of signs is not merely a passive decoding process, but it is an active process of cognition. As López-Varela (2022) clarifies, “Cognition entails very complex networks of biological processes and actions that encompass perception, attention, manipulation of objects, memory mechanisms, and the formation of knowledge by means of direct experience as well as by learning from others” (p. 1). So, in semiotic interpretations, the human mind must pay attention to perceptual stimuli, recall past knowledge, and to be engaged with symbolic standards and conventions to assign meaning, which ultimately renders the interpretation to be based in the entire complexity of cognition, rather than abstract rules and norms of sign systems .

Another important issue to be mentioned in this regard is the way in which the semiotic theory itself can influence models of cognition. According to Camargo (2022) “perception and action [are] two connected moments bound together by signs”(p. 3), indicating that cognition is mediated by semiotics. In this view, human mind does not only perceive objects and then produce the signs, but sign processes are indispensable to perception and action. Thus, in the interpretations of Semiotics,

cognition is not merely an external component that stands above semantics, but is linked to semiosis. The interpretive act, then, is considered as a form of embodied cognition, as signs that serve to mediate the interplay of sensory input, motor possibilities and conceptual integration (Camargo ,2022).

The cognitive strategies of the semiotic interpreter are shaped by typologies of signs and by semiotic hierarchies. Brandt (2011) states that “linguistic communication ... cannot be understood as meaning production without a deeper study of these underlying semiotic properties of the human mind” (para. 1). In other words, cognition in semiotic interpretations must be in accommodation or actually in compliance with metaphors, blending, indexical references, iconicity and symbolic dimensions. The interpreter must manage layers of the various kinds of sign (icon, index, symbol) and be aware of the way in which meaning is constructed through contrast, analogy and contextual modification, which calls for adaptable and flexible cognitive processes instead of a strict rule-based systems.

Semiotic interpretations are further clarified by examining how cognition advocate blending and metaphor, especially in expressive language. As Brandt (2005) points out, “examples of expressive blends, such as metaphor, need to be accounted for in semiotic terms, since they occur in — intersubjective as well as private — communication, which is essentially semiotic in nature” (p. 220). In this regard, cognition enables individuals to combine conceptual contents to form novel meaningful blends. Thus, cognition is not merely reactive but it is generative because it constructs new semiotic structures in response to expressive needs. Thus, cogniton is essential in shaping the interpretation of signs, how metaphors are comprehended, and how meaning is produced through communicative contexts.

2.3 Visual Rhetoric

To better understand visual rhetoric, an understanding of rhetoric must be obtained in the first place which dates back to ancient Greece as Kennedy (1994) claimes. Poulakos’ (1983) interpretation of rhetoric focuses on the artistic expression of rhetoric where he clarifies that: "Rhetoric is the art which seeks to capture in opportune moments that which is appropriate and attempts to suggest that which is possible. Very briefly, this definition intimates that rhetoric is an artistic

undertaking which concerns itself with the how, the when, and the what of expression and understands the why of purpose" (p. 36). In addition, rhetoric relies heavily on stylistic devices, such as metaphor, for persuasive purposes (Kenney, 2002). Building on the foundation of rhetorical principles into visual communication, Yenawine (1997, p. 845) defines visual rhetoric (VR) as "the ability to find meaning in imagery". Similarly, Foss (2005) defines visual rhetoric as: "the term used to describe the study of visual imagery within the discipline of rhetoric" (p. 141). Furthermore, Cray (1996) explains the meaning of vision as the optical experience obtained by the viewer and produced by and within the subject. Hill (2008) explains that a great deal of vivid information, once available in a visual image, will have the ability to persuade and communicate just like realistic paintings, static photographs, line drawing, and textual experiences do. Nevertheless, visual persuasion can fail if the images chosen do not resonate with an audience's conceptions (Blair, 2004). Therefore, in trying to convince an audience of an argument, it is necessary to anchor the claim to socially shared knowledge (Smith, 2007). Once the connection between visual image and intended meaning is created, the image can be used, even in an abstract form, to trigger associations with this shared meaning (Hill, 2004).

As the field developed, VR has emerged as a critical discipline for examining the power of these images[caricatures] with the tools of semiotics and rhetorical analysis. But a warning is worth noting, expressed by Foss (2005, p. 150): "Not every visual object is visual rhetoric. What turns a visual object into a communicative artifact is the presence of three characteristics. The image must be symbolic, involve human intervention, and be presented to an audience for the purpose of communicating with that audience." In relation to this, Foss (2004) developed a framework for visual rhetoric study that is; nature, function and evaluation where nature is primarily concerned with explication of the presented and suggested elements of the text. Scholars of visual rhetoric might also explore the function of the artifact, which Foss notes is not synonymous with purpose: Rather, it acknowledges that the creator's intentions do not determine the correct interpretation of a work. Finally, scholars might evaluate the artifact against its apparent accomplishment of its function (Foss, 2004) .

If one were to pick a starting point for visual semiotics ,and later VR, it is probably Roland Barthes's pivotal article, "The Rhetoric of the Image" (1964). Barthes started by noting that the word "image" derives from a Latin term meaning "imitation," posing the question of how something that is an imitation of something else can be so imbued with meaning. "Images," he states, "depict or re-present realities but are not themselves realities" (Gitlin, 2001, p. 22).

2.4 Political Cartoons

The term cartoon "refers first to metaphorical codification and second to a satirical or humorous genre through which a cartoonist subtly informs, criticizes and entertains his audience" (El Refaie 2009, p.181). Pryor and Elizabeth (2004) describe cartoons as a form of communication used to transform stories and messages, and they often express ideas that may be difficult to state directly in written text. Similarly, Barker (2016) notes that cartoons give liberty to the creator to spread awareness through the messages being embedded in the form of cartoons.

Political cartoons (PCs), in particular, are recognized as both "opinion-molding and opinion-reflecting" (Caswell, 2004, p. 14). They are considered a form of satire and able to reach their intended function through the use of caricature and satire (Bal et al., 2009). According to Dodds (2010), political cartoons can be "informative , persuasive, and draw upon the commonsense understandings of a shared readership community in order to convey a particular interpretation and desire for an action"(p.119).

Historically, Benjamin Franklin is considered to be as the pioneer of political cartoons. His first artistic cartoon of a snake which is labeled "Join or Die" represents American colonies, promoted nationalism and brings a new idea about how complicated and complex political issues or settings can be represented by an image (Political Cartoons, 2022). Since then, political cartoons continued to serve to reflect and shape public opinion.

Sani et al. (2014) found that PCs embody images, words, and satire that can entertain as well as inform the public on current issues. These visuals constitute a social discourse that reflects current happenings and social practices. Sani et al. (2012) further describe political cartoons as a vehicle of setting a social agenda.

They explain that cartoons in newspapers can be used to affect public opinion and to convey a specific meaning, and they focus upon images and visual representations to reflect issues and events on a societal and political level.

The effectiveness of political cartoons are often regarded as effective because of their symbolic nature, as Abraham (2009) argues, their humor derives from the ability to deconstruct complex ideas through the use of symbolic images, the highest form of wit. However, to fully understand these messages, viewers must be “familiar with conventional meaning of the cultural sources of the symbol” (Abraham, 2009, p. 156). Mazid (2000) focuses upon PCs adopting certain analytical tools to address the semiotic, pragmatic and linguistic aspects of the text, where he shows that cartoon, like all texts, “does not offer a single meaning that will be decoded in the same way by all readers”. (p. 53). Mateus (2016) adds that while creating political cartoons, it is very important to consider the social context of the particular event. According to Abdul-Raheem (2020), political cartoons remained successful due to the use of both verbal and non-verbal features.

Adejuwon and Alimi (2009) refer to the metaphorical and satirical representations of cartoons, through which cartoonist can teach and entertain viewers, as they show two types of cartoons; firstly, cartoons of opinions which focus on domestic politics, social themes and foreign affairs; secondly, cartoons of jokes which are designed for the purpose of humor.

2.5 Caricature Strategies

Visual strategies of caricature are techniques used in order to represent an item in an exaggerated and simplified way, usually employed in drawings or in cartoons, and their main goal is not reality, but to provide commentary, to criticize, mock, or highlight certain behaviors, or situations regarding specific event. These strategies are used widely in political cartoons, media or even advertising to convey complex messages quickly and in an effective manner. The study hereby will investigate them as follows:

2.5.1 Metaphor

People often use metaphor to draw analogies between concepts to other concepts that still have similarities with each other, and according to Holman (1980), a metaphor is an implicit comparison between two separate items. In a similar vein, Popa (2013) sees metaphor as a technique of transmitting experiences to the rest of humanity. According to Lakoff and Johnson (1980), metaphors serve a significant part within the framework of constructing thoughts or related sign systems, as well as in language, which indicate that metaphor is not only linguistic device, but also a conceptual and cognitive tool through which people make sense of particular events.

To have an insight from a social and psychological perspective, metaphor also has a strong expressive and persuasive function. This can be seen as explained by Attia (2010), as contributing to the formation of individuals beliefs and affect their points of view. In the same context, Cameron (2008) states that speakers apply metaphors to describe their particular beliefs, emotions, and ideas with the goal of stressing their own distinct personalities, revealing that metaphor is closely linked to ideology, identity, and evaluation, which makes metaphor particularly effective in such kind of communication which is caricature.

Moreover, metaphors extend beyond written and verbal communication to graphical representations, as It is not only exists in the language itself, but also in numerous additional facets that individuals encounter. These domains extend to cartoons and paintings, as well as films, marketing signs, legends, vision clarifications, explanations of the past events, politics, ethical behaviors, organizations of society, cultural habits, gestures, and multimodal metaphors (Kövecses, 2010, p. 63). In this regard, Lopez and Schaefer (2005) demonstrate how cartoons that are metaphorical may be employed for promoting mental and emotional activity. This kind of use of metaphor is especially evident in political contexts, in which visual caricatures often used to simplify complex issues. According to Charteris-Black (2011), political declarations employ metaphors to increase their impact and persuasiveness. When narrating stories, officials adopt metaphor as a means of evoking emotional responses. According to Charteris-Black (2011), metaphor is indispensable in the discourse practiced by politicians.

2.5.2 Hyperbole

More precisely, to exaggerate or distort something is the core idea of the notion of caricature (Moore, 2011, p. 13). This strategy is similarly linked to the hyperbole, that is commonly referred to as exaggeration. Exaggeration has been studied since Grecian times, where its prominence in the range of figures of speech has been widely acknowledged. It is an increasingly popular tool of rhetoric, ranking immediately after metaphor in terms of usage, according to scientific research (Kreuz et al., 1996).

The historical and rhetorical importance indicates the reason in which hyperbole is regarded as a prominent technique in caricature. Considering a theoretical perspective, the notion of hyperbole has been defined in various but related ways at the same time. Hyperbole is a representation in which the amount or state of a reality is increased or reduced in different levels in a subjective matter, irrespective of being intentional or not, yet consistently overpowering in an expression that audiences are unlikely to comprehend as its literal meaning or recognize as a dishonesty (Cano Mora, 2006). In the same manner, Stern (2000) considered hyperbole as a type of rhetorical practice in which the individual using it expresses one idea yet implying a different one.

In line with this, Burgers et al. (2016) describes hyperbole as a description that, considering its existential context, seems further severe than ideal, highlighting the fact that the initial component of hyperbole is exaggeration (Burgers et al., 2016). In daily life, hyperbole serves as a device for evaluation and emphasis, as Leech (1983) states that People frequently utilize exaggeration in regular talks to exaggerate and assess. The person who speaks is exaggerating a trait or item during times when he communicates in a hyperbolic manner (Carston & Wearing, 2015). People typically use exaggeration to highlight the significance of a point (Norasetkosol, Timyam, & Sriussadaporn, 2012). This emphatic role is especially important in caricature, when prominent characteristics are emphasized or political and social characters receive criticism through spoken and pictorial hyperbole.

Moreover, pragmatic considerations play a major role in the understanding of hyperbole. When a listener closes the distance between the speaker's potential

meaning and the actual circumstances, hyperbole is successfully interpreted (Carston & Wearing, 2015). The scientific literature additionally believes in the fact that hyperboles are activities of pragmatism. According to McCarthy and Carter (2004), who support this viewpoint on the necessity of context-dependent, non-linguistic knowledge, comprehending a hyperbole entails recognizing a distinction regarding the word used and the subject matter, or a difference between the actual situation as it really is in addition to how it is portrayed. Claridge (2010), supported this notion as he claimed that context-specific expertise plays a crucial role in spotting instances of hyperbole.

2.5.3 Humour

Humour plays a complex and multidimensional role in caricatures. Although caricature frequently corresponds to enjoyment, Rhodes (2005) makes a crucial contribution as he points out that not every caricature is comical; certain ones are rarely entertaining, particularly those that are directed at a particular problem like ethnic parody. This point emphasizes the idea that caricatural representations can have important social, political, and ideological functions in addition to being amusing and entertaining.

From a critical standpoint, humour is used into caricatures as a covert declaration that symbolizes the authority expressed beyond what is considered dominant in certain settings. Accordingly, Mulkay (1988) states that by transferring the incident from the world of reality to that of fantasy, physically misrepresenting what is being discussed, and then displaying everything to the audience as a riddle to be solved, political caricatures gain the ability to demolish the official transcript. In this way, humour turns into a tool, that can be described as tactical tool that enables caricature to undermine the established dominant perspectives and confront people in positions of power.

Humour uses a number of different tactics in regarding style and strategy. Liao (1998, p. 30) lists what are then six categories of humour tactics or strategies: "comparison", "indirect expressions", "exaggerations", "targeted humour", "satirical edge", and "meta" humour. The overall structure and rhetorical range of humour that can be found in caricature is revealed by these tactics.

An essential social and psychological function is assigned to Humour. It can be seen of as a protective device developed by society's awareness (Firat, 2014). In democratic traditions, Firat, (2014), sees the fundamental objective of humour as considered by the public, is to fulfill the duty of becoming among the most influential components of the criticism and inspection tool. According to this crucial role, when kept detached from ideals and honorable feelings, then it is an extremely significant form of complaint (Botton, 2005). Thus, humour makes it possible to convey social critique in a subtle but effective way. Moreover, Firat (2014) highlighted that instead of feelings and aspirations, humour deserves to be assessed as the result of mental ability. Creative thinking, contemporary happenings, past events, and a variety of information can all help the individual producing the humorous presentations. (Firat, 2014). Additionally, Firat considers humour as a social requirement. The function of humour as a purposeful expressive behavior instead of merely reaction due to feelings is reinforced by this intellectual and social aspects. In a more radical view, Aydın Boysan, claimed that humour lacks boundaries and is likely to be seen even in situations involving death. He claims that cruelty is an especially potent origin of humour and that suffering is the most significant instrument of cruelty (Boysan, 1984) .

2.5.4 Irony

One of the key components of caricature is irony, which is used to convey the cartoonist's or caricaturist's viewpoint regarding a genuine incident particularly related to politics (Abouelenine, 2024). Irony is among the rhetorical and pragmatic techniques utilized to accomplish this expressive purpose, it plays a crucial role since it enables caricaturists to convey meanings while in the same time retaining a degree of wit and intellectual ambiguity implicated by the caricaturist. Pollard (1970) explains it as a means of attack or a weapon used as distortions, according to Pollard, full distortion is accomplished in the manner of inverted representation, and the incorporation of certain aspects such as exclusion, inference, and implication in its consequences. This definition emphasizes the manner in which irony depends on expressing or displaying anything that appears to be in a contrastive standpoint with the specific intended meaning, which actually works well in caricatures, where

contradictions, hypocrisy, or hidden messages in social and political events can be revealed clearly through verbal or visual reversal.

However, via irony, multiple communicative functions are accomplished. Hutcheon (1995, pp. 43–53) lists the following purposes of irony: "Reinforcing" to draw attention to a certain message; "Complicating" in which the abundance and depth of comprehension; are conveyed "Lucid" to convey amusement and mockery along with carelessness and degrading; "Distancing" to prevent one from being held downward; "Self-Protective" this function serve as a protection strategy; "Provisional" this function of irony implies rejection, insincerity, and dishonesty; "Oppositional" to denote demeaning remarks and violations; "Assailing" for illustrating the assault or bursting on a subject; and the purpose is "Aggregative". Hutcheon's categorization of the functions of irony indicates that it is not a device of a single purpose but it is a flexible tool that serves to enable caricatures to make criticism, mockery, as well as engaging the audiences in a layered interpretation of the meaning.

2.5.5 Stereotype

Stereotype is considered to be as a strategy of representation commonly used in different forms of discourse including the use of caricature, where repeated and simplified images are used to express meaning in a quick and easy way. According to Cardwell and Marcouse (1996), a stereotype is a broad conception or a common belief that assign specific features to everyone who is part of a specific social group or category of individuals. Therefore a generalizing function of stereotype can be found, which allows complexity to be minimized, but at the same time it risks promoting misrepresentation and overgeneralization.

Regarding a descriptive perspective, Caswell (2004) claims that no uniqueness or diversity can be seen in the notion of stereotype. Many stereotypes have their foundation on physical attributes or typical actions. For instance, some Irish people have hair that is coloured genuinely in red, the forms of their jawlines are square, and lengthy foreheads (Caswell 2004). Such examples show the way in which stereotypes depend on fixed and simultaneously repetitive features that disregard differences that are individual in favor of traits that can be recognized easily.

Stereotypes are often linked to prejudice and negative evaluation, as Bordalo et al. (2016) shed light on this sociological point of view, where he presents the negative aspect of stereotype claiming that it is essentially false and degrading practice, because the generalized traits may be a reflection of a subjective judgments of the stereotype creators. This aspect emphasizes and reinforces the idea that stereotypes are not neutral representation, but they are socially constructed tools that can support bias and unequal power relations.

2.5.6 Labelling

Labelling is a communicative strategy that serves in shaping the meaning and interpretation in various forms of discourse, where Guigar (2005) describes it as the process through which one writes each individual's precise name instantly on the appropriate character. In caricature, this strategy helps in guiding the viewer's comprehension by identifying characters and showing their roles or identities explicitly within specific scene. Additionally, labelling has important psychological and societal consequences. According to Link et al. (1989) theory, which is modified, labeling has damaging consequences irrespective of whether it doesn't straightly contribute to the unfavorable results since it triggers preconceptions maintained by members of the general population and the people who have been tagged by the given label (Link et al., 1989). In this sense, labelling acts as a trigger for generally accepted ideas shared by society, which can affect how individuals are perceived and how they see themselves.

Labels that are disruptive, according to Simons et al. (2004), they might weaken ties to traditional community. This weakening of social ties cause exclusion and discrimination, which reinforces the label's negative impacts. In a similar vein, Goffman (1963) observes that stigmatized people evaluate themselves according to societal norms, which results in conflicting emotions on their own personalities because they tend to hold taught beliefs regarding their reputation.

2.5.7 Symbolism

Symbols are believed to be more noticeable in everyday situations and are probably utilized in almost every profession. This notion is demonstrated by the observation that pictures are favored above written material in numerous disciplines

(Yengin, 1996). Accordingly, the communicative and representative power of symbolism is indicated by this reliance on visuals, especially in the form of caricature, where meaning must often effectively and quickly be received.

Symbolism has deep historical and cultural roots. According to Fontana (1993), symbols have been a part of civilization for generations. It was shown in prehistoric cave art. These symbols could have a mystical purpose or explain a significant trend in people's emotions. They could stand for conceptual or architectural objects, animals, or other elements of the natural world (Fontana, 1993).

Symbolism holds a central position, from a literary and aesthetic perspective. According to MacMahan et al. (1986), among the most crucial elements in genuine creative work is symbolism. Cassirer (1944) highlights how they are challenging to understand and articulate. Yet, highly associated with concepts that are extremely essential to the intellect of humans and have sentimental value. Additionally, in visual and particularly political discourse, symbols often stands for representations of ideas and ideologies. According to Gadalla (1998, p. 67), symbols stand for conceptions, beliefs, and ideas like "Uncle Sam", "Russian Bear", and "British Bulldog."

However, the effectiveness of such symbols depends heavily on shared cultural knowledge. Razzaq (2022) highlights the role of audience competence in understanding the meaning of the symbols, according to him, It is vital to take into account that if the intended audience fails to be acquainted enough to interpret the cartoonist's symbols, then the caricature may seem completely implausible.

Moreover, symbolism should be distinguished from other related concepts, Morrison (2002) asserts that symbolism should be kept away from other notions such as allegory. According to his definition, a symbol converts something to a certain notion and then converts that specific notion into a visual representation, but additionally this process happens in a manner that gives this notion in the visual form limitless implications and keeps it invisible, meaning that it would never be explicitly conveyed even if it were stated through all languages in the world (Morrison, 2002).

2.5.8 Gestures

In political cartoons, and more generally in visual discourse, Gestures are an indispensable strategy used in the construction of meaning processes, especially in the form of caricature. According to Press (1981, p. 62), political cartoons consist of three fundamental components. "The picture of reality" what we perceive by creators as an embodiment of fact is part of the initial component. "A message", often inferred and not clearly stated component. The last component regards the use of artistic strategies and metaphorical depictions. The artist creates an atmosphere in this aspect that conveys or conveys emotions and perceptions related to what is taking place, and they serve as an effective visual tool for the purpose of expressing feelings and implicit interpretations inside this artistic and allegorical realm.

However, culture has a strong influence on how influential gestures are, and almost any facet of gesturing are influenced by culture (Efron, 1941). This reliance on the cultural perspective means that gestures in cartoons or precisely in caricatures rely on shared knowledge between the cartoonist and audience in order to interpret and understand it correctly.

In the realm of political cartoons, gestures can occasionally entirely substitute the place of spoken words. According to Emmorey and Reilly (1995), political cartoonists can convey an essential point by using gestures rather than using words. It can be utilized to show pictures of certain behaviors or occasions, or like the metaphorical gesture which is employed to convey intangible message that alters meaning and sparks fresh creativity.

2.5.9 Distortion

One of the most basic techniques of caricature is distortion, which is crucial to determining the visual effect of caricatures in general. Creators of caricatures most frequently use the technique of distorting someone's physical characteristics since it is the most straightforward and simplest to perform of all the other techniques of caricature (Hannoosh, 1992). This technique allows the artists to attract attention of the audience immediately and communicate meaning via visual exaggeration.

Distortion, as opposed to realistic portrayal, has a particular expressive purpose. whatever the circumstances of the identity, the primary distinction between normal pictures and caricatural representation, is that the latter highlights characteristics that purposely stray from the conventional traits to a humiliating extent (Rivers, 1991, p. 14), and by emphasizing these deviations, distortion draws attention to specific characteristics, views, or shortcomings of the topic, frequently resulting in ironic, judgmental results, or hilarious ones.

2.5.10 Dialogue

Through short or brief utterances, dialogue contributes in guiding the reader's interpretation and reinforce the visual elements of the cartoon. Political cartoons illustrate more rapidly occurring events and contain dialogue. Lanning and Brown (2019) assert that verbal and cognitive involvement are necessary for traditional comprehension evaluations. Therefore, dialogue can be employed in cartoons concerning politics to convey an obvious point.

However, the dialogue used in political cartoons is a complex communicative phenomenon rather than being a straightforward addition, for it entails striking an agreement among context and language on the one side as well as between language and specific groups on the other, it is a complicated process (Fischer, 2012). Because of this intricacy, successful speech that conveys meaning requires meticulous compliance with environmental settings, comprehension of culture, and sensory input. In other words, by combining verbal interaction with visual representation, dialogue enables those who create cartoons, and henceforth caricatures, to communicate complex ideas quickly while in the same time maintaining a balance between linguistic expression and contextual interpretation.

2.6 The Influence of Humour and Satire in Political Cartoons

Political cartoons are a powerful form of communication that individuals use by combining visual imagery with humour and satire to express complex political messages that is difficult express explicitly. Walker, (2003) states that political cartoons' deceptively regarded as a harmless humour which is one of their most alluring qualities. Cartoons' contents are readily accepted by viewers, frequently with no significant critical opposition or in-depth contemplation, for the reason they

are typically delivered under the cover of amusement. This feature enables political cartoons to play a vital part in shaping public perceptions and political discourse (Walker, 2003).

According to Greenberg (2002), political cartoons are more effective when spectators and the artist who draws them have similar backgrounds and experiences. The shared knowledge allows humour and satire to act in an effective manner, as meanings are expressed and communicated more easily, and correspond with the audience's beliefs and attitudes.

Satire is central in comprehending this visual representations. In this context, Rivers (1991) defines caricature as the creative application of distortion in satire, therefore, emphasizing exaggeration as a main strategy for criticism as the artists expose contradictions, and weaknesses in political realm by using distortion and exaggeration. However, satire is not always the right tool to be used in political cartoons. Diamond (2002) clarifies the serious functions of cartoons, showing that political cartoons that depict catastrophic traumas like the tragedy of September 11th do not require humour, levity, or sarcasm. Despite this, Political cartoons utilize humour as a tool to draw attention to the present state of politics and societal problems. As a result, social and political ridiculousness can be exposed via the employment of humour (Kulkarni, 2004).

Different types of humour also operate within political cartoons, due to a survey regarding styles of humour, by Martin, Puhlik-Doris, Larsen Gray, and Weir (2003) where they distinguished four categories. These include self-harming style, aggressive humour, self-improving , and supportive humour. However, aggressive humour typically refers to the application of comedy to elevate oneself to the detriment of people around them. Only by slandering, severely taunting, belittling, or disparaging others in an effort to appear more valuable while others are not. Sarcasm, taunting, mockery, contempt, or disparaging humour are all considered forms of aggressive humour (Zillmann & Bryant, 1980).

Humour seeks to undermine those in power positions by making those authority appear foolish , corrupt , or incompetent, where the relationships between power and humour is seen to be very crucial in political cartoons. According to

Arendt (2003), mockery or humour is the biggest opponent of power and it lives via dignity and respect. When the authority becomes target to humour and satire, its legitimacy is weakened and distorted as well. Maintaining legitimacy in political realm requires authority to uphold its good name, and once this disappears, the political authority diminishes correspondingly. In this way, mockery of authority figures represents a significant barrier to their social legitimacy (Firat, 2014).

2.7 Semiotic Analysis of Political Caricatures

Political caricatures are considered to be as an important representation of visual communication that create meaning and convey political, social, and cultural messages. Visual discourses are tools for representing meanings that are obtained from experience and executing relations of interpersonal nature (Kress and Van Leeuwen, 2006, p. 1). In this sense, caricatures and cartoons operate as visual tools that allow individuals to interpret and engage with political and social events. Individuals tend to be more able to comprehend key concepts and their significance when images are used in place of words (Abdulrazzaq, 2022), which accordingly demonstrate how efficient visual media are in highlighting complex messages.

The idea of semiotics, that has a foundation in the scientific investigation of symbolism and signs, has a significant impact regarding the investigations of interaction through visuals, especially cartoons (Hasanah & Hidayat, 2020). A theoretical foundation for examining how interpretation is created, conveyed, and understood using a variety of signs is supplied by the field of semiotics, as Silverman (2006, p. 249) refers to the discipline of semiotics as an academic study of signs devoted to examining the way in which this items link to the others in order to establish certain interpretations, whereas Schwandt (1997, p. 114) characterizes it as "a theory of signs" or a framework for studying the association between information and signs.

In the context of caricature, semiotic analysis helps us to show specific differences and similarities between two related visual forms. Caricatures and cartoons are occasionally used interchangeably, according to Streicher (1967) and Hoffman (1958) (quoted in Alghezzy, 2017). Caricatures differ in the application of hyperbole and its distorting nature, however the two usually involve being backed

by verbal tags or subtitles that succinctly convey the cartoon's intended content (Alahmadi, 2022). People who create caricatures, namely caricaturists, are commonly named as cartoonists, as well as the two use verbal and visual signals to convey their thoughts, frequently including mockery or derision (Streicher, 1967).

Political caricatures serve multiple functions in communicative and social contexts, as Calder et al. (2000) claim, caricatures contribute in the representation of personal characteristics, beliefs, viewpoints, and preconceptions. In all forms of media, they are utilized to convey important concepts regarding politics (Shaikh, Tariq, & Saqlain, 2019) and have additionally evolved into a way for individuals to share opinions and criticize societal issues.

A great deal of scholarly investigations (Machin, 2007; De Sousa & Medhurst, 1981) indicate that sociopolitical caricaturists utilize familiar signs and symbols to facilitate the viewer's understanding of politically charged situations, the thing that emphasize the principle of semiotic that meaning is constructed via common cultural knowledge. Political caricatures serve as a means for community to interact and communicate with governmental organizations and to display the current state of politics of the entire globe, they serve as instruments for social involvement and public participation as well (Dugalich, 2018). The primary goal of caricatures is to persuade and sway people by portraying the public's responses to political events. they offer visual representations of political messages that encompass aggressive actions, intricate policies, significant historical occurrences, and even entertainment. (De Sousa & Medhurst, 1981; ElFalaky, 2019).

2.8 The Iran-Israel Political Rivalry

The Political rivalry of Iran and Israel represents a complex combination of historical disputes, disagreement of ideology, nuclear goals, regional power rivalries, and intervention in an international scale, which render it as one of the most volatile and consequential conflicts in the Middle East, as both Iran and Israel have a long-standing political conflict that grew more intense after the islamic revolution of Iran, these two countries had strong ties under Shah Mohammad Reza Pahlavi (1941–1979), which even led to the formation of a strategic partnership (Menashri, 2013). However, Iran's foreign policy and relationships with Israel

underwent a dramatic change as a result of the Islamic revolution of 1979, where both the United States and Israel were seen by the opponents of Shah as enemies who approved the Shah's administration and western cultural efforts. Ayatollah Khoumainsi frequently underlined this perspective, which became into a fundamental element of the revolution.

As both Iran and Israel sought nuclear weapons and saw one another as immediate dangers, the competition grew more intense and advanced to the nuclear realm. Israel has seen Iran's geographical impact by means of agents as a direct threat to its force supremacy, demographic development, and safety. In reaction, Israel has sponsored militants like the Nusra Front over Hezbollah who is allied to Iran, and the Syrian government, carried out selective combat operations in Syria, Lebanon, and Palestine, and continually pressured Washington to preserve its geopolitical position (Maher, 2018). Some scholars argue that Israel portrays Iran as a significant regional and international security threat, because it has a significant amount of control in Western media outlets and academic institutions, where the Israeli officials often claim in talks that all geographical problems stem from the Islamic Republic of Iran (Emámjomezâdeh & Bâbâei, 2015). In fact, In order to persuade the West, and the United States particularly, to support the Jewish state and strengthen ties with the Arab world, particularly Saudi Arabia, Israel greatly exaggerates the impact of Iran.(Tërã & Rostami, 2018).

It is commonly acknowledged that Iran with weapons of mass destruction resembles a threat to American and Israeli concerns and benefits, and could potentially disrupt the surrounding area. According to Kahl et al. (2012), Iran's administration is sufficiently logical to maintain nuclear deterrence, hence it is improbable that the country will intentionally deploy weapons of mass destruction or give one to terrorists. However, Iranian nuclear weapons programs might limit U.S. flexibility to operate in the Middle East, promote additional regional instability, threaten the international non-proliferation framework, and allow forceful diplomacy in the Persian gulf (Kahl et al., 2012).

In the end, outright confrontation resulted from the increase of tensions, where according to Tweissi (2025), after years of mutual accusations and indirect conflicts, war between Iran and Israel had started in on June 13, as the Israeli attacks against

several Iranian goals, notably army and nuclear installations, and the killing of prominent Iranian commanders, leaders of different positions and nuclear experts marked the start of the rivalry. Iran replied by attacking neighborhood areas in addition to army, intelligence, and technical installations by using strategic missiles and drones. On June 22, the United States engaged the battle officially and used stealth aircraft to attack three Iranian nuclear sites located in Fordow, Natanz and Isfahan.

2.9 The Role of Caricatures in Political Discourse on Iran and Israel

Caricatures are powerful tools that operate visually and convey social and political messages, and as Aritonang (2023) explains, they are visual representations that are made with particular points in mind (Aritonang, 2023). Caricature is emerging as a way to critique current incidents in society in technological climate we live currently, and according to Heru Dwi Waluyanto (2000), an effective caricature is one that responds to societal issues by combining characteristics of intellect, clarity, and vividness of cartoon imagery. These qualities makes caricature play a significant role in shaping the discourse of politics and public opinion.

Regarding the political contexts of caricatures, they often operate with the notions of satire, ideology, and propaganda, clearly revealed in debates surrounding Israel and Zionism in the Muslim Middle East. Anti-Semitism is a rising issue with serious social and political repercussions throughout the Muslim region. Since anti-Semitism frequently takes the more common form of anti-Zionism (Chesler, 2003), it has progressively earned acceptance from society in certain communities, this is partly due to the fact that anti-Semitism is situated within the longstanding religious dispute among Muslims and Jews (Webman, 2010).

In similar vein, Iran publicly demands the dissolution of Israel and positions itself as an important player considering the global movement over Israel and Zionism. Prominent political authorities, such as the nation's leader and the supreme authority, have made overtly anti-Semitic statements after the Islamic Revolution in 1979. These statements are often based on Islamic considerations. For example, Ayatollah Khomeini, explicitly likened Jews to animals such as pigs and monkeys and reaffirmed that they had betrayed the prophet Muhammad (Shahvar, 2009).

Such a standpoint reflects and develops an ideological background that effect Iranian political discourse in general, including the use of caricatures.

A key moment that highlights the political use of caricatures occurred as a reaction to the Danish cartoon controversy. Twelve cartoons that the Danish daily *Jyllands-Posten* issued in September 2005 in which Muslims considered as mocking their religion and disparaging the messenger of Allah, Muhammad peace be upon him. Discontent within the Muslim world resulted, as Danish embassies were attacked in Islamic regions , while protests in other Islamic regions claimed more than 100 lives (Fischer, 2009). As a direct response to this controversy, The *Hamshahri* newspaper which belongs to Iran, launched the Global Holocaust cartoon Competition in 2006 as a reaction to the Danish caricatures, where the declared goal of the contest was to expose Western duplicity about free expression in light of the West's handling regarding the Danish caricatures (Hussain, 2009). This contest challenged the legitimacy of the Holocaust , which shows a challenge to the moral foundation of the of Israel through caricature which in the case not merely artistic representations but are embedded within broader political, religious, and ideological spheres.

2.10 Previous Studies

Previous studies have examined visual rhetoric and caricatures from different perspectives and within various contexts. For instance, the study of Sani et al. (2012)"The Role of Humor in the Construction of Satire in Nigerian Political Cartoons ", sought to offer political commentary, discuss significant concerns, and artfully critique those in power and their unacceptable actions. He came to the conclusion that the intended point might be effectively communicated via the use of cartoons with a humorous focus, which would enable the viewers to appreciate the cartoon's clever mockery of political figures and those in higher positions.

The study of Mwetulundila (2014), "An Analysis of Rhetoric and Humour in Dudley's Political Cartoons Published in 2012", examines the humor and rhetoric in Dudley's political cartoons published in the Namibian daily. The reason that the scholar selected Dudley's caricatures is that, similar to other political cartooning artists, he expresses thoughts on concerns of public importance through his use of

rhetoric and humor. Each cartoon's examination reveals that political cartoons employ a variety of devices of rhetoric to influence viewers to critically consider problems with politics in society. These devices are employed so effectively to the extent they can convey the intended point and make an opinion.

The significant study of Algezzy (2017) "The Image of Iraqi Politics in Editorial Cartoons a Semiotic Analysis" clarifies the ways in which cartoons can serve as a conduit for interpretations that exists between audience members and creators of cartoons. Algezzy discovered that Iraqi cartoonists use humorous drawings to try to improve society in addition to entertaining their audience. Additionally, they might occasionally elicit amusing feelings in addition to indignation and wrath.

Rasheed (2020) conducted a study "Visualizing Some Iraqi Politicians' Corruption in Political Cartoons: a Cognitive-Semiotic Study" that aims to demonstrate the manner in which political cartoons expose fraud and deception in Iraqi politics and clarify how their messages are comprehended, the research investigation also looks at how editorial cartoonists impact the readers they are targeting and whether they take political cartoons seriously across various sources. She finds that political cartoons should be treated at serious stand-point because they play a significant part in exposing certain leaders' dishonesty.

In the study of M'yuuf and Al-Khazaali (2025), "When the Political Cartoons Speak: a Cognitive Semiotic Study", a cognitive semiotic standpoint was considered to examine political cartoons, emphasizing how they impact the beliefs of the society and political views, reveal social challenges, illustrate current political difficulties and dishonesty, and influence ideological perspectives and social conventions. The study finds that political cartoons have vital significance due to their ability to expose corrupt politicians and explicitly address critical political problems.

The current study builds on these earlier works by addressing the identified gaps and showing how visual metaphors and semiotic symbols shape political interpretation. It also contributes to political discourse analysis by revealing how multimodal resources such as image composition, exaggeration, symbolism, and the interaction that is based on text-image are employed strategically to influence

audience cognition and ideological alignment. Unlike previous studies, this research integrates a broader perspectives, this study offers several original contributions to the field . First, an in-depth cognitive semiotic account of how caricatures construct meaning in the context of such a prolonged and ideologically charged international rivalry is provided in this study. Second, the study advances the research on visual rhetoric by indicating how caricatures do not only entertain or make criticism, but actively contribute in framing power relations, threat perceptions, and also political identities at a global level. Finally, the study enriches cognitive semiotic theory by applying it to contemporary geopolitical caricatures, and thus expanding its analytical scope beyond the realm of domestic politics to international conflict representation and offering a systematic framework for analyzing visual political meaning in global media contexts.

CHAPTER THREE

Methodology

3.1 Introduction

This chapter outlines the methodology employed in the present study. It explains the overall design and also the procedures which the researcher follows to achieve the research objectives. The study adopts a qualitative approach because it focuses on interpreting meanings and understanding how visual elements construct the messages conveyed by the selected data.

Then the chapter provides a description of the process of data collection process, including the sources of the data, and also the criteria used for the selection of relevant samples. It then explains the analytical procedures applied in analyzing the data. Finally, in order to provide a clear framework for analysis, the study draws on two main theoretical models. First, Kress and van Leeuwen's (2006) "Visual Grammar" is used to conduct a semiotic analysis of the data by concentrating on how the selected caricatures convey their messages, while the second is Conceptual Metaphor Theory by Lakoff and Johnson (1980), which is used in this study to explore how the abstract ideas are represented and conceptualized through the conceptual metaphors found in the data.

3.2 Nature of Research

This study uses a qualitative research approach that is employed to analyze the caricatures created during the 2025 conflict between Iran and Israel. According to Creswell (1994, p. 2), a qualitative research methodology is a research method for comprehending an issue affecting humanity or society that is built on creating an interconnected or general image using words. Qualitative research is the most suitable choice for this topic because it focuses on understanding meanings, ideas, and interpretations instead of numbers. Political cartoons are not just simple drawings but they include symbols, messages, and cultural references that need careful interpretation. Political cartoons often include hidden messages, satire, and

opinions. Krippendorff (2019) argues that qualitative analysis is valuable because it focuses on the ways in which assertions and beliefs are communicated.

By using qualitative methods, the researcher can identify common themes and ideas in the cartoons. This can show how each country represents itself and its enemy, and how cartoons may be used to influence public opinion. The aforementioned kind of approach seeks to comprehend the manner and the reason a specific societal event occurs in a given setting and period of time (Polkinghorne, 2005). This is important because the meaning of cartoons often depends on the way ideas are presented, not how often they appear. This approach is utilized because it allows for detailed analysis. So, instead of studying too many caricatures in a simple way, the researcher can select a smaller number and analyze them deeply. This is very important because cartoons often have complex and multifaceted meanings that need careful and detailed explanation to provide a deeper understanding of how cartoons represent war and conflict between countries. The qualitative approach is suitable in this study because it is exploratory in nature. It does not try to investigate a fixed idea but it aims to understand how meaning is created in cartoons. This open approach allows the researcher to find new ideas and insights from the given data.

3.3 Data Collection

The collection of data by the researcher for this study consists of 10 cartoons depicting the 2025 conflict between Iran and Israel. This number is believed to be sufficient, based on Sandelowski's (1995) assertion that for comprehensive interpretations, samples should be neither too many nor too small. Furthermore, the selected data is not random but rather selected specifically and carefully.

The "*cartoonmovement*" website was chosen as a primary source for collecting data because it is a general and rich source of caricature, containing libraries, exhibitions, and extensive lists of cartoonists with their various orientations, along with all their works classified chronologically. Accordingly, to ensure a balanced comparison, the data was divided into two equal sections, with five caricatures depicting negative aspects, actions, or representations of Israel, and the other five depicting negative aspects of Iran. The sample was considered sufficient to achieve

data saturation, and no new information emerges when further data is analyzed (Given 2008). This sample size is appropriate for qualitative analysis, because qualitative research focuses more on detailed interpretation than on large quantities. Each caricature was examined to make sure it is relevant, and interpretable. Only caricatures that included clear visual elements related to the conflict were included in the analysis. The caricatures that were unclear, unrelated, out of the war time or did not provide enough interpretive material were excluded.

3.4 Criteria of Data Selection

When applying a qualitative approach in this study, the data selection process plays a crucial role in ensuring the accuracy of the analysis that will be provided in chapter 4. The researcher selects ten cartoons concerned with the geopolitical relations between Iran and Israel. Several important criteria are considered when selecting the data .

The first criterion to be mentioned here is the relevance of the data to the topic of this research . The researcher ensured that all the caricatures directly address the conflict between Iran and Israel and reflect the war and the political tension between these two countries. Each caricature was selected to depict negative aspects of the other country and to be clear and understandable through the utilization of visual aspects such as exaggeration, metaphors, or even text in some cases.

Another important criterion is to maintain balance. Accordingly, five cartoons are selected to represent Iran and five to represent Israel to maintain the objectivity of the analysis and also to avoid bias towards either country. In addition, the researcher focused on the diversity of artists within a single source, thus supporting a variety of perspectives and avoiding reliance on a single viewpoint.

Furthermore, particular consideration was given to chronological consistency, as all the drawings were selected within a specific timeframe related to 2025 conflict. Moreover, a considerable attention was given to the semiotic and cognitive richness of these drawings, which serves to align them with the chosen approaches of analysis; semiotic analysis using the Kress and Van Leeuwen (2006) model, and cognitive analysis using Lakoff and Johnson's conceptual metaphor theory (2008).

3.5 Analysis Procedures

The data analysis in this study is conducted through several systematic steps using a cognitive and semiotic approaches. A summary of these steps is provided below :

Step 1: 10 cartoons were selected and divided into two groups to ensure balance and neutrality.

Step 2: The Conceptual Metaphor Theory by Lakoff and Johnson (1980), was applied to conduct a cognitive analysis identifying the conceptual metaphors present in each cartoon.

Step 3: Five conceptual metaphors were provided as a standard for most cartoons, but in some cartoons, the number was increased, though it did not exceed 10 metaphors per cartoon.

Step 4: The researcher conducted a semiotic analysis using the model of Kress and van Leeuwen (2006), "Visual Grammar." The researcher applied the three metafunctions, along with the basic components of each of these three metafunctions.

3.6 Models of the Analysis

The analytical framework in this study is based on "Conceptual Metaphor Theory" by Lakoff and Johnson (1980), "Visual Grammar" by Kress and van Leeuwen (2006). The researcher will provide a detailed description for each below.

3.6.1 Kress and Van Leeuwen (2006)

Discourses that are Visually coded, consistently incorporate a number of fundamental beliefs or narratives because, as explained by Kress and Leeuwen (2006), these discourses serve as visual manifestations of a community beliefs and customs. Kress and Van Leeuwen's (2006) goal is to analyze how transitory artists who are specialized in pictorial representations create their messages and to offer practical explanations of significant composition patterns that have proven themselves as customs in the academic discipline of visual semiotics.

Kress and Van Leeuwen (2006) have drawn an analogy or comparison based on linking "visual grammar" to the rules and the grammatical structure of language study. While grammar naturally deals with constructing correct sentences by linking appropriate vocabulary words together, visual grammar focuses on how certain elements, such as human shapes, places, and entities, are integrated into a visual representation, without neglecting the pragmatic role and its impact, as well as the nature of perception and other aspects related to appearance. Their important work has resulted in three representations of the meaning;

3.6.1.1 Representational Metafunction

This metafunction focuses on several matters, which can be summarized as the nature of relationships between specific individuals, the events that arise from actions that take place, and the influential circumstances and contextual elements. We can clearly notice that this metafunction is concerned with what happens in everyday life and what has actually been dealt with by members of society (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006).

Two processes are worth noting in this metafunction: the conceptual process and the narrative process. The conceptual process, in terms of meaning, classification, or structure, deals with matters that are not related to actual practices but rather to representing the state in which the participants find themselves, not to their activity or to the fixed and timeless aspect. The narrative process differs fundamentally from the previous one, as it reflects the practical aspect that the participants undertake. According to Kress and Van Leeuwen(2006), the participants are connected by a vector, which is an abstract representation between the participants. These participants then engage in a specific activity. In addition, this type of process reflects the presence of events, changes, or alterations in the spatial arrangement of things (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006).

Narrative processes are further divided into three types: Transactional, where there is a goal and the participant's actions are intentional towards that goal; Non-transactional, where there is no goal and the participant is the sole agent, and their actions are not for anyone or anything else; and reactional, which, as the name suggests, relates to the participant's reaction while focusing on something else or

another participant. In this process, the overall concentration is not about an action but rather a specific phenomenon represented by reactions (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006).

3.6.1.2 Interactional Metafunction

This metafunction (as the previous one) is derived from the work of the scholar Halliday in 1978. As the name suggests, this meaning relates to the interaction that occurs between participants or the events that take place between them, and the nature of the relationship between those who create visual artworks and their audience who receive it visually. Kress and Van Leeuwen(2006) classify participants in this type of meaning into two categories: First, represented participants, meaning those present only in the visual artwork, such as people, objects, or specific places. Here, participants do not deviate from the framework of what is present in the visual representation. Second, interactive participants. This type of participant includes, in addition to those mentioned above, even the artists responsible for creating the visual work, as well as the viewers or audience who evaluate and interpret it (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006).

Returning to the interactive meaning, Kress and Van Leeuwen(2006) identified three concepts used or considered when describing or analyzing a work in this metafunction;

3.6.1.2.1 Contact (Gaze)

This relates to studying or analyzing the gaze or stare exchanged between participants and the meanings that arise as a result of this visual communication. Kress and Van Leeuwen (2006) divide contact into two categories: demand or offer .In the case of demand, the visual communication between the participants - described above as "represented"- and the audience viewing the visual work is direct communication, where the viewer is essentially being asked to do something specific. In other words, the nature of this communication between the participant and the viewer is demanding , as observed in their visual relationship (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006). This sense is reinforced by Forceville, El Refaie and Meesters (2014), according to them, there is a desired response from the participants as a result of this direct communication.

In the case of an offer, communication is not direct between the participants and their audience. In other words, the participant is represented as an object, entity, or person presenting or providing information to the recipient. (Kress and Van Leeuwen, 2006). According to Forceville, El Refaie and Meesters (2014), this principle contributes to enriching the nature of power relations between the participant and the recipient by considering the angle and the meanings related to control that arise from that angle.

In this vein, Cumming (2009) outlines several contrasting perspectives. At one end is the direct view which is conceptualized as front-facing view serves to create a strong sense of engagement, similar to when a given character in the visual work speaks straight to the audience. At the other end is the profile view, which separates the subject or character from the viewer and makes the audience observe them more objectively, simply as an outsider.

3.6.1.2.2 Social Distance

According to Kress and Van Leeuwen (2006), various types of relationships between represented participants and viewers are expressed by social distance. It refers to the spatial amount of distance the cartoonist creates between the people shown in the image and the audience of the caricature. Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) also explain that distance in images can reflect the type of relationship between the participants within the caricature. For instance, close-up shots can reflect a general sense of closeness, while placing characters at a medium distance may reflect some separation between them.

3.6.1.2.3 Angle

The angle additionally conveys the interactive aspect. There are two kinds in it. The initial one is the horizontal, which is linked to both disengagement and engagement. When the participants are viewed from a forward-looking perspective, they are considered engaged; when they are viewed from an angled perspective, they are considered disengaged. The relationship between the front facing levels of the represented participants and the creator of the caricature determines the horizontal angle (Kress & Van Leeuwen, 2006).

The vertical angle, which is related to power, is the second kind. In other words, if the represented participant is shown from a superior viewing point, it indicates that the audience is more dominant than the given participants. On the other hand, if the represented characters are portrayed from a lowered position, it indicates that they are more powerful than the audience. Lastly, if they're situated at the audience's level, then those viewing and the characters are on an equal footing. (Kress & Van Leeuwen, 2006).

3.6.1.3 Compositional Metafunction

The textual metafunction proposed by Halliday (1978) serves as the foundation of the compositional metafunction. According to Kress and Van Leeuwen (2006), the process by which interactive and representational components are merged into a unit of significance in order to be linked to one another is known as the compositional metafunction .

Forceville, El Refaie, and Meesters (2014) state that the arrangement and composition of photographs in the structuring term can be comparable to a prose phrase or paragraph. The compositional metafunction integrates both representational and interactive meanings by referring to the visual components that guarantee that a visual message is consistent internally and across the larger context for which it was made (Kress & Van Leeuwen, 2006). Three interrelated visual systems of composition are described in this metafunction:

3.6.1.3.1 Framing

According to Kress and van Leeuwen (2006), the technique of framing is used to link or separate pieces of the image, indicating whether or not they belong together. This idea has to do with how the lines of the frame connect and detach those who are involved. While the lack of frame lines creates a link between the caricature figures, the presence of it creates a detachment or division among the elements shown in the caricature.

3.6.1.3.2 Salience

Too many factors shape the concept of salience including effective visual significance, symbolic significance of a given culture, positioning of certain objects, size considerations, and foregrounding of the elements vs backgrounding (Kress & Van Leeuwen, 2006).

salience refers to how visual elements are positioned to draw the attention of the viewers. However, despite the importance of spatial considerations, Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) argue that salience establishes a hierarchical contrast in the perceived significance of certain elements in a visual work compared to others.

3.6.1.3.3 Information Value

This concept pertains to how the placement of pieces within an artwork affects the manner in which visuals are perceived by viewers. The positions of the figures involved depicted in the political cartoons are indicated by multiple areas that provide varying levels of information value. As a result, what is on the left of the location are shown as "Given", while the items on the opposite end are shown as "New". Furthermore, there are two levels: the top and the bottom. The component parts at the uppermost are described as "Ideal," while those at the bottom are described as "Real". (Kress & Van Leeuwen, 2006).

3.6.2 Conceptual Metaphors Theory

Thinking metaphorically gives rise to specific ideas and visions. According to Lakoff and Johnson (1980), metaphor is a common and spontaneous part of discourse in daily life. According to their definition, a conceptual metaphor is an abstract idea that is linguistically and cognitively connected to more known and concrete ideas. Collections of mappings through a "source domain" which is concrete, to a "target domain" which is abstract, are established from these notions.

According to Feldman (2008, p203), there are two conceptual perspectives function together in the cognitive system to produce conceptual metaphors. Fahlenbrach asserts that a conceptual domain is whatever meaningful representation of an experience (Fahlenbrach, 2016). The source domain is the conceptual area

utilized to create the metaphor, while the target domain is the basic idea which underlies the metaphor (Feldman, 2008, p203). Compared to the target domain, which is used to represent an intangible idea or event, the source domain is the foundation that defines the conceptual realm and therefore more precise (Barrios, 2021).

Moreover, Coëgnarts and Kravanja (2012) argue that, target domains frequently address complex ideas including interpersonal interactions, feelings, ethical behavior, time span, and more. According to Coëgnarts and Kravanja (2012), source domains are employed to demonstrate these problematic ideas by means of certain form of analogy; the connections made between these domains are frequently called mapping .

The central tenet of conceptual metaphor theory (CMT) is that human interpretation, classification, and comprehension of the global community are governed by identical rules that characterize a standard metaphor (Gibbs, 2008, p3). According to this viewpoint, metaphors can be seen as a process that individuals use to understand the world because they are believed to be a normal result of the intellect of humans (Gibbs, 2008). In this vein, Kövecses (2020) believes that individuals perceive everything around them metaphorically, therefore our actions and interactions with our surroundings are significantly affected by the specific selections we make in the source domain where the target domain is perceived.

Lakoff and Johnson(2003) argue that metaphor is a conceptual construct and is therefore not limited to being linguistic, but also exists in visual patterns. Accordingly, in considering the manner whereby the traits of the source domain are transferred towards the target domain, visual conceptual metaphors happen to be quite analogous to conventional conceptual metaphors. Thus, the process of understanding visual metaphors is similar to that of understanding verbal metaphors (Forceville, 2009).

3.6.2.1 Conceptual Metaphor Types

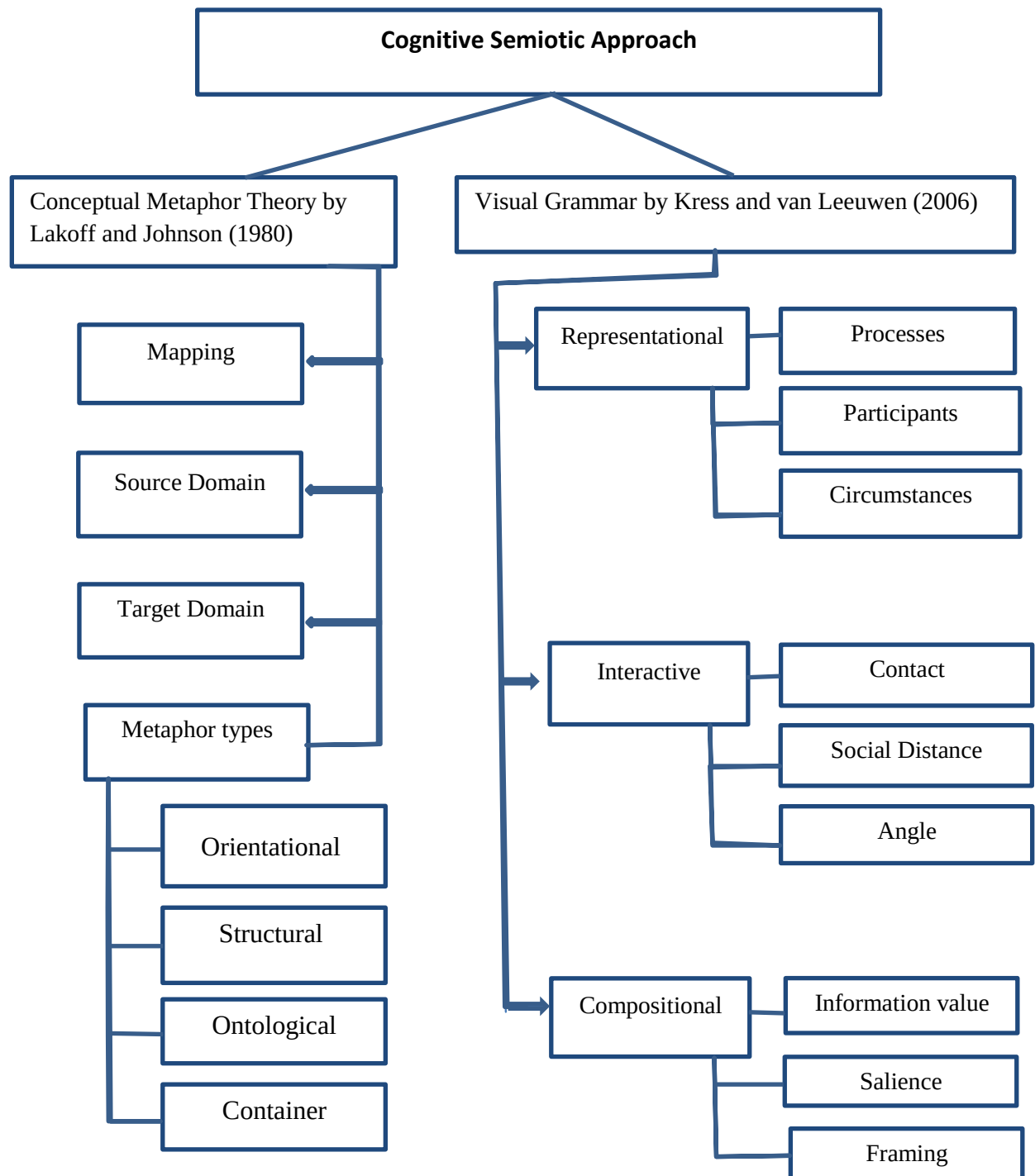
With their groundbreaking book "Metaphors We Live by," George Lakoff and Mark Johnson (1980) began the subject of discussion on the topic. The authors of the study make reference to a number of sorts of conceptual metaphors, including : "orientational", " structural", "container" and "ontological metaphors" (Lakoff and Johnson, 2003, pp10–26).

Orientalional Metaphors: As the name implies, the orientational metaphors are related to the idea of orientation. Generally speaking, an orientational metaphor is every single metaphor that deals with spatial orientation, whether it is spoken or sight-based, including upward, downward, ahead, backwards, within or without, behind, in the front, and further along (Lakoff and Johnson, 2003).

Structural Metaphors: According to Johnson and Lakoff (2003), structural metaphors are those that use actual, tangible dimensions which are much simpler to comprehend and to illustrate an even more abstract idea. According to Fahlenbrach (2016: 37), this kind of metaphors employ source domains with intricate constructs, a variety of operations, and several components related to the structure.

Ontological Metaphor: This type shares characteristics with personified representation. An intangible concept takes on the characteristics of something physical when it is applied. This kind is frequently used to talk about states, acts, incidents, and undertakings (Lakoff and Johnson 2003).

The container metaphor: This metaphor is when an idea is viewed as a container. This kind of metaphor may originate from a visual area or the body of a person itself (Lakoff and Johnson, 2003, 30). Examples of this would be; "MIND IS A CONTAINER FOR KNOWLEDGE" (Lakoff and Johnson, 2003, p149).

Figure3**The Analytical Model Adopted for the Study**

CHAPTER FOUR

Data Analysis, Findings, and Discussions

4.1 Introduction

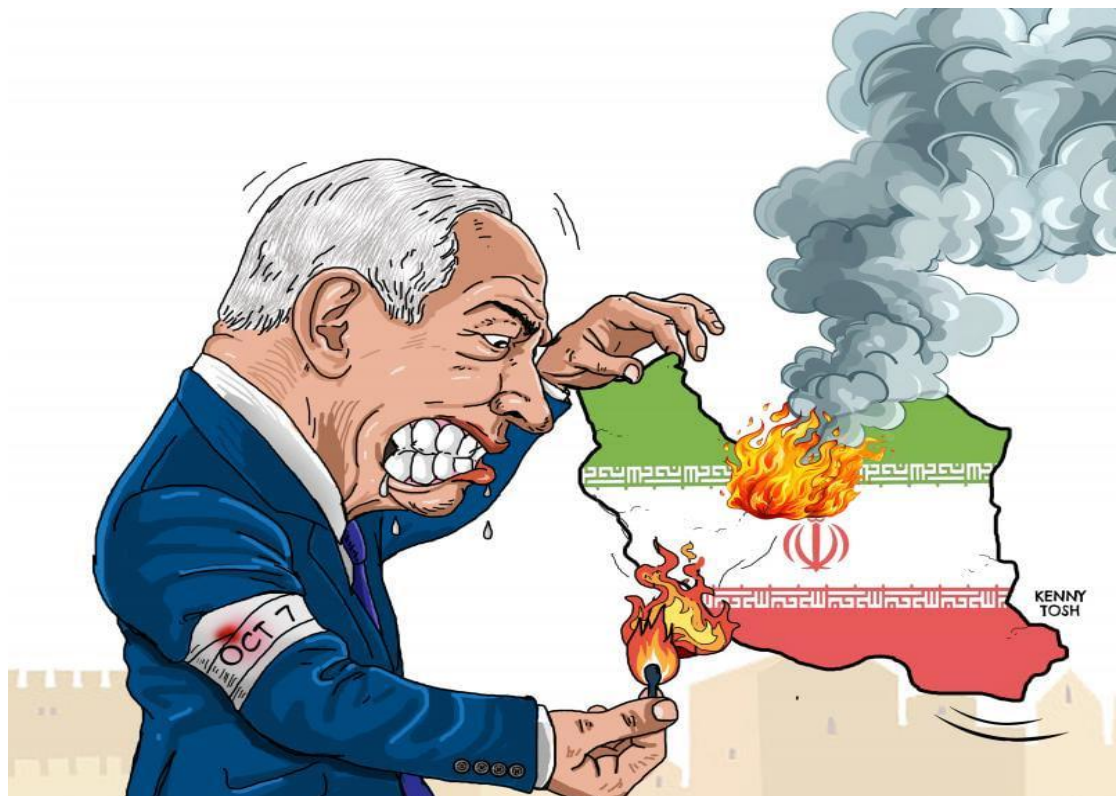
This chapter presents a detailed analysis of the ten selected caricatures based on the analytical framework developed in Chapter Three. As previously remarked, the data are separated into two sets, where each consists of five caricatures.

4.2 Data Analysis

The analysis begins with the first set of caricatures, which portray Israel negatively followed by the second set, which portray Iran negatively.

Figure 4.1

Israel attacks on Iran's nuclear power plants



Note: Israel attacks on Iran's nuclear power plants, by Kenny Tosh, 13 June, 2025, cartoonmovement.

The first conceptual metaphor found in this caricature is; *CONFLICT IS FIRE*, where the viewer can observe that the abstract domain of geopolitical rivalry is understood via the concrete and sensory experience of fire. The flames that are burning the map of Iran visually entails the idea of war, destruction, and instability in those nations engaged in the conflict. The notion of fire is commonly known as being culturally associated with danger, loss of control, and rapid spread, which allows viewers to cognitively see conflict as something inherently destructive and not easy to be contained, which leads the caricature to frame the rivalry as extremely violent and escalating rather than a diplomatic or negotiable one.

Closely related to this meaning is the metaphor; *POLITICAL ACTION IS IGNITION*. The source domain for this metaphor is the burning match, which represents a specific political decision or action, in the sense that the act of lighting the match is intentional and physical, which in turn suggests that a single intentional action can lead to large consequences, emphasizing the idea that war is initiated with a conscious choice and not with accidental circumstances. Accordingly, a clear responsibility is assigned to Netanyahu, and therefore Israel.

Another metaphor to be noticed is; *THE NATION IS A BODY* or *AN OBJECT*, which is realized through the map of Iran, as the burning map metaphorically represents injury to the nation, and thus its people, sovereignty, and political identity. The damage shown on the physical outline of the country makes the viewers conceptualize this politically aggressive actions as physical harm, which gives the viewer a sense that the consequences of the conflict are immediate emotionally and cognitively.

Another metaphor found here is that; *THE CONFLICT CONSEQUENCES ARE SMOKE*. Smoke here represents long-term effects such as regional instability, humanitarian crises, and political problems. In our common experience, smoke reduces the ability to see and causes discomfort, which triggers a sense of uncertainty and extended suffering in this conflict. Overall, this metaphor stands for the idea that the results and the effects of war extend beyond the initial act and last longer.

The exaggerated expression of Netanyahu's face triggers the metaphor *POLITICS IS PERSONAL EMOTION*, reflected in his behavior that is clearly conceptualized through personal anger and aggression. By translating it into human emotion and desires, this metaphor serve to simplify this ideological conflict, which in turn makes political hostility appear irrational and emotionally driven .

Through the use of embodied source domains such as fire, ignition, physical harm, and emotion, the caricature relies on conceptual metaphors to shape viewers' understanding of the Iran-Israel rivalry. By mapping concrete experiences onto abstract political relations, the caricature frames the conflict as intentional, destructive, and personally driven.

A clear narrative process structures the representational level, namely an action process as Kress and van Leeuwen put it, because a vector connects an Actor to a Goal. Netanyahu functions as the Actor, whereas the burning map of Iran functions as the Goal, the lit match and the direction of the flames create a strong visual vector that links the hand to the fire that is consuming the map. This vector establishes a clear notion of causality, as the action of lighting the match produces the destruction. In this context, it is clear that the process is dynamic rather than conceptual, meaning that the image does not simply classify or symbolize, but it tells a story of action and consequence. In terms of participants, Netanyahu is detailed in a meaningful way and is emotionally expressive, where the exaggeration on his face and tense posture depicts him as an active agent, while Iran is represented symbolically through its map and the symbol of its flag. It does not perform any act, but it is acted upon, what actually creates an asymmetrical structure of power within the narrative. We can notice the absence of additional participants which simplifies the conflict and represent it as a direct confrontation between a single person and a nation-state. To consider circumstances, the setting is minimal and clearly undefined, as the neutral background removes contextual complexity, ensuring that the viewer focuses on the central act, that is the act of ignition .

Moving to the interactive metafunction; In terms of contact, the political figure does not look directly at the viewer but his gaze is directed toward the burning map. According to Kress and van Leeuwen, this is an " offer", which serves to create a sense of detachment where viewers do not feel as being personally confronted.

Regarding social distance, the upper part of the body of Netanyahu and the facial expression are shown in details, which creates a sense of proximity as the viewer is close enough to see tension in his face and the intensity of his gesture. This proximity increases emotional engagement and highlights the intentional responsibility of Israel. In terms of angle, the caricature is drawn from an eye-level, horizontal perspective. There is no dramatic high or low angle that would suggest superiority or inferiority, instead, this eye-level positioning implies equality between viewer and represented participants, encouraging the viewer to judge the situation critically. However, the political figure in this caricature is larger and more dominant than the other entity which is the map, the thing that reinforces his agency and influence.

The compositional metafunction; Considering the information value, it is clear that Netanyahu is positioned on the left side, while the burning map appears on the right side, the left often represents "given" information and the right "new" information. This arrangement suggests that the political actor here is a known or an established force, while the burning map stands for the outcome or the consequence of his action. This relation of left-to-right visually reflects a cause-and-effect structure.

For salience, the orange color and yellow flames are immediately attract the viewer's the attention against the muted background. The facial expression that is clearly exaggerated of the political figure also attracts the eye. These elements compete for the prominence and salience, but together they reinforce the basic notion of aggression and destruction which is central in this visual representation. Additionally, the rising smoke above the flames also increases the salience via extending the visual impact upward and symbolically expands the consequences beyond the immediate scene. About framing, there are no strong dividing lines to separate the elements. instead, the Actor and the Goal are connected through the vector of the match and the fire, the thing that integrates the elements into a single unit, which in turn suggests that the action and its consequences are inseparable from each other. This unity of the overall composition strengthens the causal considerations that are constructed at the representational level.

Figure 4.2**The power of attack**

Note: The power of attack, by Vasco Gargalo, 13 June, 2025, cartoonmovement.

The first metaphor here, is the metaphor *POLITICS IS THEATER* or *PERFORMANCE*. Trump offers a "nuclear agreement", which visually symbolizes peace and diplomacy while at the same time, missiles marked with the symbol of Israel strike from another direction. This creates a double scene: one public and peaceful, the other violent and hidden, where what is shown (which is peace) differs completely from what is done (the attack). Hypocrisy is thus structured by the metaphor *DECEPTION IS HIDING OR COVERING*. Another central conceptual metaphor in the caricature is *POLITICS IS PHYSICAL PROTECTION* or *CONTAINMENT*, as Trump is visually placed under Khamenei's cloak. The cloak functions as a container or shelter. To be under someone's cloak metaphorically

suggests and represents protection or alliance as commonly known. Thus, the abstract diplomatic decisions and actions are conceptualized as a physical act of sheltering. The caricature thus implies that political agreements may cover or protect certain actors. Another dominant metaphor here is that; *INTERNATIONAL CONFLICT IS WAR/PHYSICAL ATTACK*, where the missiles marked with the Star of David represent geopolitical tension through literal weapons, and to consider it from a cognitive perspective, the abstract concept of political disagreement is constructed by the more concrete and embodied experience of physical violence. Additionally, the metaphor *POLITICAL ACTION IS CAUSING PHYSICAL HARM* is suggested by bloodstains dripping on the cloak, which is as a substance of the body, activates strong embodied knowledge of injury and death to the nation or a particular figure. Considering this mapping, diplomatic decisions are framed as directly producing violence.

The paper of "Nuclear Agreement" operate within the metaphor *AGREEMENTS ARE OBJECTS*. In this caricature, the agreement is clearly a physical document that can be held and signed to be accomplished. This process of objectification allows the viewer to see the claimed diplomacy as something tangible and something that can be controlled, even though its consequences are complex and abstract, therefore, the act of holding the agreement becomes metaphorically equivalent to the act of controlling political outcomes. There is also an underlying metaphor of *POWER IS SIZE/HEIGHT*. Khamenei appears much larger than Trump. The larger and taller figure visually represents dominance or ideological centrality, which reflects the common orientational metaphor; *POWER IS UP/BIG*. Finally, the caricature relies on *POLITICAL RELATIONS ARE MORAL ACTIONS WITH PHYSICAL CONSEQUENCES*, revealed by the blood stains that represent moral responsibility.

At the representational level, the caricature constructs a clear narrative process, where the missiles create strong diagonal vectors moving across the sky. These vectors signal action and aggression and they visually represent military force and conflict. The participants are clearly individualized and recognizable. One participant resembles Ali Khamenei, symbolizing Iran, while the other resembles Trump, symbolizing the United States, while the third is an implied participant (Israel), represented symbolically through the Star of David on the missiles. Even

though Israel is not shown as a human figure, it is present symbolically as an actor through the weapons, it functions actively within the narrative process. Trump is shown holding a document labeled "Nuclear Agreement". This creates a secondary action process: the act of offering or presenting diplomacy. Thus, two processes operate simultaneously. The first is diplomatic (offering an agreement), and the second is violent (missile strikes). The coexistence of these processes creates tension where diplomacy and war are introduced side by side in this caricature. The circumstances of the scene are minimal but meaningful. The background is dark and filled with smoke, that functions as a circumstantial element that reinforces and emphasizes the atmosphere of conflict, suggesting destruction or instability. Also, blood stains on the cloak introduce another element that operates symbolically. They do not belong to a specific action in the image, but they suggest past or ongoing violence.

Concerning the interactive metafunction, contact is realized through gaze. In this caricature, Khamenei looks directly at the viewer. This is a demand, where a direct gaze demands something from the viewer whether attention, judgment, or emotional involvement. His facial expression is serious and intense, which increases the sense of confrontation, while in contrast, Trump does not look at the viewer, but he is focused on the agreement paper. The difference in gaze creates asymmetry. One participant confronts the audience, while the other one appears absorbed in his own action, which influences and affects how viewers assign responsibility or interpret their own awareness. Social distance can be seen clearly constructed through framing and size.

Both figures are shown in close-up, especially Khamenei's face, which occupies a large space of the given caricature. This corresponds to an intimate or personal distance. This closeness forces the viewer to engage emotionally with the figures, making the political issue feel immediate rather than abstract. The caricature is drawn from a frontal angle, particularly in relation to Khamenei. This frontal angle suggests involvement, the viewer is positioned as directly facing the participant, not observing from a distance or side perspective. However, Khamenei's exaggerated size compared to Trump subtly constructs power relations, in the sense that the

viewer perceives him as dominant due to scale, even without a dramatic vertical angle.

At the compositional level, information value is organized through left-right and center-margin structures, where the left side of the caricature is dominated by Khamenei, while the right side includes Trump and the missiles. Here, the nation of Iran, represented by Khamenei, may be constructed as the established or contextual background of the whole issue, while Trump's diplomatic action and the missiles introduce new developments or consequences about that issue.

For salience, Khamenei's face is the largest and darkest element in the frame, making it highly salient. The black cloak occupies a large visual space. The bright yellow explosions and white smoke of the missiles also create high visual contrast, drawing the viewer's eye upward and across the image. Moreover, the red blood stains are particularly salient because red contrasts sharply with the darker tones. These color choices emphasize violence and moral issues. Trump, although smaller, is made salient through gesture. His hand holding the document of nuclear agreement is centrally positioned in the lower right quadrant. The written text on the document further increases salience because linguistic elements attract attention. The combination of visual and verbal modes strengthens the meaning.

Framing in the image is relatively weak; there are no strong dividing lines separating elements. Instead, one can notice that the cloak visually connects Trump and Khamenei within the same space of composition, which suggests connection rather than separation. The missiles, however, cut across the background, partially separated from those two figures by spatial positioning. This placement may suggest an involvement indirectly rather than a direct physical participation.

Figure 4.3**Israel Strikes Iran**

Note: Israel Strikes Iran, by Emad Hajjaj, 13 June, 2025, cartoonmovement.

The source domains such as war, force, motion, and bodily action clearly organize complex geopolitical relations in the caricature under analysis. One of the most dominant conceptual metaphors in the caricature is that; *POLITICS IS A HOSTILE CONFLICT*, as the political conflict between Israel and Iran is structured through the source domain of military combat where the caricature visualizes missiles, a falling bomb, and fighter jets instead of depicting diplomatic negotiation or ideological disagreement. Through this depiction, the abstract political tension between these countries, target domain, is comprehended in terms of physical attack and destruction, which is source domain. Therefore, hostility and urgency are highlighted in this metaphor, to reinforce the idea that the political disagreement is equivalent to an armed confrontation.

A second prominent metaphor is that; *STATES ARE PERSONS*, inspired by the depiction of Israel as a human figure who is riding a bomb, while Iran is symbolized by missiles marked with its flag, and the United Nations appears as a personified globe who is wearing a suit marked with the letters "UN". Thus, this metaphor allows the viewers to interpret state actions as individual actions such as attacking,

chasing, controlling, or failing. The caricature is simplified the international relations into interpersonal ones by depicting national entities as human bodies, making them cognitively accessible to be comprehended.

The caricature also reveals the metaphor which is; *POWER IS PHYSICAL FORCE*, triggered when Netanyahu is shown riding and directing a descending bomb while still maintaining his confidence which suggests a clear notion of dominance and control. In contrast to this, the UN figure appears to be struggling in the air, holding a document labeled "ICC ", while in the same time being physically unable to stop the weapon. Here, political and military power (target domain) is conceptualized in terms of bodily strength, balance, and kinetic energy (source domain). The side that controls force appears powerful and the side being limited to documents appears in a weak position.

In relation to the previous metaphor, we can find the metaphor; *LAW IS A FRAGILE OBJECT*. The paper representing the International Criminal Court symbolizes international law which is generally assumed to be authoritative and binding, but logically, this paper is not actually of any significance when confronted with explosive weapons. Thus, the legal authority is depicted as a light, easily displaced object, while military violence is depicted as heavy and extremely destructive thing. However, this sense of contrast serve to reinforces a hierarchy in which the physical force overrides the global authority.

Last but not least, the curved depiction of the earth that is shown beneath the falling bomb activates the metaphor *THE WORLD IS A PHYSICAL BODY THAT CAN BE HARMED*. Accordingly, global stability is depicted as a vulnerable surface exposed to impact. The falling bomb directed by Israel implies an imminent damage not just to a specific nation but clearly to the whole world.

From a representational perspective, the caricature is structured primarily around action processes that is represented by a dynamic movement of a bomb descending toward the earth and a caricatured Israeli leader is shown riding on top of this bomb, while behind him a globe-shaped person marked "UN" is flying in pursuit. This is regarded as a narrative representation because it contains vectors. The falling bomb forms the main vector, indicating directionality and activity. The Israeli figure

functions as the actor in the process (riding, directing, advancing), while the bomb operates both as an instrument and as a Goal aimed at the earth below. The UN personification, holding a document labeled "ICC" becomes a secondary actor engaged in a chasing process, but without visible capacity to alter the main action. The Participants are clearly differentiated in this caricature. The Israeli prime minister Netanyahu, the expression of his face, posture, and his clear physical engagement with the bomb emphasize determination and therefore reflecting full responsibility of his actions, while in contrast, Iran is not depicted by a human figure but it is represented through missiles and a national flag which is positioned on the ground. This creates an asymmetry in representation because one side is humanized and actively depicted while the other is objectified through weapons.

The United Nations which is depicted as a globe wearing a blue suit, stands for international authority yet appears physically unable to change the action of Netanyahu. However, the overall circumstances of location are indicated by the curved horizon of the earth, reflecting a global scale for the conflict to be held rather than a specified battlefield. The minimal background reduces contextual distractions and intensifies focus on the central action.

For the interactive metafunction: There is no direct gaze toward the audience; none of the figures look outward. According to Kress and van Leeuwen, this constitutes an "offer", which increases the sense of watching a dramatic event unfold from a distance. Social distance is revealed via framing and scale, as the figures shown in medium-to-long shot, the thing that allows viewers to see clearly their bodies and actions. This creates a public rather than personal distance. At the same time, the exaggerated facial expressions especially the strain on the UN figure, introduce emotional cues that guide interpretation of the viewers.

The angle is slightly elevated, and the viewer is enabled to have a broad overview of the whole scene. This angle places the audience in a powerful interpretive position, what ultimately enables them to judge the imbalance between military force actions and the opposite side that stands for the so called diplomatic effort. However, the sense of speed also produces tension and the events are shown as expand rapidly and they are beyond control.

The compositional metafunction also reinforces these meanings, Information value is structured horizontally and vertically. On the right-hand side of the caricature, missiles marked with the Iranian flag are positioned near the ground, while in the left and center, the upper space is dominated by the Israeli leader while riding the bomb. In Kress and van Leeuwen's model of analysis the top often represents the "ideal" and the bottom the "real". Here, the upper area contains the dramatic action which is the symbolic, ideological dimension, while the lower curved earth represents consequences of a material nature. The bomb acts as a visual bridge between these areas, linking intention and impact. For salience, the bomb is large and located in the center, which immediately attract attention, while the Israeli aggressor is placed prominently on top of it, he is depicted as being wearing distinct colors that separate him from the pale background.

The UN globe is also noticeable visually due to its, or his, bright blue color of the suit and its human features, yet it is placed behind the central action. The Iranian missiles, though multiple, are clustered and visually secondary. This hierarchy of salience manifestations directs the viewer's reading path that is: first the bomb and rider, then the pursuing UN figure, and finally the missiles and flag below. Regarding Framing in this caricature, a spatial separation conveys ideological positioning shown as follows; the UN is physically distanced from the bomb's control, and Iran is placed below, while Israel takes elevated and dominant position among them. Therefore we can say that the overall effect here is not neutral because it visually frames international politics as directly driven by violence and weaponry, while the global law appears secondary and ineffective.

Figure 4.4**Attack on Iran**

Note: Attack on Iran, by Kamal Sharaf, June 13, 2025, cartoonmovement.

One central metaphor operating in the above caricature is that; *POLITICAL RELATIONS ARE PHYSICAL CONTROL*, activated by the leash that functions as a concrete source domain drawn from everyday experience of a person controlling a dog, while in considering the target domain, this physical restraint represents a sense of political influence or dominance. Therefore, by depicting Trump as holding the leash that is attached to Netanyahu's neck, the cartoon maps bodily control onto diplomatic relations. The previous metaphor leads us to another related metaphor; *A NATION OR LEADER IS AN ANIMAL*. Netanyahu here is portrayed as a barking and very aggressive dog. In conceptual metaphor theory, this is a case of ontological metaphor, where a complex political actor is understood as a physical creature with instinctive behavior. The metaphor reduces political and diplomatic process of decision-making to animal aggression, which suggest impulsiveness rather than rational considerations. Through this mapping, political strategy becomes instinct, and diplomacy becomes barking or attacking. The given caricature simplifies a very

complicated geopolitical situation into a familiar embodied experience: restraining an aggressive animal.

Another important metaphor is *CONFLICT IS ANIMAL ATTACK*. The direction of movement toward the sign of the flag of Iran is important to take into account for it reflects what Lakoff and Johnson labeled as orientational metaphors, because movement forward signals action, intention, or purpose. Here, forward motion toward Iran operates political hostility as physical pursuit. The target domain ,political confrontation, is structured by the source domain of a dog running aggressively at a target. This metaphor frames conflict as something instinctive and inevitable, rather than negotiated or avoidable.

Another metaphor operating here is that; *POLITICAL ALLIANCE IS OWNERSHIP*, because as commonly known, the person who is holding a leash is the owner of the dog or any animal in general. The given notion of ownership implies specific concepts such as hierarchy, dependency, and lack of autonomy. So, the caricature frames the relationship between those two leaders as unequal, and Israel lacks independence due to the control of Trump. The caricature also relies on the broader and very common metaphor; *STATES ARE PERSONS*. Iran is represented here not as a complex society but as a single visible object, a sign with its national flag, this sign is functioning for the entire country, what allows the viewers to comprehend the international politics as interactions between individual bodies or entities in physical space. The process or the depiction of reducing states to singular entities, makes the geopolitical tension easier to grasp cognitively.

From a representational perspective, the caricature is structured mainly around a narrative process, which is according to Kress and van Leeuwen, realized through vectors lines that indicate action or direction. In this regard, the leash functions as a strong vector connects Trump to Netanyahu. The leash visually constructs an action process where Trump is shown as the actor who holds and directs, while Netanyahu becomes the goal of that control, while Netanyahu himself is represented as an actor in another action process of lunging forward toward the sign shaped with the flag of Iran. A chain of actions is created as the control here flows from Trump to Netanyahu, and aggression flows from Netanyahu toward Iran. The barking mouth, exaggerated appearance of the teeth, and the state of leaning forward reinforce and

intensify the sense of dynamic movement. These vectors are not created merely by accident but clearly, they organize the political notion of dominance and confrontation.

Considering participants in this caricature, Trump is drawn upright and relatively stable, holding a document in one hand and the leash in the other, while Netanyahu, by contrast, is drawn in a position of a dog. This difference in body positioning is significant, where Trump's vertical position suggests authority and stability, while Netanyahu's lowered, lunging body suggests impulsiveness and aggression. Iran, on the other hand, is reduced to a sign bearing the national flag, where it functions as a goal rather than an actor. It does not act, but it is acted upon. This asymmetry is meaningful because it visually constructs who has power and who is the target of that power.

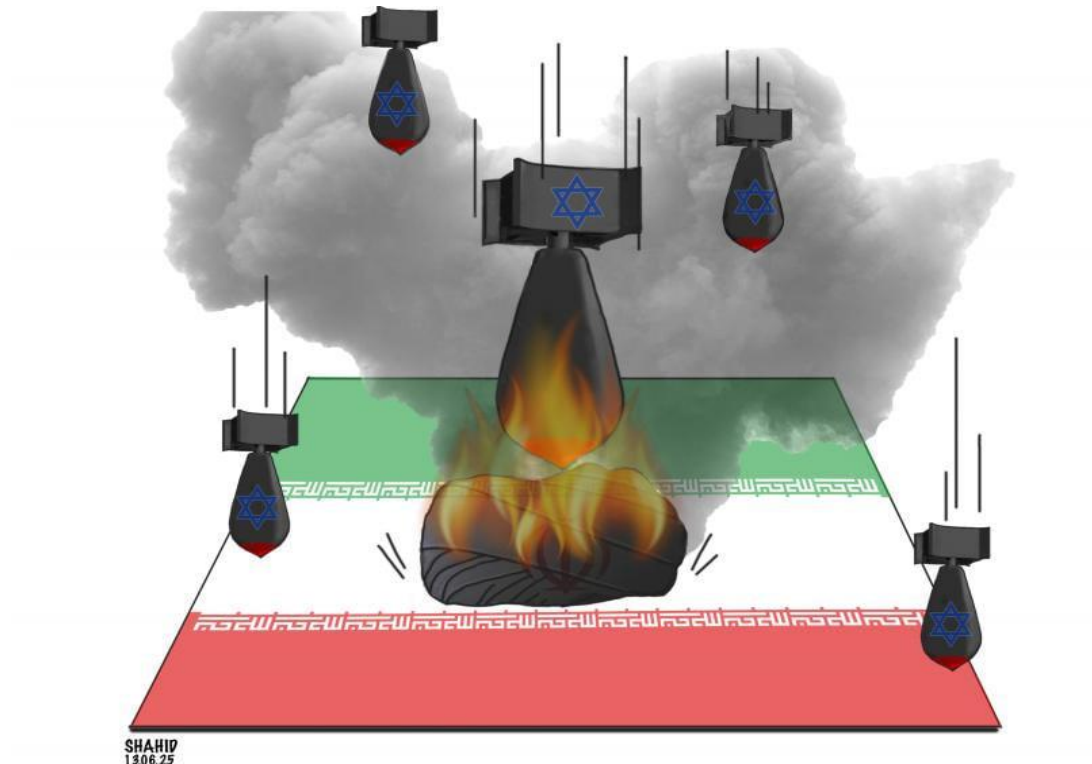
For circumstances, the background appears to be empty, with no specific geographical markers, which removes contextual complexity and focuses the attention on the core action. Moreover, this simplified setting can function to universalize the message as it is not about a specific location but about a broader political relationship. This emptiness also heightens the symbolic weight of the participants and their actions.

For the interactive metafunction: First, there is no direct eye contact with the viewer where neither Trump nor Netanyahu looks outward, but they are focused on each other and on Iran. This creates an "offer", which serves to encourage interpretation and judgment rather than emotional involvement that could be operated by gaze. The figures are shown in full body, which corresponds to a relatively impersonal social distance, as we are not in intimate proximity to the characters, but instead, we see them as public figures engaged in political action. At the same time, the exaggerated facial features and expressions make the emotions clearly readable, and therefore the viewer can easily interpret aggression, tension, and control. Angle also plays an important role. The image is presented at eye level, which implies equality between viewer and represented participants. However, within the caricature itself, power relations here are clearly hierarchical, this is shown obviously as Trump stands upright and he firmly holds the leash, while Netanyahu is physically lower than him and restrained.

Finally, the compositional metafunction organizes the overall meaning through information value, salience, and framing. The caricature follows a left-right structure where Trump and Netanyahu appear on the left side "Given", while Iran appears on the right "New", which means that, the established relationship between the two leaders may be treated as known political reality, while the movement toward Iran represents a developing or future action.

Salience in this caricature is created via several strategies: First, the bright colors of the flags draw an immediate attention of the viewers, where the Israeli flag around Netanyahu's neck and the Iranian flag on the sign stand out against the highly muted background. Second, the leash acts as a strong visual line guiding the eye from Trump to Netanyahu and then toward Iran. Third, the exaggerated facial expression of Netanyahu increases visual prominence.

For framing, it is clear that the caricaturist placed participants within a single field without a very clear dividing lines, which suggest that the actions of one directly affect the others. This idea is reinforced by the leash that physically connects Trump and Netanyahu who is portrayed as a dog, visually reinforcing this notion of unity. At the same time, we can notice that Iran is slightly separated by spatial distance which reinforces the idea of Iran as being the external target of the interaction between the two leaders.

Figure 4.5**Israel attacked Iran!**

Note: Israel attacked Iran!, by Shahid Atiqullah, June 13, 2025, cartoonmovement.

A common orientational metaphor is revealed in this caricature; *POWER IS UP* or *POWERLESSNESS IS DOWN*, as the bombs descend from above onto the flag that is placed below. In human experience, UP is associated with the notions of dominance, control, and authority, while the opposite direction, which is down, is associated with weakness. This vertical positioning process is not neutral because it visually encodes a power hierarchy, where the attacking force occupies the higher spatial position, which metaphorically stands for superiority and control over the other country.

Another salient metaphor is *DESTRUCTION IS RAIN* or *NATURAL FORCE*. The bombs fall repeatedly from the sky, resembling rainfall which is (Rain) normally beyond human control, and therefore frames the Israeli violence and aggression as overwhelming and inescapable.

In many cultures in the world and especially within Shi'a Islam, the turban is not merely clothing to wear, but it signals religious authority and identity. Conceptually,

this activates the metaphor; *RELIGIOUS IDENTITY IS A CROWN*. Because it is worn on the head which is the highest part of the body, it draws on the orientational metaphor *IMPORTANT IS UP* or *AUTHORITY IS UP*.

As long as the turban marks a spiritual authority, the head therefore becomes the site of legitimacy, and what rests upon it signifies ideological leadership. An additional metaphor emerges accordingly; *ATTACKING THE TURBAN IS ATTACKING THE IDEOLOGY*. Since this turban stands for Shi'a (or Islamic) religious authority, damage to it can metaphorically assign an assault to the religious system itself. The previous metaphor enables the broader metaphor; *IDEOLOGY AS A PHYSICAL OBJECT THAT CAN BE HARMED*. The turban, which stands for Shi'a religious authority and represents this identity, becomes a material object that can be burned, attacked, destroyed, or eliminated. Burning it therefore maps physical destruction onto symbolic or ideological destruction.

There is also an orientational dimension. The turban sits on the head, which in embodied cognition, represents reason, identity, and authority. When the turban burns, the metaphor can extend to *CORRUPTION* or *COLLAPSE OF AUTHORITY IS A DAMAGE TO THE HEAD*. Since the head is basically vital for the life itself, thus harming what sits on it indicates deep destabilization.

Finally and as commonly known, fire often evokes a sense of uncontrollable spread, so bombing the turban may also suggest a metaphor; *IDEOLOGICAL CONFLICT IS A SPREADING FIRE*, which symbolizes an escalation in actions rather than a contained event. Generally, this caricature intensifies the perception of crisis for Iran.

In the representational perspective, the caricature constructs a narrative process, and the falling bombs in this caricature create strong downward vectors where the vertical lines around them reinforce a strong sense of motion, guiding eyes of the viewers from top to bottom. The bombs act as the main actors, while the flag and the burning turban function as the goals of the action. The flames and smoke serve as circumstances of effect, showing the result of the action which is destruction and crisis. The turban placed at the center of the flag works symbolically. It represents Shi'a religious authority and, by extension, the Iranian religious and political system.

Thus, participants are not individual human figures but they are symbolic objects standing for collective identities. This abstraction intensifies the ideological message, because the attack is framed not as military engagement between armies, but as destruction directed at a national religious identity.

The bombs are marked with the star of David, which symbolically identifies the attacking side as Israel, while the green, white, and red background identifies Iran. No soldiers or civilians appear. Instead, national and religious symbols stand in for entire political entities, which particularly transforms the conflict into a generalized geopolitical confrontation. The burning turban particularly operates symbolically because it is not merely an object, but an entity of ideological meaning, and by representing it as engulfed in flames, the image visually encodes the idea of ideological assault or destabilization.

Moving to the interactive metafunction, the relationship between the caricature and the viewer is significant. Obviously, there is no eye contact because no human faces are presented, and thus an "offer" is created rather than a "demand". In considering the social distance, the framing shows the entire flag and multiple bombs within one scene, what ultimately creates a sense of detachment. For angle, the bombs are shown descending from above, which introduces a vertical power hierarchy as the viewer sees the scene from a slightly elevated, neutral perspective, but the attacking objects clearly occupy the higher spatial position within the image, the thing that would reduce the power of what is depicted below. Here, the attacked symbol representing Iran lies beneath the descending bombs, reinforcing its weakness, while the attackers' elevated position visually encodes dominance. This positioning strategy shapes the way in which viewers interpret power relations without any written explanation.

In the compositional metafunction, information value is structured in vertical manner, where the top of the caricature contains both the bombs and smoke elements associated with action and aggression, while the bottom contains the flag which represents Iran. Accordingly, the top often corresponds to the "ideal" and the bottom to the "real". Here, the ideal space is occupied by destructive force, while only consequences assigned to the real space, which ultimately frames the conflict as being of one side aggression that impacts and harms a national identity. Salience

in the given caricature is strongly achieved through both color and size. The flames contrast sharply with the darker tones of the bombs and the muted background for being in the center with bright orange and yellow color. This color contrast immediately draws the eye to the burning turban. Its central placement increases its importance, making it the main point of interpretation.

The bombs, leads the attention toward this basic symbol. The smoke also creates an important effect as it surrounds the upper part of the caricature and emphasizes the intensity of the scene. Framing is to some extent tight, as all elements integrated within the boundaries of the flag, which acts as a visual container, which reinforces the idea that the conflict is contained within national space.

Figure 4.6

Israel Against Iran



Note: *Israel Against Iran*, by Marian Kamensky, 13 June, 2025, cartoonmovement.

The first, dominant metaphor reflecting Iran's negative role is that; *IRAN IS A PRODUCER OF DESTRUCTION*. This metaphor is activated as the supreme leader who is representing Iran pours something like grain into a container of a nuclear bomb shape, and therefore a clear mapping process emerges, where the abstract domain of nuclear policy is mapped onto the concrete domain of cooking or manufacturing. However, unlike the ordinary processes of production, this production leads to a weapon. Thus, the metaphor would become as ; *NUCLEAR DEVELOPMENT IS COOKING A WEAPON*. Cooking in general and common sense is associated with nourishment and life, but in this context it is inverted to produce the death, which intensifies the moral judgment by depicting Iran not merely as developing a technology, but as producing destruction.

The caricature also implies the metaphor; *IRAN IS AN INSTIGATOR OF CHAOS*, where it is in this context produce a scene of apocalyptic disorder reflected by the darkened sky, dead trees, and the eclipse of sun. In CMT terms, this lead us to the metaphor; *MORAL DISORDER IS NATURAL DISASTER*. Meaning that,

environmental ruin and total corruption is connected metaphorically to Iran's nuclear activity, and therefore a sense causality is implied by the surrounding decay and suffering. Here, Iran is depicted as producing darkness in a global settings and as being a destabilizing force whose movements and actions leads to worldwide consequences.

Another metaphor is activated by the use of axe and club; *POLITICAL ACTION IS PHYSICAL TOOL USE*, framing policies and strategies as weapons that strike, cut, or beat instead of negotiations and diplomatic endeavors. The metaphor here simplifies complex diplomatic processes into direct physical causation process. Meaning that, force produces results and consequences.

Additionally, there is a moral metaphor in the caricature; *DANGEROUS STATES ARE IRRATIONAL* or *FANATICAL AGENTS*. The clerical clothing emphasizes religious identity, mapping religious authority onto political extremism. In metaphorical terms, we can also say; *IDEOLOGICAL EXTREMISM IS BLIND FORCE*. The absence of negotiation climate and the focus on weapon production process cognitively erase diplomacy and replacing it with inevitability of violence, which in turn simplifies the overall political identity of Iran into a singular threatening role.

Moreover, the dark sky, dead trees, and green glow contribute to activate the metaphor; *POLITICAL CONFLICT IS DISEASE* or *ENVIRONMENTAL DECAY*, where the abstract depiction of instability is communicated via bodily sickness and ecological destruction, reflected in the environment appearance as being infected by political actions, which ultimately reflects moral and social responsibility.

This caricature also carries the metaphor; *RESPONSIBILITY IS A BURDEN*. The kneeling figure's posture suggests strain and effort. The abstract sense of responsibility is framed conceptually as a physical weight. In other words, heavy objects require effort to carry, just as difficult political commitments require effort and cost to be conducted, making viewers in a position to interpret the alliance of America and Israel as unequal or exploitative. The green radioactive glow surrounding elements of the scene draws on sensory experience with poison and infection, leading us to the metaphor; *THREATS ARE MONSTERS* or

CONTAMINANTS, where nuclear development becomes conceptualized as contaminations that are spreading.

From the representational metafunction, the caricature mainly constructs a narrative process. In this caricature, the raised axe and club create strong vectors that direct the attention of the viewer toward potential violence. The participants include political leaders symbolizing Iran, Israel, the United States. The Supreme Leader of Iran pouring grain into a container of a nuclear bomb shape, this represents Iran involvement in an action process, he is actively doing something. This is a material process, in which Iran performs an action (pouring) that affects a goal (the bomb container). At the same time, the raised axe adds another action process, reinforcing aggression, and a second narrative structure is created by depicting Netanyahu as holding a club and standing on the back of the kneeling Trump who functions as a participant supporting figure, which reveals a clear hierarchy among the two participants.

Additionally, the underground man emerging from the sewer provides another narrative layer of meaning as it suggest a hidden or an emerging threat. The dark sky, eclipse, dead trees, and green radioactive glow mark the circumstances in this caricature. These environmental elements are not neutral background details, but they symbolically frame the entire event as a very dangerous one. Conceptually, the nuclear container with the radiation symbol introduces a symbolic process of a nuclear threat and danger. The clothes of the supreme leader of the Islamic republic of Iran also operates symbolically as it mark religious and national identity. To sum up, the caricature combines narrative processes (actions of attacking and producing) with symbolic processes (visual markers of identity and danger).

Considering the interactive metafunction, no direct gaze toward the audience found where none of the participants look at us. This absence of eye contact creates offer rather than a demand, where the viewer is not directly engage with the scene. Regarding social distance, the image is framed at a medium distance. We see the figures from head to knee level, not extremely close, but not far either, which in turn creates a sense of moderate involvement as being close enough to recognize identities and actions, but far enough to maintain analytical distance. The viewer is not emotionally intimate with any participant, which allows judgment rather than

empathy. The caricature is drawn at eye level, which implies equality between viewer and participants, and the internal power relations among participants are shown through posture and vertical positioning of Netanyahu who stands upright and elevated, the kneeling American leader, and the underground figure who emerges from below. Although the viewer is positioned neutrally, the participants are arranged hierarchically. The oblique angle relatively distances the viewer from direct involvement, suggesting that we are witnessing a staged political drama rather than participating in it.

Finally, the compositional metafunction: Information value is created through left-right and top-bottom placement, on the left side we see the nuclear container and the cleric figure, while in the right side we see the cluster of Israel, the United States, and the emerging underground figure. The placement of the nuclear activity on the left may suggest that Iran's nuclear program is the established issue "given", while the right side shows the developing political reaction and consequences "new".

Top-bottom structure also plays a noticeable role. The dark eclipse and sky dominate the upper section, representing an overarching threat. The actions of the political actors occur in the middle, while the underground figure appears at the bottom, revealing and reinforcing the idea of hidden or suppressed forces that strengthens the sense of instability and imbalance in the area. However, color and gesture mark the so-called salience, where the green radioactive glow draws immediate attention, additionally the kneeling posture of Trump is visually striking because it breaks normal expectations of upright posture.

These elements ensure that the viewer's eye moves first to the nuclear container and then to the hierarchical human arrangement. Framing of this caricature shows that there are no clear borders to isolate the given participants, but Instead, all of them share the same landscape, which suggests interconnectedness in the overall sense, and thus the actions of one actor affect the others who are involved in a shared geopolitical space. In other words, all of these events are depicted as being part of one continuous crisis state.

Figure 4.7**Mad dogs of the region!**

Note: Mad dogs of the region!, by Emad Hajjaj, 16 June, 2025, cartoonmovement.

A multiple important conceptual metaphors are reflected in this caricature, and the first metaphor is that; *NATIONS ARE ANIMALS*, or specifically *DOGS*, which is activated as the two missiles that are marked with national symbols or flags of Iran and Israel are drawn as aggressive animals that are mostly dogs with their sharp teeth, reflect a clear and prominent conceptual mapping from the source domain, that is the dangerous animals, to the target domain, which is the identity or countries. Thus, by representing these two countries in this depiction, the artist tries to convey the idea that political figures behave in an instinctive and violent manner rather than being rational. So, this metaphor is about an extremely savage confrontation, and the personification of these missiles as having eyes, teeth and facial expressions of anger activates another important metaphor in this caricature that is; *THE WEAPONS ARE LIVING CREATURES*. So, they appear as active participants instead of being merely tools that are controlled by human beings. Such a manner of personification helps people in conceptualizing the complex meanings in simpler terms, and it also intensifies and emphasizes the sense of danger by depicting that destruction as uncontrollable and alive one.

The caricature also presents the metaphor; *WAR IS MUTUAL DESTRUCTION*, which is seen as both Iran and Israel are shown attacking each other simultaneously with no clear winner. which reflects an idea that the conflict leads to shared loss instead of victory to either side. The bone that is falling beneath them stands for the idea of death, which reinforces the idea that the consequence of such aggression behavior is not success but it is destruction for both.

The caricature also implies the metaphor; *ANGER IS A DANGEROUS ANIMAL*. The sharp teeth, and the angry facial expressions of the missiles reinforce the idea ,that is commonly shared, that anger transforms any creature into an uncontrollable one. This idea is built on the experience of human where anger is basically associated with the loss of control. Accordingly, the metaphor highlights irrationality and emotional escalation in this specific political conflict.

We can also find the metaphor *CONFLICT IS COLLISION*, as the two sides of the conflict are not just opposed but they are literally crashing toward each other, which maps their physical action (as source domain) onto their apparent political disagreement (that is the target domain). It reflects the idea that the conflict is unavoidable and explosive at the moment, with no space for conducting a compromise or any diplomatic efforts.

Finally, the earth in this caricature that is shown as a limited space where the consequences of the conflict is granted, reflects the metaphor; *THE WORLD IS A STAGE* (or *CONTAINER*), indicating that the global politics happens within a shared space, and their actions in one area affect the whole area. So, the researcher believes that this metaphor emphasizes interconnectedness and shared risk.

In regarding the representational metafunction, the researcher can assert that the caricature mainly constructs a narrative process, to be more specific, it is an action process where the two missiles that are marked with national symbols of Iran and Israel are not static, but they are actively fighting and biting each other. Their movement creates the so called "vectors" (which is lines of action) that direct the viewer's attention to the violent interaction between them. Their action is clearly reciprocal in the sense that each missile attacks and is being attacked simultaneously, which encodes mutual aggression rather than one side dominance.

The participants are loaded symbolically with meaningful content. Despite of being merely missiles, they are portrayed as aggressive creatures or dogs with teeth, eyes, and ears. This transformation shifts them from being merely objects into being an active actors, the thing that allows the audience to make a judgment of them as representatives of political entities (nations or governments). Their facial expressions (as being angry and hostile) reinforce the idea that their violence are intentional. However, the Earth below these missiles functions as a secondary participant and not directly involved in the action but clearly affected by it. It can be seen as a setting in concerning the location, and accordingly situate the action in a global context, and therefore reminds the viewers of the broader consequences of the conflict. As for circumstances, the conflict is isolated by the empty sky in order to make it the central focus, while the Earth below clearly provides the spatial context. The bone which is falling, introduces an implied result and outcome which is death.

In terms of interactive meaning, the caricature positions the viewer in a particular relationship with the caricature, because at the first place we cannot find a direct contact between the participants and the viewer as the missiles do not look at us but instead of that, they are occupied completely in fighting each other. This is an "offer" in Kress and van Leeuwen's terms. The social distance is shown to be close. These two missiles are large in size and clearly visible for they occupy much of the frame, which creates a sense of proximity.

However, viewers are not so close as to feel personally involved and engaged in the conflict, and therefore this situation of distance reflects how audiences experience international conflict as being aware and affected, but not directly participating in it. However, the caricature is presented from a relatively elevated angle, allowing the audience to see both of the missiles and the earth below, which gives the viewer a sense of overview or control, as if we are in a position to make our judgments toward the given situation. The sharp teeth, the flames, and aggressive expressions orient the viewer toward a negative reflection of the conflict. The caricature is therefore not neutral, but it directs us to see the situation as being extremely dangerous and irrational in its nature.

Compositional metafunction; In terms of information value, the central placement of the two fighting missiles makes them the most important elements as

they occupy the center of this caricature, which associate with the core message. The earth is placed at the bottom which serve as the "real" or the outcome of the conflict, while the sky above remains empty, the thing that keeps the attention of the viewer focused on the main action. Considering the salience in the caricature, we can notice that the missiles are colored brightly, especially the red color which immediately attract attention and reflect danger and harm in its common sense. Moreover, their size is also exaggerated if we compare it to the earth, which ultimately emphasizes the scale and the intensity of the conflict. Moreover, the flames and smoke further increase the salience in this caricature by adding a sense of movement and visual energy.

Furthermore, the falling bone, though being small in size, but it stands out because of its symbolic meaning, which ultimately draw the eyes of the viewers down and reinforce the theme of death. In terms of framing, we notice that all the elements are connected rather than being separated, all elements are part of a single and interconnected event, and the conflict between the two countries cannot be isolated from its consequences due to the placement of the world below them.

Figure 4.8**ISRAEL VS IRAN ON ARAB TERRITORY**

Note: ISRAEL VS IRAN ON ARAB TERRITORY, by Hassan Bleibel 15 June 2025, cartoonmovement.

The first metaphor in this caricature is; *A REGION IS A BODY*, which is shown by the camel as being a representation of the Middle East. This kind of metaphor helps the people to conceptualize and understand the political problems in physical behavior, and therefore shows the Gulf countries as politically weak and unable to defend themselves. So, this region is not just in crisis but it looks like a living being that is suffering from the result of Iran and Israel conflict.

An idea connected to our experience of the real life of how the body reacts when it is hurt or stressed lead us to see the metaphor; *SUFFERING IS A LOSS OF STRENGTH* or *A COLLAPSE*, where the legs of the camel that are being bent and its low body reflect tiredness and weakness. So, the political pressure in this caricature is shown as physical weakness which ultimately makes people feel with a sense of empathy because they understand their physical pain easily.

The metaphor *DEPENDENCE IS WEAKNESS* is also reflected in this caricature. The camel, which is known to symbolize the patience and strength is shown here as weak and dependent. The reflected idea would be that, relying on others makes the region vulnerable to dangers, and It also gives the idea that the region does not control its own future.

In addition, we see *CONTROL IS GRASPING* or *HOLDING*. The missiles are not physically holding anything, but we recognize that their action and movement suggests they are trying to take control over the other by presenting a kind of competition between Iran and Israel.

Finally, the caricature presents the metaphor; *VULNERABILITY IS EXPOSURE*, as the camel is completely exposed with no protection or defense which mean it is at risk and it is not only weak but also unprotected from outside forces.

From a representational metafunction, the caricature presents a narrative action process that is basically built around a conflict between Iran and Israel depicted as a collision of two rockets. We can clearly observe vectors being formed by the directions of the two rockets as they fight and move toward a central point. However, the key action here is not merely a simple attack on a single target but rather represented as mutual collision, where the two countries crash into each other aggressively, creating a sense of conflict that is shared and chaotic in its nature rather than being controlled or done by one side, and as long as the two rockets marked with national symbols and constitute a flags that represent Iran and Israel, they act as the main participant. Their interaction is extremely aggressive, but in the same time seen as self-destructive because their collision leads to the breaking of the central structure.

The center becomes the goal, but instead of being exploited, it is clearly shown as breaking apart with small size pieces falling down. These fragments represent the result and the consequences of the conflict, which emphasize destruction and devastation. Moreover, the camel functions as another important participant that stands for the gulf countries, but having a completely different role; they are not directly involved in the conflict but they are positioned as a victims of the consequences of it. Their depiction as having their head buried, bent and a lowered body implies weakness, and therefore we can see a clear imbalance highlighted by the contrast between the two powerful rockets and the fragile and fearful camel.

Considering the circumstances, the ground which is desert hints at a Middle East context, while in the same time the falling fragments act as evidence of the damage caused by the missiles shown above. Ultimately, the background is shown minimal and also abstract, which shifts the event from any specific place and makes it symbolic and globally influencing.

In terms of interactive metafunction, the caricature functions as an "offer", because none of the given participants look at the viewer. The social distance is close in a relative manner, especially in the depiction of the camel and the falling down fragments, where the viewer can clearly see the details of the damage and the camel's condition of fear and weakness. This sense of closeness creates a sense of involvement and also encourages empathy. The camel appears vulnerable and exposed to risk that is resulted from the conflict, making it easier for the viewer to feel concern and engage. Generally, this composition guides the interpretation of the viewers because the camel is placed at the bottom of the caricature and is directly affected by the falling fragments. Thus, the viewer is more likely to act emotionally with it.

At the compositional level, the information value is situated vertically and centrally. The top part of the caricature that shows where the rockets are located, represents action, power, and an aggressive conflict, whereas the center is the most important area in the composition, where the rockets collide and cause themselves to be broken. In this context, the bottom part of the depiction, where the camel placed, represents the results of that collision of the two rockets. The vertical arrangement of the elements clearly reflect a relationship between cause (which is the clash above) and effect (which is the suffering and fear below).

Considering salience, the viewer's attention is immediately drawn to the center, where the rockets meet with their destructive consequence, and the eye follows the path of the falling fragments down toward the camel. Here, we observe the broken pieces clearly stand out against the given background which make the destruction highly visible. The different colors of the rockets also make them noticeable. Additionally, the camel remains very important because of its position and the emotional impact. In terms of framing, the above caricature uses weak framing strategy, meaning that all elements are connected and not separated. The rockets, the breaking fragments, and the camel constitute a chain of action and result, and there are no clear borders dividing them. Everything here is part of the same events.

Figure 4.9**Netanyahu's dilemma**

Note: Netanyahu's dilemma, by Fahd Bahady, 17 June, 2025, cartoonmovement.

Using conceptual metaphor theory, the researcher believes that this caricature can be understood as mapping abstract political ideas onto concrete experiences related to the body such as injury, illness, urgency, and dependence. The visual elements, an injured man resembling a national leader, a war destruction at the background, a phone call directed at Trump, create a network of metaphors that structure how the viewer interprets political reality.

At first, we see *CRISIS IS PHYSICAL INJURY*. Israel here is portrayed as being extremely harmed by Iran as the bandages, bloodstains on all over Netanyahu's body, and his facial expression translate the political crisis into visible bodily harm, which emphasizes a sense of risk vulnerability and evokes empathy by suggesting that the situation in Israel painful and urgent .

The caricature also uses the metaphor; *DEPENDENCE IS A PHONE CALL FOR HELP*. The act of calling Trump symbolizes and stands for reliance and political dependency on an external power, framing international relations as a personal plea rather than a formal alliance. Another metaphor in this context is that; *MEDICAL AID IS A KIND OF POLITICAL SUPPORT*. This metaphor is conveyed through bandages and injury depiction, and therefore the implicit message would be that: there is an external actor ,who is Trump, expected to heal the

wounded state of Israel, which maps diplomacy onto caregiving and recovery conditions. another metaphor is revealed in this caricature that is; *WAR IS DESTRUCTION OF HOME*. This metaphor is activated by the depiction of the ruined buildings in the background, which reflects the concrete nature of the conflict, and thereby makes war highly understandable not only as abstract strategy but as the loss of shelter and loss of safety.

Netanyahu's expression and the speech bubble "Hurry up please", shed lights on a particular metaphor that is; *URGENCY IS PHYSICAL PAIN*, conceptualized and communicated through the apparent pain that becomes a way of reflecting time pressure and imply that delay worsens extreme suffering. The caricature also reflects the metaphor; *POWER IS THE ABILITY TO HEAL* or *SAVE*, where Trump is metaphorically positioned as someone who has the capacity to remove the suffering of Israel, which frames political power as almost medical authority in Trump's hands.

In this caricature. the injured body that symbolizes political fragility or the lack of autonomy which implies that the state of Israel cannot defend or sustain itself from Iran without outside intervention, triggers the metaphor; *WEAKNESS IS WOUNDEDNESS*. The interaction that resembles a personal appeal between individuals rather than formal diplomacy, would also triggers a significant metaphor; *INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS ARE PERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS* that renders such a complex geopolitical conflict to an interpersonal dependency and urgency.

From representational metafunction perspective, the caricature operates on a single dominant participant who is an injured man, namely Netanyahu. He symbolizes a national leader and we can say the state of Israel itself, as the bandage on his head, bruised face, and blood stains on his cloths mark him as physically harmed, while the exaggerated long nose that is shaped like a missile visually blend and merge his body with military imagery. This blending reflects that he is not merely affected by the conflict with Iran but is also inseparable from it. However, the caricature reveals both action and reaction processes, as the act of holding a phone to his ear and speaking "Trump.....hurry up please" is an action process that expresses urgency and also dependence. At the same time, his facial expression expresses a reaction to suffering and destruction caused by Iran, which accordingly

invites the audience to interpret his emotional state as being exhausted and desperate. The background as the destroyed buildings, smoke situate the scene within a destructive war environment. These details are not neutral as they connect the injuries in a broader narrative of demolition and devastation and they reinforce the idea that the personal suffering is a direct result of this conflict.

In interactive metafunction perspective, the depicted representation of Netanyahu does not make a direct eye contact but instead, his gaze is shown headed downward and unfocused, as if he is extremely absorbed in the phone call. This creates an "offer". Social distance is established through a close framing of Netanyahu, from the chest up, which creates an intimate but in the same time not intrusive perspective, where the audience are close enough to see the injuries and other details, which fosters empathy. The viewer is positioned at eye level with Netanyahu.

However, the exaggerated expressions of his face and the caricature style introduce a sense of evaluation, we are being guided to see him as weakened and dependent. This notion of dependence is reinforced by the inclusion of the speech bubble of Trump's name, which further shapes and influence the interaction by directing the viewer's understanding of the event as being involving external political explicit reliance.

The compositional metafunction perspective: The injured depiction of Netanyahu occupies the central position in the frame of the caricature, which makes him the most salient element. His pale skin contrasts sharply with the darker, gray background of destruction, which make the viewer's attention is immediately directed to him. The bold is also attracting salience, unusual shape of the nose that is like missile, acts as a visual point and reinforces the notion of militarization and war. considering information value, the positioning of the speech bubble to the right side of the caricature is very significant where it represents new information, suggesting that the call for help is the main message the audience should take into their account.

On the other hand the left side, that is filled with ruins, can be seen as the given information, the context of destruction explains why the call is being made by Netanyahu. Considering framing, Netanyahu and the background are visually connected which implies that the individual and the environment are inseparable.

This reinforces the idea that the leader's condition is directly tied to the state of the nation.

Figure 4.10

THREAT TO PEACE



Note: THREAT TO PEACE, by Naoufal Lahlali, 19 June, 2025, cartoonmovement.

The first important metaphor seen in this caricature is that; *WAR IS A TICKING BOMB*. Although, the bombs are not exploding yet but one can undoubtedly say that their presence implies impending danger to the civilian institution that is represented by the central shape of a building. This depiction maps the abstract idea of geopolitical tension that is happening between Iran and Israel onto the physical threat of explosive bombs that could explode at any moment.

We also see another important metaphor in the given above caricature; *NATIONS ARE WEAPONS*. According to this view, instead of representing people or leaders to represent their countries, the two countries are depicted directly as two

opposite bombs, the thing that shifts the national identity into a very destructive object, which suggest that their primary relationship is defined and shaped by violence.

Moreover, the caricature conveys and implies the metaphor; *CONFLICT IS A BALANCE OF FORCES*, which is triggered by the depiction of the bombs leaning in a symmetrical manner toward the structure which is in the center of the caricature which creates a sense of balance. This sense of balance suggests a fragile confrontation, while in the same time neither side has taken action yet, but both of Iran and Israel are capable of causing the destruction equally.

Additionally, a clear metaphor can be found in this caricature; *THE WORLD IS A FRAGILE STRUCTURE*, where the central building stands tall but narrow, almost precarious, and represents civilization or global stability, which is threatened by the opposing forces pressing in on either side.

In a similar context, one can say that the caricature implies the metaphor; *DESTRUCTION IS COLLAPSE*. The vertical structure in the center of the caricature is a representation of something that could easily fall down to the ground if disturbed by either country, which actually map the results and consequences of war onto the physical act of a building collapsing, the thing that hint to the mind that the stakes are depicted as being visually immediate.

Considering the angled inward positioning of the bombs, as if confronting each other across the structure would activate the metaphor; *OPPOSITION IS PHYSICAL CONFRONTATION*. This spatial arrangement turns political rivalry into a bodily, face-to-face standoff. By representing both countries in the form of bombs, here the perspective of power is conceptualized not in terms of diplomacy or even economy but as the capacity to destroying, which would suggest the metaphor; *POWER IS EXPLOSIVE FORCE*, where the larger and more prominent the bomb, the greater the implied power.

Another metaphor that we can identify is that; *TENSION IS PRESSURE*. The inward pressure of the bombs as depicted here creates a sense that the central structure is being harmfully squeezed and almost going to be destroyed. This serves to map the emotional and political tension between Iran and its opponent to the physical experience of pressure that is applied to an object.

From a representational metafunction perspective, this caricature can be seen as built around symbolic rather than narrative processes. we cannot see an apparent action in the conventional sense, no explosion or visible movement but the positioning of the given elements, bombs and damaged building in the center, strongly implies potential destructive action, where these two bombs act as the primary participants in the caricature and each one of them is standing for a nation or state, they are not depicted as individuals or leaders, which serves to remove any sense of individuality, but instead the caricaturist emphasizes their function as instruments of destruction and devastation.

The central structure that is vertical, clearly representing a building, henceforth a civilizational institution, functions as a secondary participant, where it resembles a high building or a symbolic representation of a city, it represents not just a single object but a broader idea of civilization and life, or even global stability.

A very crucial relationship is found between these participants as the bombs lean toward the structure and creating a visual sense of pressure or imminent impact. Meaning that, this structure is arranged to reflect relationships rather than actions. The circumstances are minimal but they are meaningful at the same time. The darkness of the background that is combined with the bright circular shape behind the structure serve to evoke a spotlight or a moon representation. This setting put away any specific geographic context and the scene feels universal and symbolic instead of being associated to a particular specific place. The caricaturist work of removing or not considering any extra details in the surroundings directs attention of the viewers entirely to the relationship between the given participants.

Turning to the interactive metafunction, there are no human faces or eyes presented in this caricature, so traditional notions of gaze do not apply here, which means that the image operates entirely as an "offer", where the viewer stand point is to observe the overall event and provide interpretations without being involved. For social distance, the viewer seems situated at a moderate distance from the scene and seems not so close that the bombs looks overwhelming, but in the same time not so far that the details are lost, which ultimately reinforces the idea that what really matters is the relationship between the elements.

Moreover, no dramatic angles or distortions found in the caricature, but instead a frontal perspective is presented, which reflects a sense of objectivity and neutrality,

as if the viewer is being shown a fact about the event rather than merely a subjective interpretation. However, this presented notion of neutrality is somewhat deceptive and not accurate because the choice to depict the two countries as bombs is already encodes and implies a strong evaluative stance that frame both of them as sources of potential massive destruction, and therefore the viewer here is guided to interpret the relationship between Iran and Israel as being extremely dangerous and unstable, even though the visual depiction itself appears at the first glance as balanced and stable.

Finally, the compositional metafunction ; The central placement of the building structure gives it high information value where it acts as the visual anchor of the composition. In this particular context, Kress and van Leeuwen believe that the elements that are placed in the center often stand for the main idea of the visual representation, and here that idea can be read as shared or common vulnerability.

The bombs are placed symmetrically on either side which creates a sense of balance but also confrontation and tension. So, we can clearly assert that according to his placement neither side clearly dominates, but instead of that, the symmetry implies equivalence between these two opposing forces in a standoff state. Saliency is shown here with the bright circular space attracts the eye immediately to the center of the caricature, while in the same time the bombs with their dark color stand out against it. However, their size and positioning increase their prominence and render them impossible to be ignored.

Moreover, the central structure remains important visually because it is framed by the circle and positioned vertically. Framing in this caricature is established as all the elements are drawn in a single, unified space, with no borders or divisions to separate them from each other. So, the participants are interconnected and the actions of one of them cannot be isolated from the others, which reinforces the idea that any escalation of each side would have consequences for the entire system.

4.13 Findings

The analysis of the ten political caricatures reveals that they employ a wide range of cognitive and semiotic strategies to construct particular representations of the conflict between Israel and Iran. The findings demonstrate that these caricatures are not merely intended for entertainment or artistic expression; rather, they function as

ideological texts that communicate specific political viewpoints and evaluations of the actors involved in the conflict.

At the cognitive level, the caricatures rely heavily on conceptual metaphors that map abstract political concepts onto concrete and familiar experiences such as war, fire, bodily injury, animals, physical force, disease, and destruction. These metaphorical mappings simplify complex geopolitical events and make them more accessible to viewers.

At the semiotic level, the caricatures consistently employ narrative action processes, symbolic representations, salience, framing, and information value to guide viewers toward particular interpretations. Visual elements such as missiles, bombs, flames, injured bodies, animals, and national symbols are strategically foregrounded to construct specific political meanings and ideological positions.

Overall, the integration of Conceptual Metaphor Theory and Visual Social Semiotics demonstrates that political caricatures serve as powerful multimodal tools for shaping public perceptions of political conflicts and international relations.

Table 1

Negative Representations of Israel

4.1	Cognitive level	Semiotic level		
		representationally	interactively	compositionally
	-Source domain: Fire	Process: Action	Contact: Offer	Information Value: Left / Right
	-Target domain: war	Participants: Actor and Goal	Social Distance: Close	Salience: Flames and face
		Circumstances: Minimal setting	Angle: Eye-level	Framing: Connected
4.2	Source domain: Politics	Process: Narrative action	Contact: Demand	Information Value: Given/New
	Target domain: War	Participants: Trump, Khamenei, Israel	Social Distance: Close	Salience: the leader Khamenei, missiles
		Circumstances: Smoke, explosions	Angle: Frontal	Framing: Connected
4.3	Source domain: War	Process: Action process	Contact: Offer	Information Value: Top–Ideal / Bottom–Real
	Target domain: Politics	Participants: Israel, UN, Iran	Social Distance: Medium	Salience: Bomb & rider
		Circumstances: Global setting	Angle: High angle	Framing: Connected
4.4	Source domain: Leash control	Process: Action process	Contact: Offer	Information Value: Left–Given / Right–New
	Target domain: Political power	Participants: Trump / Netanyahu / Iran	Social Distance: Medium	Salience: Leash / Flags
		Circumstances: Minimal background	Angle: Eye-level	Framing: Connected
4.5	Source domain: Fire	Process: Action (narrative)	Contact: Offer	Information Value: Top /bottom
	Target domain: War	Participants: Bombs, flag, turban	Social Distance: Long	Salience: Burning turban
		Circumstances: Fire, smoke	Angle: High angle	Framing: Connected

4.14 Discussion 1

The analysis of the first five caricatures demonstrates a recurring negative representation of Israel within the selected dataset. At the cognitive level, the caricaturists employ a range of conceptual metaphors that frame Israel as an aggressive, destructive, and dominant political actor. The most frequently recurring source domains include war, fire, physical force, bodily injury, and animal behavior. Through these mappings, abstract political relations are conceptualized as physical conflict, thereby emphasizing violence, confrontation, and domination.

Several metaphors recur across the dataset, including *POLITICS IS WAR*, *POWER IS PHYSICAL FORCE*, *STATES ARE PERSONS*, and *NATIONS ARE ANIMALS*. These metaphors simplify complex geopolitical events and encourage viewers to interpret political actions in terms of familiar embodied experiences. Consequently, Israel is frequently portrayed as an active agent responsible for initiating or intensifying conflict.

At the semiotic level, the caricatures consistently employ narrative action processes in which Israeli actors occupy the role of the primary actor, while Iran, international institutions, or civilian symbols frequently function as goals or affected participants. Furthermore, the predominance of offer images, medium social distance, and connected framing structures encourages viewers to observe and evaluate the represented events from a relatively objective position.

The compositional analysis further reinforces these representations. Salient elements such as bombs, flames, missiles, and political leaders attract immediate attention and guide the viewer's reading path. Information value structures, particularly Given/New and Ideal/Real arrangements, contribute to the construction of ideological meanings concerning power, responsibility, and conflict. Collectively, these visual and cognitive strategies construct Israel as a central actor in the escalation of the conflict represented in the selected caricatures.

Table2**Negative Representations of Iran**

4.6	Cognitive level	Semiotic level		
		representationally	interactively	compositionally
	Source domain: War Target domain: politics	Process: Action process	Contact: Offer	Information Value: Left–right
		Participants: Iran, US, Israel	Social Distance: Medium	Salience: Nuclear glow
		Circumstances: Dark environment	Angle: Eye-level	Framing: Connected
4.7	Source domain: Animals Target domain: Nations	Process: Action process	Contact: Offer	Information Value: Center
		Participants: Missiles, Earth	Social Distance: Medium	Salience: Fighting missiles
		Circumstances: Global setting	Angle: High angle	Framing: Connected
4.8	Source domain: Collision Target domain: Geopolitics	Process: Action process	Contact: Offer	Information Value: Top vs bottom
		Participants: Rockets, camel	Social Distance: Medium	Salience: Collision center
		Circumstances: Falling fragments	Angle: Oblique high	Framing: Connected
4.9	Source domain: Human body Target domain: State	Process: Narrative process	Contact: Offer	Information Value: Center
		Participants: Injured Netanyahu	Social Distance: Medium	Salience: Injured figure
		Circumstances: War setting	Angle: Eye-level	Framing: Connected
4.10	Source domain: explosive material Target domain: Geopolitical conflict	Process: Conceptual	Contact: Offer	Information Value: Center focus
		Participants: Bombs, building	Social Distance: Medium	Salience: Bright circle
		Circumstances: Darkness, spotlight	Angle: Frontal	Framing: Connected

4.15 Discussion 2

The analysis of the second group of caricatures reveals a predominantly negative representation of Iran and its role within the regional conflict. At the cognitive level, the caricatures employ a variety of conceptual metaphors that portray Iran as a source of instability, threat, and geopolitical tension. Frequently recurring source domains include war, dangerous animals, environmental decay, physical collision, explosive materials, and bodily injury.

The metaphorical patterns identified in the dataset include NATIONS ARE ANIMALS, POLITICAL CONFLICT IS WAR, THREATS ARE CONTAMINANTS, STATES ARE PERSONS, and GEOPOLITICAL CONFLICT IS PHYSICAL COLLISION. Through these mappings, Iran is often represented as a participant associated with aggression, danger, or instability. Such metaphorical constructions simplify complex political realities and make them cognitively accessible to viewers.

From a semiotic perspective, most caricatures employ narrative action processes in which conflict is represented through movement, collision, attack, or confrontation. Participants are frequently represented through symbolic objects such as missiles, bombs, radioactive materials, national flags, and political leaders. These visual choices transform abstract political relationships into concrete and easily recognizable images.

The compositional structures further reinforce these meanings through the use of central placement, salience, color contrast, and connected framing. Elements associated with conflict and destruction are typically foregrounded, while environmental settings and symbolic objects provide contextual support for the intended interpretation. Overall, the combined cognitive and semiotic findings indicate that the selected caricatures construct Iran as a significant source of regional tension and geopolitical instability while simultaneously emphasizing the broader consequences of the conflict for surrounding actors and international peace.

Chapter Five

Conclusions, Recommendations, and Suggestions for Further Studies

5.1 Introduction

In this chapter, conclusions drawn from the findings of the three research questions will be presented and discussed, where each of the questions will be addressed individually in a separate section of its own to ensure clarity. This chapter will start answering the first question, followed by the second, and finally the third one. Additionally, a conclusion to the overall findings, a practical recommendations, and suggestions to guide future studies regarding this area will be provided as well. The so called research questions are listed as follow:

1. How does a combined cognitive semiotic approach help in understanding the deeper meanings and ideological messages in caricatures about the 2025 Iran–Israel conflict?
2. In what ways do visual and cognitive elements interact in caricatures to construct particular ideological perspectives about the 2025 Iran–Israel conflict?
3. How do these caricatures represent power relations, actors, actions and shape the perception of the viewers?

5.2 Conclusion of the First Research Question:

Using a combined cognitive semiotic approach is particularly effective for uncovering and understanding the deeper meanings and ideological messages in caricatures about the 2025 conflict of Iran and Israel, because it combines and brings together two related and interconnected perspectives of analysis that begins with the conceptual level which considers the way in which meaning is operated in the human mind, and the second perspective is the visual level that deals with how meaning is presented through images or any other visual representation, including the caricatures.

By choosing Lakoff and Johnson's conceptual metaphor theory, the analysis reveals that the given caricatures do more than simply reflect political actions or events, but they shape how viewers understand them through recurring metaphorical patterns in an active and highly effective way. Accordingly, the researcher finds that in both groups of caricatures (those criticize Israel and those which criticize Iran) similar themes of metaphors appear, such as the common notion of war as leading to immoral actions (see figure 4.2, 4.6 in ch4), NATIONS ARE PERSONS or WEAPONS (see figure 4.3, 4.10 in ch4), and ENEMIES ARE MONSTERS/OR ANIMALS (see figure 4.4, 4.7 in ch4), and other thematic similarities. These metaphors function actively in translating the complexity of this geopolitical tension into more concrete and emotionally engaging visuals, for instance, Israel and Iran are alternately represented as aggressors, threats, victims or dependent actors according to the ideological orientation of each caricature.

Likewise, the semiotic level, which is in this study based on the visual grammar by Kress and Leeuwen, clarifies the way in which these meanings are constructed visually and are made to convince and persuade the audience, therefore the researcher finds that the given visual features such as size, placement, color, gaze, and the overall composition plays a significant role in guiding the attention and interpretation of the viewers. Leaders depicted negatively are often exaggerated, positioned in the center, or made visually dominant to reflect a sense of threat, danger or blame for specific responsibility. At the same time, the using of dark colors, distorted features, and other symbolic elements like weapons, smoke, fire flames reinforce the metaphorical meanings that are presented at the cognitive level.

Therefore, what makes this cognitive semiotic approach useful for this study is that it explains and reveals the way in which visual and mental operations work simultaneously to make ideological messages seem ultimately natural and clear, where the cognitive dimension shows and uncovers the concealed metaphorical structures behind the caricatural representations. In the other hand, the semiotic dimension reveals how they are turned into visual forms that appear familiar and absorbable to the viewers who watch and evaluate the event carefully. Thus applying this framework to the ten caricatures proves how ideological messages of the 2025 conflict between Iran-Israel

are carefully communicated and constructed, the thing that highlights the important value of integrating cognitive with semiotics in the study of a political visual discourse.

5.3 Conclusion of the Second Research Question:

Considering the second question in this study, the study finds that the interaction between cognitive and visual elements in the selected caricatures of the 2025 Iran-Israel conflict plays a central role in shaping and communicating specific ideological perspectives, as meaning is not produced by either level in isolation but actually created by their interplay continuously.

From a cognitive perspective, caricatures rely on mappings between a source domain and a target domain, where these mappings provide the logic of how viewers interpret the overall situation of this conflict. For instance, depicting a country as a monster would activate ideas of danger, and a notion of aggression and moral threat. However, these abstract mappings do not operate in isolation but they are activated, reinforced, and made persuasive through the employment of visual strategies explained by the grammar of Kress and van Leeuwen. The ideological meaning is constructed precisely in this interaction.

Cognitive metaphors directly shape the way in which processes, participants, and circumstances are visually depicted at the representational level. For instance, when employing a metaphor such as *POLITICS IS WAR*, here Israel or Iran are both represented visually as being fighters or soldiers who are involved in an action process like attacking or defending, and if a metaphor like; *ENEMIES ARE MONSTERS* is inferred, the targeted nation is drawn with features that are extremely exaggerated and non-human ones, the thing that visually transforms an abstract cognitive mapping into a concrete image. Circumstances such as setting or elements in the background, fire, ruins, and dark skies, also reinforce the source domain, embedding the metaphor within a coherent visual scene, in this way, the representational level functions as a bridge that links and translates cognitive operations into visible elements, the thing that ensures the intended ideology whether depicting Israel or Iran as aggressor or victim is communicated clearly.

The relationship between the visuals and the viewer plays a crucial role in strengthening these cognitive meanings at the interactive level were elements such as contact, social distance, angle work together in order to put the viewer in position where he becomes in alignment with certain ideological stand point, when a gaze is direct from a figure portrayed negatively, this create a relationship of confrontation which makes the viewer feel addressed or threatened personally, which ultimately reinforces the type of metaphors that are related to danger or hostility.

Social distance also interacts with cognition. A sense of emotional engagement are intensified by visuals of close-up depiction, and make the metaphor more immediate, while shots of distant can create sense of detachment or objectivity. Furthermore, angles also shapes interpretation and understanding, as low angles may empower a figure, while high angles can diminish it, reflecting a notion of weakness or victimhood, these visual element guide the way in which the viewer aligns with the metaphorical framing emotionally and cognitively, and creates an agreement with the message that is intended to be ideologically delivered.

The interaction becomes even more prominent at the compositional metafunction perspectives where elements like information value, salience, framing establishes the ways that meanings are interpreted cognitively. Elements placed in prominent positions, such as center or top, are to be given higher importance to direct the viewer toward the basic participant associated with the metaphor, whereas salience reveals that the metaphorically significant elements stand out immediately which makes the intended interpretation almost automatic, so if a nation is framed metaphorically as being a destructive force, it will often be the most dominant element to be found in the caricature. These compositional features actively structure the viewer's cognitive processing and they do not merely decorative in the caricature but they ensure that the metaphorical mapping is interpreted in a specific way that is ideologically charged.

Both groups of caricatures rely on similar mappings and visual strategies, but along with that, they differ in how these are applied as one set operates negative metaphors against Israel and the other targets Iran. Therefore, the cognitive dimension provide the conceptual foundation for the analysis, while the visual elements assign them form,

emphasis, emotional force, and when considering them together they shape viewers perception the overall evaluation to the 2025 conflict of Iran and Israel.

5.4 Conclusion of the Third Research Question:

Addressing the third research question " How do these caricatures represent power relations, actors, actions and shape the perception of the viewers", the findings show that the ten selected caricatures construct power relations, define the actors, and shape viewer perception through a carefully organized interplay of representation, symbolism, and visual emphasis.

Power is not presented as fixed but as fluid and unfixed across the two sets, how each actor is framed constantly shifts the power. In the first set of caricatures, where Israel is depicted negatively, Israeli political entity is depicted as dominant one but in the same time as an agents of aggression and violence, as in the first caricature, both power and hostility are revealed, where the Israeli prime minister angrily burning a map of Iran, which positions him visually as an initiator of destruction. Similarly, in the depiction of Netanyahu being riding a missile, the power is exaggerated into a form of dangerous autonomy of hostile president, where he appears to act without any regard for international norms that is represented by a personification of the globe trying to stop him.

However, this power is sometimes shifts, as seen in the caricature where Trump controls Netanyahu with a dog leash, implying that Israel's actions or decisions are not entirely independent but are influenced or directed by a stronger ally, which provide a sense of a layered power hierarchy, as Israel is both powerful and subordinate to America's president at the same time.

In contrast, Iran is depicted as the victim or target of aggression in the first set, represented by symbols such as the flag or religiously by the black turban. Iran here is not an active agent but a nation under the Israeli attack. Actions of bombing, burning, and missile strikes in which Israel holds military dominance reinforce a one-sided power dynamic where viewers are guided to perceive Israel as the primary source of

aggression and hostility, and Iran as extremely harmed in these particular representations.

However, through the deep investigation the researcher finds that these roles are reversed and actually complicated in the second set of caricatures, which shows how power relations are constructed and built instead of being inherent and of a fixed stand point. Iran is now frequently depicted as a dangerous and threatening country, this idea is indicated particularly in the caricature where the Supreme Leader of Islamic republic of Iran, Ali Khamenei, building a nuclear weapon, which depict Iran as a source of instability, which render the power to be seen as associated with potential destruction, and global risk.

Meanwhile, actors like Trump and the Israeli Netanyahu are shown attempting to contain this threat, which repositions them as defenders of the world safety rather than aggressors, which reflects hypocrisy in its highest levels, where both of them have such destructive weapons!. In other caricature, power becomes mutual and balanced , this emphasize the notion of conflict rather than dominance, such as the caricature that depicts both Iran and Israel as fighting animals in the form of colliding missiles, which suggest a balance of power and contradict with the idea of being fixed, defined by continuous striking confrontation where both of these sides are capable of causing destruction equally for the other side.

In all caricatures , the actions of burning, striking, building weapons, calling urgently for help, are of a significant role in shaping the overall perception of this conflict, where these actions are not neutral or randomly established by the caricaturist, but they are extremely symbolic and charged emotionally to guide audience to interpret intentions and moral position of each actor.

The viewer's understanding of power can further be complicated and changed. This can be seen in the depiction of Netanyahu when injured and seeking help from Trump, the thing that reverses the early mentioned representations of power and dominance, presenting Israel as weak entity, dependent and in need.

Ultimately, these ten caricatures shape perception of the audience through simplifying this complex geopolitical conflict into clear visual discourse, they assign roles such as aggressor, victim, controller, or dependent actor, moreover, shifting these roles across the two sets of caricatures reveals that power relations are not fixed but they are influenced by ideological settings and visually constructed perspectives.

In conclusion, this study concludes and sums up that a cognitive semiotic analysis of the caricatures that are provided and analyzed in chapter four, depicting the 2025 Iran-Israel conflict, reveals that meaning is constructed and perceived through the related interaction of conceptual metaphors and the elements of visual design, where mapping processes operate significantly. Accordingly, multiple abstract ideological situations are mapped onto concrete representations within the caricatures of both sets, and reinforced through particular choices of representational, interactive, and compositional perspectives of analysis.

The study concludes that both Iran and Israel are alternately depicted as aggressors, victims, or dependent actors, depending on the ideological orientation of each caricature. Moreover, power relations are found to be shifting in a constant manner through exaggeration, foregrounding, size, symbolism, textual and visual emphasis on certain elements. Metaphorical meanings that are conceptualized cognitively as for presenting conflict as war ,and nations as actors, are realized visually through processes like, defending, destroying or attacking, while the resources of semiotics such as salience, gaze, and framing are of an associated ,yet relatively different influence, where they guide viewers toward specific interpretations.

Overall, this study demonstrates that caricatures actively construct political reality and not merely reflect it. Henceforth, shaping perception of audience through simplified, emotionally, and ideologically charged visual narratives that ultimately influence how the conflict is realized and understood

5.5 Recommendations:

Several recommendations can be considered valuable, therefore, addressed below on this basis :

1. The first recommendation which should be taken into account by caricaturists and viewers as well, is that a caricature may contain more than one metaphor.
2. Education professionals and educationists are advised to make use of caricatures in teaching and learning settings.
3. Caricaturists should ensure clarity in the overall design of their caricatures to facilitate accurate interpretation.
4. To ensure ethical considerations, viewers should be aware that a caricature may reflect the perspective of the artist in a biased way, therefore, the researcher recommends considering multiple sources and looking from different angles to obtain a more balanced understanding of political events.
5. Educational programs should teach viewers how to critically analyze images instead of accepting them without questioning.
6. Using combined and integrated approaches would provide more systematic and deeper analysis, than being applied in isolation.

5.6 Suggestions for Further Studies

The researcher provide several suggestions for further studies that are listed below;

1. A study of caricatures as means of activism, opposition, criticism, or special interest.
2. A Pragma-Critical Discourse Analysis of Caricatures Depicting the Iran–Israel Conflict (2025)"
3. "The Influence of Cultural and Religious Background on interpreting visual metaphors in Iran–Israel conflict caricatures (2025)"
4. A study of AI-generated caricatures.

5. "Emotional Framing of Fear, Anger, and Sympathy in the Iran–Israel Conflict Caricatures."
6. "The Impact of Historical Narratives on Visual Framing in Contemporary Political Caricatures: the case of the Iran–Israel conflict (2025)"
7. " Repetition of Visual Metaphors and the Construction of Ideological Stereotypes in Iran–Israel Conflict Caricatures (2025), A qualitative-quantitative study".

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الخمسة الأخرى إيران بصورة سلبية. ويستند الإطار التحليلي إلى نموذج انتقائي يجمع بين "القواعد البصرية" لـ كريس و فان ليوين (2006)، و "نظرية الاستعارة المفاهيمية" لـ جورج ليكوف ومارك جونسون (1980) وتُظهر النتائج أن هذا المنهج يكشف كيف تنقل الرسوم الكاريكاتيرية، ببساطة ولكن بقوة، رسائل أيديولوجية تتعلق بهذا الصراع. علاوةً على ذلك، فإن تفاعل العناصر المعرفية والبصرية يسمح بتجسيد الأفكار المجردة بصرياً ويوجّه المتلقين نحو تفسيرات محددة. كما تُسهم هذه الصور في تشكيل تصورات الجمهور من خلال بناء علاقات قوة متغيرة، إذ تُصوّر بنجامين نتتياهو ودونالد ترامب وعلي خامنئي بوصفهم ضحايا أو معتدين أو أطرافاً تابعة.

المستخلص

تتناول هذه الدراسة الضوء على أهمية فحص الرسوم الكاريكاتيرية السياسية بوصفها أدوات قوية تُسهم في تشكيل التصور العام وكشف الفهم الأيديولوجي للصراع الإيراني-الإسرائيلي لعام 2025، إذ تؤكد قيمة المنهج التكاملي المعرفي-السيمائي في الكشف عن المعاني التي تتجاوز التفسيرات السطحية. وتُعد هذه الدراسة الأولى التي تتناول الرسوم الكاريكاتيرية التي تُصوّر الصراع الإيراني-الإسرائيلي لعام 2025، كما أنها الأولى التي تطبّق المنهج المعرفي-السيمائي على هذا الصراع الجيوسياسي تحديداً.

وتهدف الدراسة إلى إبراز كيفية إسهام هذا المنهج في الكشف عن المعاني العميقة والمواقف الأيديولوجية التي تتضمنها الرسوم الكاريكاتيرية. إضافةً إلى ذلك، تتناول الدراسة التفاعل بين العناصر البصرية والمعرفية في الرسوم المختارة. كما تستكشف الطريقة التي تُنشئ بها هذه الرسوم تمثيلات معينة لعلاقات القوة، والفاعلين الرئيسيين، والأفعال، وكيف تُسهم في تشكيل تصورات الجمهور تجاه هذا الصراع.

ولذلك، تم اعتماد التحليل النوعي في هذه الدراسة من خلال تحليل مجموعة مكوّنة من عشرة رسوم كاريكاتيرية؛ صوّرت خمسة منها إسرائيل بصورة سلبية، في حين صوّرت



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تحليل معرفي سيميائي للبلاغة المرئية في رسوم الكاريكاتير المصورة للتنافس السياسي بين إيران وإسرائيل (2025)

رسالة مُقدّمة إلى

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درجةِ ماجستير التربية في اللغة الإنجليزية / اللغة

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