

Iconographic Analysis of Bola Ahmed Tinubu’s Visual Genre of Cartoons and Political Communication

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Abstract

Around the world, cartoons are a popular journalistic genre used in the mimical portrayal of rather severe political and socio-economic issues. The purpose of this study is to examine political cartoons on Bola Ahmed Tinubu (BAT), especially regarding his intention to be the President of Nigeria in 2023. This qualitative and descriptive study relied on primary and secondary data sources and is predicated on the visual rhetoric theory, which is the term used to describe the study of visual imagery within the discipline of rhetoric. The study employed the analytical method, and a purposive sampling technique was adopted in the cartoons’ selection. Political cartoons, articles, and commentaries of political analysts and political communication scholars on Bola Ahmed Tinubu were reviewed. The study population comprised editorial or political cartoons on BAT’s visual genre in Nigeria published from August 2021 to August 2022 in Nairaland, the second most visited Nigerian website. The findings of the study indicate that many cartoons depicting Bola Ahmed Tinubu’s presidential ambition are unsupportive of his ambition. His disputed age, uncertain health condition, and perceived corruption are some predictors of this lack of support for BAT’s presidential ambition. The paper therefore recommends that political actors should consider posterity when they act, particularly as the media, which includes cartoons, document their actions and promote narratives which posterity uses in its judgments.

Keywords: Bola Ahmed Tinubu, Cartoon, Iconography, Nigerian Cartoonists, Political Communication

Introduction

The universal appeal of using cartoons to express deep political thoughts is well-documented. With the cartoon's unique means of expressing opinions through pictorial representation using funny caricatures and satire, cartoons are popular and universally acceptable mediums of communication. Cartoons are used today primarily for conveying political commentary and editorial opinion in newspapers and for social comedy and visual wit in magazines (Britannica, 2022). According to Akpabio (2021, p.97), “cartoonists' stock-in-trade has been to lampoon the excesses and moral foibles of political power holders. He argues further that “cartoonists have been most unkind to misrule, abuse of power, and authoritarianism.” Cartooning is “one of the most significant means of propagating and promoting cultural heritage in Nigeria” (Kurfi, Maradun, and Msughter, 2022).

Cartooning is part of the whole system of communication, which Anidi quoted in Okerefor (2022) defines as “the process of expression within and between a person, persons, group or groups...communication involves the exchange of ideas and information, and interaction between and among individuals, and is so central to our being.” The risk and dangers associated with journalism practice globally have also contributed to the growth, appeal, popularity and acceptability of this visual journalistic genre. Cartoons play vital roles in political expression and activism, citizen mobilisation, social action and eventual national development. Corroborating, Bello (2020) argues that editorial cartoons satirise current political issues and offer indirect criticism skilfully coated with humour and sarcasm. While cartoons amuse and satirise, they are equally great ways of exposing, revealing and speaking to societal wrongs and shortcomings. Cartoons are reflective pieces of journalistic work.

An important question raised by commentators on political cartoons is whether political cartoons, also known as editorial cartoons, are worth the time and effort for a rigorous academic scholarship. Scholars have added their

voices to this question. Kurfi et al. (2022) captured the thoughts of some scholars in their work. Kurfi et al. (2022), Ho, Proglar and Vuong (2021) lament the lack of serious attention to the study of political cartoons. The “lamentations” by these scholars presuppose that they believe that increased attention be directed to this discipline. On his part, Oparaugo (2021) describes political cartoons as a neglected genre of political communication. The scholar argues that the seeming lack of documentation and the perplexing issue of whether to consider political cartoons as work of art or expression of humour lingers. Contributing to this discussion Akpabio (2021) argues that to consider political cartoons as expressions of humour is to abuse this type of cartoon as political symbols. The best way to understand political cartoons is to study them through the deconstruction of the symbols used in the cartoons.

In a publication by Cabin (2022), cartoonists use five main elements to convey their point of view. These are:

- Symbolism - using an object to stand for an idea
- Captioning and labels - used for clarity and emphasis
- Analogy - a comparison between two unlike things that share some characteristics
- Irony - the difference between the way things are and the way things should be or the way things are expected to be.
- Exaggeration - overstating or magnifying a problem or a physical feature or habit: big nose, bushy eyebrows, large ears, and baldness.

This paper was centered on the Visual Rhetoric Theory. The visual rhetoric theory is an art of effective communication through images, typography, and texts. Visual rhetoric as a concept covers the skill of visual literacy and the skill of examining images for their form and meaning. Drawing from the theoretical lens of rhetorical analysis, visual rhetoric examines the structure of an image and the consequent persuasive effects on an audience (Kurfi et al., 2022).

In correlating this study's findings, the visual rhetoric theory's postulation of the “consequent persuasive effects (of cartoons) on an audience” presupposes that Bola Ahmed Tinubu would face a complex and herculean task at the polls, even if he wins the election. This is a significant point that should be of note in the run-up to Nigeria's 2023 general elections. The polls would be a litmus test of how well the editorial cartoons express the general mood of the voting public.

Prominent political players who have had (or would have) their reasonable share of satirical and sarcastic portrayals of their persons and actions captured in cartoons are encouraged to, moving forward, leave footprints worthy of commendation. This is premised on the assertion that cartoons “constitute a compelling political force with the ability to express complex issues in a single graphic metaphor accessible to a variety of literate and illiterate audiences” (Kurfi et al. 2022). Cartoons contribute to the judgments passed by posterity.

In line with the above, this paper, therefore, reviewed editorial cartoons on Bola Ahmed Tinubu and equally analysed the iconographic depictions contained therein. This review is situated within his intention to run for the office of the President of Nigeria in 2023. His success or not at the polls and courts, as there are legal disputes arising from BAT's election victory, would further define the conclusions of the reviewed editorial cartoons.

Research Objectives

The objectives of the study were to:

1. Review political cartoons on Bola Ahmed Tinubu (BAT), especially regarding his intention to be the President of Nigeria in 2023.
2. Examine the iconographic representation of BAT's presidential ambition.
3. Determine the effectiveness of cartoon communication.

Conceptual Clarification

Iconography

Encyclopedia Britannica (2022), the oldest English language general encyclopaedia, defines iconography as “the science of identification, description, classification, and interpretation of symbols, themes, and subject matter in the visual arts. The term can also refer to the artist’s use of this imagery in a particular work.

Kilroy-Ewbank (2021) posits that iconography “comes from two Greek words, eikon (meaning “image”) and graphe (meaning “writing”). Together we get “image-writing,” so the word “iconography” conveys the idea that an image can tell a story”. Indeed, an image can tell a story, as seen in many cartoons. Perhaps the ability of an image to tell a story has also contributed to the popularity and effectiveness of cartoons in conveying meanings, being satirical and sometimes inspiring mass action. The effect of an image which is acknowledged in many languages, gave rise to the popular quote that “a picture (image) is worth a thousand words”, credited to Frederick R. Barnard in *Printer's Ink* (December, 1921), “while commenting that graphics can tell a story as effectively as a large amount of descriptive text”.

In the above definitions, the “use and interpretation of imagery” and “conveyance of meaning” run through the descriptions and are essential phrases to note in understanding the term iconography. Cartoons utilise an iconography of images, sometimes from everyday living experiences, to convey meaning. In the Bola Ahmed Tinubu cartoons under study, the subject’s cap and eyeglasses are iconographic symbols of Bola Tinubu, such that whoever wears those will be seen as Bola Tinubu or his associate. For this study, Kilroy-Ewbank’s definition of iconography would be adopted. She explains that iconography conveys the idea that an image can tell a story.

Kilroy-Ewbank, like some scholars, made an important observation that any study of iconography should note. The iconographic analysis of a subject does not happen in isolation; it should be situated within a cultural or environmental milieu to aid improved understanding and enhance meaning. Kilroy-Ewbank (2021) notes that the study of the iconography of an image is more complex since it involves understanding the specific culturally constructed symbols and motifs in a work of art that can help us to identify the subject matter. To understand the symbols, you have to be familiar with their culturally specific meaning; that is, you need to be in the know about agreed-upon conventions. The iconographic approach is not particularly interested in the form or style of an artwork.

Bola Ahmed Tinubu: Brief Profile

Bola Ahmed Tinubu (BAT) is a Nigerian accountant and politician who served as the Governor of Lagos State from 1999 to 2007 and Senator for Lagos West during the brief Third Republic. He is a native of Osun State. He was (reportedly) born on the 29th of March, 1952. He started his formal education at St John’s Primary School at Aroloya, Lagos, and continued at a children’s home school in Ibadan, Southwest, Nigeria. He finished his secondary education abroad. He attended Richard J. Daley College in Chicago, Illinois. He completed his education at the State University of Chicago and graduated with a Bachelor of Science degree in Accountancy. He worked for some American companies namely: Arthur Andersen, Deloitte, Haskins & Sells, and GTE Services Corporation. After returning to Nigeria in 1983, Bola Tinubu joined Mobil Oil Nigeria and later became an executive of the company. He has been honoured with several traditional titles; Tinubu is the Asiwaju of Lagos and the Jagaban of Borgu kingdom in Niger State.

Political Career

BAT began his political career in 1992 with his membership in the Social Democratic Party (SDP). He was a member of the Peoples’ Front faction led by Shehu Musa Yar’Adua, which comprised other politicians such as Umaru Yar’Adua, and Atiku Abubakar. He was elected to the Senate, representing the Lagos West constituency in the short-lived Nigerian Third Republic.

After the annulment of the results of the 12 June, 1993 presidential elections, Tinubu became a founding member of the pro-democracy National Democratic Coalition (NADECO). This group mobilised support for the restoration of democracy and recognition of Moshood Abiola as the winner of the 12 June election. Following the seizure of power as military head of state of General Sani Abacha, he went into exile in 1994. In 1998, after the death of the military dictator that ushered in the transition to the Fourth Nigerian Republic, Tinubu returned to the country.

Perhaps, the golden era of Tinubu began with his assumption of office as governor of Lagos State in May, 1999. His achievements in office between 1999 and 2007 endeared him to Nigerians across the nook and crannies of the country. Lagos State, during his administration, became a model for other states, of significant importance was the geometrical increase of its Internally Generated Revenue. From there, Tinubu rose to national prominence, and had a firm grip on Lagos State. Tinubu single-handedly handpicked his successor, Babatunde Raji Fashola (SAN), Akinwumi Ambode (2015-2019) and the incumbent, Governor Babajide Sanwo-Olu.

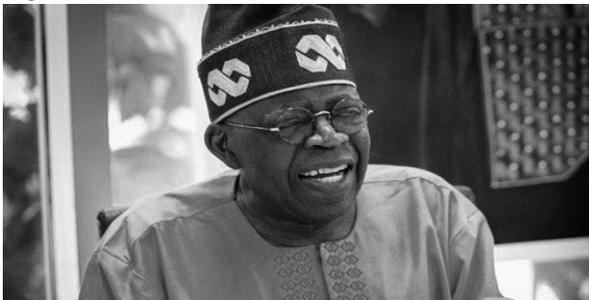
On 10th of January 2022, Tinubu announced his intention to run for the President of Nigeria. On 8 June 2022, Tinubu won the presidential primary of the ruling All Progressive Congress. Tinubu's net worth is uncertain. Bola Ahmed Tinubu is a man surrounded by several controversies. A few of them include:

- In 2019, eyewitnesses saw a bullion van entering his mansion on the eve of the election. He claimed the van contained his money and not ballot boxes.
- Social media has always queried the constant change of his age on his Wikipedia page. They claimed his real date of birth is 29th March, 1942. Tinubu remained silent over the issue.
- The US federal authorities investigated him for drug-related offenses.
- Bola Tinubu is widely perceived and feared as the godfather of Lagos politics.

2023 Question

Some political analysts argue that Bola Tinubu's perceived ill health may jeopardise his presidential ambition. They cite the case of the incumbent President Buhari, who spent much time and public funds attending to his health. The general question is whether Nigerians would want another president who would spend time and public resources treating undisclosed illnesses while being away from presidential duties for an extended period, as witnessed by President Buhari. (The Will Nigeria, 2021 & News Wire NGR, 2022). Results from the 2023 presidential election stated Bola Tinubu as the winner, hence his perceived ill health may not have jeopardised his presidential ambition. The 2023 Presidential election results are, however being disputed at the election tribunal.

Figure 1. Bola Ahmed Tinubu



Source: BBC, 8 June, 2022.

The above picture of Bola Ahmed Tinubu shows him wearing his iconic round eyeglasses and cap designed with broken hexagons. Irrespective of the facial representation, a cartoon image with the peculiar round eyeglasses

and a cap designed with broken hexagons is associated with Bola Ahmed Tinubu. These symbols have become his signature. Some people believe the logo represents a broken chain or shackles which depicts freedom or the will to 'break the shackles of poverty'

Cartoons

The **word** cartoon, according to Ibili and Sahin (2016), quoting Chiangtong (1975), comes from the Latin word *charta*, which means paper because, in that era, cartoon meant painting onto large textile curtains or drawing patterns or pictures onto mirrors and making mosaics. A cartoon is a preparatory design, drawing, or painting (as for a fresco) a drawing intended as satire, caricature, or humoral political cartoon, comic strip, animated cartoon, a ludicrously simplistic, unrealistic, or one-dimensional portrayal or version (Merriam-Webster Dictionary, 2022).

In describing a cartoon, Kurfi et al. (2022) posit that "it is a journalistic genre presented in simple, short and catchy formats, which appeals to human sense and consequently allows for quick reception of the messages communicated." Cartoons convey deep and subtle meanings that text may neither wholly capture nor express or may take many words to state. Often cartoons are humorous and contain salient social and political themes or messages which the cartoonist hopes would not offend sensibilities. Cases, however, abound where cartoons offended sensibilities leading to social disorder and the breakdown of law and order.

Two cases are prominent and worthy of note. The 7 January 2015 attack on the satirical French weekly magazine Charlie Hebdo, where eleven people were killed in cold blood and another eleven people injured when two brothers, Said and Cherif Kouacbi, breached the magazine's premises and opened gunfire on unarmed staff. Charlie Hebdo was accused, by the brothers, of publishing satirical representations of Prophet Mohammad. Another noteworthy incident was in September 2005, when Jyllands-Posten, a Danish newspaper, published twelve cartoons of Prophet Mohammad titled "The Faces of Mohammed", which some Muslims felt were offensive and anti-Islam. According to the newspaper, the cartoons were a test of religious tolerance, contributing to the debate on criticism of Islam. Some Muslims engaged in violent protests and riots across the globe, including in Nigeria. Reports say over 200 people died globally due to these violent demonstrations (Agius, 2013; Kurfi et al., 2022 & Nsungu, 2021).

Ibili and Sahin, earlier quoted, also noted that there are seven types of cartoons namely: political cartoons, illustrated cartoons, gag, comic books or serial cartoons, commercial cartoons, feature-length animated cartoons, and television cartoons. This research focuses on political cartoons on BAT's presidential ambition. Quoting Test (1991), Sani, Abdullah, Ali, and Abdullah (2014) posit that political cartoons by their nature constitute a specific genre of political reporting in that they are pictorial representations which depict political, social issues and events, as well as the parties involved, in a quick and condensed form. The genre is characterised by the humorous depiction of events, exploiting the ability of irony and satire to unravel, ridicule and attack in a playful, witty and artful fashion. Political cartoons are instrumental in communicating political and social matters that require tact, wit and subtlety from the cartoonist. The universal acceptability of political cartoons has helped to promote the increased scholarship of this genre of political reporting.

Political Communication

In the introduction segment to a book titled 'Thoughts on Political Communication in Nigeria' edited by Asemah, E., Ekharefo, D., and Santas, T. (2022, p.1), the authors state that the concept of political communication has varied definitions which sometimes flow from the various dimensions to it. The authors quote various definitions of the subject to buttress the point. These definitions include: "political communication is the resolution of political conflicts through communication", "the dissemination of information about how people and government relate to foster understanding and peace in a society" ... "a complex, communicative activity in which language and symbols, employed by leaders, media, citizens and citizen groups, exert a

multitude of effects on individuals and society, as well as on outcomes that bear on the public policy of a nation, state or community” ... “is system processing, producing, distributing, keeping and exchanging standardised information which can influence the realisation of the political authority.” They note that since political communication covers a broad range of subjects like communication, political science and sociology, it may be challenging to cover the subject in one textbook.

Gisela (2018), writing on political communication, says that the term “refers to both a set of professional practices and a multidisciplinary field of study focusing on the interaction between the political, media and public spheres”. Political communication is, therefore, a multidisciplinary field that scholars may approach from different angles.

Theoretical Framework

This paper is based on Visual Rhetoric theory. It is important to note that within the communication discipline, visual rhetoric has been termed differently and variously defined. The terms include the rhetoric of symbolic action, rhetorical dimensions of media, rhetoric of non-oratorical form, celluloid rhetoric, rhetorical iconography, or electronic rhetoric, among others (Lester C. Olson, Cara A. Finnegan and Diane S. Hope, 2008).

Visual rhetoric is the term used to describe the study of visual imagery within the discipline of rhetoric. As a branch of knowledge, rhetoric dates back to classical Greece and is concerned with the study of the use of symbols to communicate; in the most basic sense, rhetoric is an ancient term for what now typically is called communication. Visual rhetoric is a new area of study within this century-old discipline (Foss, 2011).

Kurfi et al. (2022, p.162) define visual rhetoric as an art of effective communication through images, typography and texts. Visual Rhetoric encompasses drawing from the theoretical lens of rhetorical analysis. Visual rhetoric examines the structure of an image and the consequent persuasive effects on an audience. Visual rhetoric encompasses the skill of visual literacy and the ability to analyse images for their form and meaning.

In 1970, at the National Conference of Rhetoric, USA, convened by the Speech Communication Association, participants made the first formal call to include visual images in the study of rhetoric. Quoting Sloan et al. (1971, p.220-221), Foss (2011, p.141) noted that the conference participants recommended an expansion of the study of rhetoric “to include subjects which have not traditionally fallen within the critic’s purview; the non-discursive as well as the discursive, the nonverbal as well as the verbal.” The participants further suggested that a rhetorical perspective may be applied to any human act, process, product, or artefact that may formulate, sustain or modify attention, perceptions, attitudes, or behaviour.

Kenneth Burke is also reputed to have contributed to rhetorical scholarship. Douglas Ehninger is another prominent rhetoric scholar who has contributed to rhetorical scholarship. Ehninger defined rhetoric as how humans “may influence each other’s thinking and behaviour through the strategic use of symbols” (Foss, 2011, p.141). The objective of visual rhetoric theory is to enhance the prospect of persuasion and influence. This perhaps explains the popularity of this theory in political communication, media and advertising.

The pervasiveness of visual images in many communication and non-communication artefacts, and the impact of visual images on today’s culture have further informed the interest and study of visual rhetoric. Furthermore, “the emerging recognition that visual images provide access to a range of human experience not always available through the study of discourse” has increased interest in visual rhetoric scholarship. Some scholars have noted some limitations to the theory. Symbols and images are better analysed within a cultural context, which may limit universal appeal (Kilroy-Ewbank, 2021). Further, visual imagery may be ambiguous and open to multiple interpretations, resulting in unintended consequences.

This study examined political cartoons on Bola Ahmed Tinubu, especially in the run-up to Nigeria's 2023 general elections that he contested as President and won. This is despite the visual rhetoric theory that was considered. The theory is primarily concerned "with the study of the use of symbols to communicate" and "the consequent persuasive effects of the iconographic symbols on an audience." Despite winning the election which is being challenged at the law courts by some of his opponents who accuse BAT and his political party of manipulating the election with the support of the electoral body, the underlying points noted in visual rhetoric theory still subsist and indicate its relevance to this study.

Literature Review

An Overview of the History of Political Cartooning in Nigeria

Nigeria's political or editorial cartooning has a long history dating back to the early twentieth century. During the period covering British colonial rule, political cartooning was active. Scholars trace the history of Nigerian cartoons to the pioneering works of Akinola Lasekan (Akpabio, 2021). Corroborating this, Artland (2022), an online site that 'sources and trades art from across the world' in an article titled "Akinola Lasekan" states that:

Akinola Lasekan (1916 - 1974) was known to be a pioneer of modern Nigerian art. Lasekan received little to no education. He studied at the Hammersmith School of Art for a short period. Later, Akinola Lasekan established his art correspondence course that became the training ground for many of the nation's most celebrated artists. Lasekan was well known for portraits, allegory, landscape painting, and cartoon drawing. Lasekan's artworks were inspired by living under British colonial rule. Political systems failings, the military, the Nationalist movement, and their call for political independence, Lasekan initially portrayed those political conflicts through cartoons published in *The West African Pilot*. Lasekan's paintings afterward were therefore illustrated with a cartoonist's eye.

The cartoons of Lasekan, just like his predecessors, helped to shape political discussions. The cartoons were a gauge of the country's mood and helped generate and sustain discussions that bothered national development. They served as a source and medium for expressing the hopes and aspirations of local communities in achieving freedom, emancipation and liberation from the shackles of oppression, discrimination and tyranny. Cartoons set the tone for public discussions and debates on national issues (Ifechelobi & Nwachukwu, 2021).

Other prominent Nigerian cartoonists have also stridden the editorial cartooning landscape. Their works contributed to political discussions of the day, many times capturing the mood of the nation. Some of these cartoonists are influential, winning national and international awards.

Cartooning as Political Communication

Cartoons have a long history. Balter, M. (2009, July 29), writing on the history of cartoons published in *Science*, an online publication of the American Association for the Advancement of Science, said:

the modern comic strip dates from the late 19th century, when artists such as Rudolph Dirks, inventor of the Katzenjammer Kids, began drawing them for American newspapers; and the animated cartoon was born in 1907 when French artist Émile Cohl began drawing people and other images directly onto movie film... But a special exhibit in the south of France claims that the origins of the cartoon can be traced back much further, to the earliest known cave art more than 30,000 years ago... early cave artists used some of the same animation techniques that cartoonists use today.

Britannica (2022), in tracing the history of cartoons, posits that though William Hogarth (1697 – 1764) had a few predecessors, it was through his social satires and depictions of human foibles that later cartoons were assessed. William Hogarth was an English artist, pictorial satirist and editorial cartoonist who is best known for

his series paintings of 'modern moral subjects', which he sold as engravings on subscription. The Collection contains the set called 'Marriage A-la-Mode'. Although pugnaciously hostile to Continental art, he succumbed to French influence (The National Gallery). There are five main types of cartoon drawings, namely: Gag, Comic Strip, Animated, Editorial and Illustrative cartoons and each type has its distinct use in the field of visual communication (Ford, 2021).

Political cartoons, according to Jimoh in Onyike, Okoye and Labo (2022), are primary ingredients in political communication, as they foster political reflection, which can serve as a basis for social action. They are viable means of criticising, reflecting and supporting political views through satire and wit. The ability of political cartoons to express complex issues in a single graphic metaphor, including having access to a variety of literate and illiterate audiences, suggests that they constitute a compelling political force (Kurfi et al., 2021). In other words, political cartoons can be veritable means of instigating thought, individual and community, which may lead to community action.

Research Methodology

This paper is qualitative research with descriptive and textual analysis. It relied on secondary data sources. Six editorial cartoons on BAT's presidential ambition published in Nairaland between August 2021 and August 2022 were reviewed as the primary data. The study also reviewed research works, academic papers, informed commentaries of experts and commentators on Bola Ahmed Tinubu, which served as secondary data. The study employed the Analytical Method through which a researcher uses facts or information that are already available and analyses these facts to make a critical evaluation (Patowary, 2014).

Data Collection

The study population comprised editorial or political cartoons on BAT's visual genre in Nigeria, published from August 2021 to August 2022. The cartoons, which served as primary data, were obtained from a single source Nairaland. Nairaland is an online media forum that, according to Statista (2022), is the sixth most visited website in Nigeria, although Galleria (2021) notes that Nairaland is the second most visited Nigerian website (Nigerian domains or operated from Nigeria targeting the Nigerian audience). Often, Nairaland cartoons are reproductions of editorial cartoons from reputable political cartoonists and media organisations.

Six cartoons were sourced and analysed for this study. This is in line with Kurfi, et al. (2022) in 'Thoughts on Political Communication in Nigeria' edited by Asemah, E. S., Ekharefo, D. O., & Santas, T. (2022). The purposive sampling technique was utilised in the selection of the cartoons. The main selection criteria were cartoons with the relevant socio-political theme, visual imageries, little or no texts, single panel designs and cartoons in synergy with the focus of the study. Secondary data sources included published literary and scholarly materials on the study focus.

Data Analysis

An iconographic analysis is an interpretation of the content of images: the subjects depicted the particular compositions and details used, including other elements that are distinct from artistic style (Jimoh, cited in Oparaugo, 2021).

In analysing political cartoons, the National Park Service (NPS, 2022), in its Teacher's Guide: Analyzing Political Cartoons, suggested five key questions to ask when analysing a political cartoon. They are:

- What was happening when this cartoon was made?
- Who do you think was the audience for this cartoon?
- What issue do you think this cartoon is about?
- What do you think the cartoonist's opinion on this issue is?
- What methods does the cartoonist use to persuade the audience?

For this study, the above criteria were categorised into two subheadings and used in analysing cartoons on Tinubu. The categories are: (i) Background and (ii) Iconographic Analysis.

Background: This reviews what motivated the publication and the prevailing circumstances that may have informed the cartoon. Questions like: “what was happening when the cartoon was made?”, “Who do you think was the audience? “, and “what issue do you think this cartoon is about?” are answered in this heading.

Iconographic Analysis: This heading analyses the images and symbols utilised by the cartoonist, given the existing environmental background and cultural milieu. Questions like, “what do you think the cartoonist's opinion on this issue is? and “what method does the cartoonist use to persuade the audience?” are reviewed in this heading.

Figure 2. “It is my turn”



Source: Nairaland, 23 Feb., 2022.

Background

This cartoon, by Mike Asukwo, was set at a time of uncertainty over who would succeed President Buhari. Many eligible candidates are eminently qualified for the top job, for instance, the vice president, Prof. Yemi Osinbajo (sitting next to President Buhari in the cartoon). Having served about seven years of his constitutionally allowed eight years (two terms of four years per term), President Buhari is due to hand over to a democratically elected president in May 2023.

Intra-party politics and several extraneous considerations may mean that even the “best” aspirant may not become the candidate to fly the party’s flag at the elections. Aspirants employ strong-arm tactics, including violence and intimidation, to ensure they emerge as the party’s candidate. In Nigeria, the incumbent’s political party usually wins the election, making politicians join the political party of the current position holder. Furthermore, there are no structures to support independent candidates to contest and win elections on the strength of their personality; they have to join a political party as things stand.

The cartoon depicts the determination of Bola Tinubu to take over the driver’s seat of Nigeria’s presidency from President Buhari, at whatever cost. To the shock of different Nigerians represented in the cartoon, the cartoon symbolically posits that Bola Tinubu is not averse to using violence to achieve his aim.

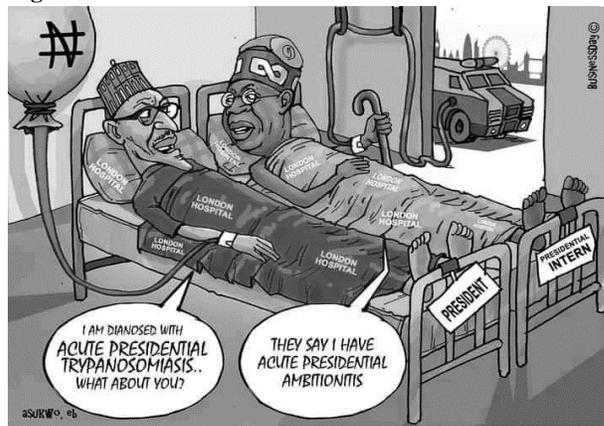
Iconographic Analysis

This single-panel cartoon was situated inside a “Danfo” bus heading to “Aso Rock”, the official residence and office of Nigeria’s President. Aso Rock is to Nigeria what The White House is to the United States of America. The Danfo bus on a voyage symbolises Nigeria, described as a nation in transition or a country on a journey to greatness. The Danfo bus aptly represents a vehicle ideal for the “journey to greatness”. Danfo buses are regular

sights on Lagos roads and are used for commercial transportation. Lagos state is the main political forte of BAT, who previously served two terms of eight years as governor of the state. With the traditional yellow colour and black stripes of Danfo buses, the operators, reputed for shabby dressing, are unruly, aggressive and quick to pick a fight. Synonymous with Danfo buses are the legendary Lagos motor park touts, otherwise known as “Agberos”. Many Danfo drivers are regarded as Agberos and dreaded because of their uncultured and uncivilised approach to issues. Violence is a language many Agberos understand and relate to.

Even though wearing the symbolic eyeglasses and cap designed with broken hexagons, Tinubu is poorly dressed and metaphorically represented as the feared Lagos ‘Agbero’ with a bottle, a weapon of choice for the Agberos. Scantly clad, he is struggling with the bus driver for the steering wheel with verbal threats of “...na my turn be this. I no mind to fight dirty...” The cartoon shows desperation and disregard in Tinubu’s ambition to become Nigeria’s next President. The symbols utilised in this and the other cartoons support the postulations of the visual rhetoric theory on which this study is predicated.

Figure 3. Presidential Clinic



Source: Nairaland, 21 Aug., 2021.

Background

Situated in faraway London, this cartoon by Mike Asukwo highlights the concerns of many Nigerians about the health status of Nigerian leaders, exacerbated by the current regime of President Buhari. The “president” and the “presidential intern” are hospitalised, needing a blood transfusion, which amounts to a huge financial burden. The cartoon highlights the economic drain the ill health of the incumbent President impacts on the nation and the feared continued drain on the economy should the “presidential intern” become the next President. Many Nigerian leaders at the national and sub-national levels are accused of incorrectly stating their health status before elections. Recall that former President Musa Yar’Adua died in office due to ill health after claiming to be fit and denying suggestions of his unfavourable health condition during the campaigns.

The cartoon also highlights the penchant of Nigerian leaders for foreign medical tourism to the detriment of Nigeria’s local health sector and foreign reserves. In a report by Tunji Oyeyemi (2022), Nigeria’s Minister of Information and Culture, Alhaji Lai Mohammed, on his ministry’s official webpage, claimed that Nigerians spend between \$1.2 billion and \$1.6 billion on medical tourism annually, a development he described as a huge drain on the country’s foreign reserves. This amount is colossal for a nation struggling with basic infrastructure. Note that the current President is a significant contributor to this huge drain.

Iconographic Analysis

The single-panel cartoon figuratively depicts the character of Tinubu wearing his trademark round eyeglasses and cap designed with broken hexagons. Lying in a hospital bed in faraway London, depicted by the distant

figures of the London Eye and Tower Bridge and the “London hospital” duvet. Europe, especially the United Kingdom and Germany are destinations of choice of Nigerian leaders involved in medical tourism. The green and blue blankets represent Nigeria’s national colour for the current President and the political party colour for the ‘presidential intern’ respectively.

Tinubu’s blood supply is linked to the legendary bullion van, which represents the enormous wealth he has made as a former governor and kingmaker. The cartoon also highlights the effects of the unguarded personal ambitions of politicians on the nation’s polity. Both patients on the hospital beds rely on vast sums of money to continue to survive, exerting enormous financial pressures on government coffers at national and state levels.

In the cartoon under review, Bola Tinubu does not recognise his ambition; rather he accuses others by saying, “they say I have acute presidential ambitionitis (ambition)”. This statement exonerates him from his ambition. The symbols utilised in this cartoon are simple and funny caricatures but express a rather sensitive issue of the “unknown” health status of Nigerian leaders.

Figure 4. Vote Again?



Source: Nairaland, 2 Aug., 2022

Background

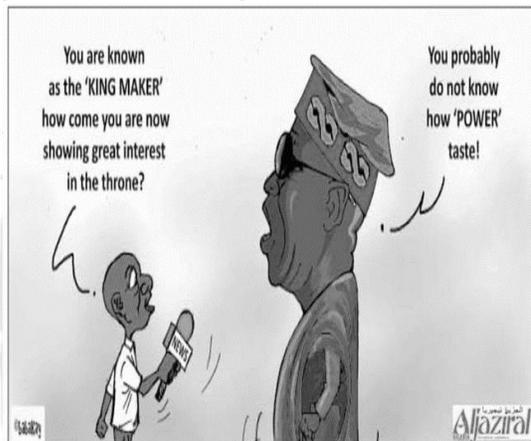
This cartoon by Mustapha Bulama asserts that the insecurity crisis in which the country is engulfed is traceable to the current All Progressive Congress (APC) government of Mohammad Buhari which has been unable to surmount the challenges despite the party’s pre-election promises. Bola Tinubu, the flag bearer and representative of the party in the 2023 presidential election, has promised to “continue” in the footsteps of President Buhari. The cartoon reviews the suffering of Nigerians symbolised by the cry for “help” and the “continuity” statement of BAT creatively represented by the incumbent president’s remark encouraging, nay instructing, Nigerians to vote for Tinubu’s APC in 2023. The question remains if BAT would “continue” the insecurity crisis of the current administration if he becomes president in 2023. Do Nigerians want that kind of “continuity”?

Iconographic Analysis

This single-panel cartoon creatively depicts Buhari speaking in favour of a Tinubu-led APC in the 2023 general election. The imagery of “continuity” that Tinubu used in his campaigns is significant in the cartoon. “Continuity” is the campaign slogan of BAT. With widespread insecurity and suffering, do Nigerians want

“continuity” as captured and symbolised by BAT? This depiction suggests that Nigerians groaning under the weight of insecurity and death, as seen by the massive blood flow and ignored by the leader, may not listen to the instruction to vote for “continuity”.

Figure 5. Ambitious Kingmaker



Source: Nairaland, 22 Nov., 2021.

Background

This cartoon is set in a media interview environment that captures a question-and-answer session between Tinubu and a journalist. Many consider Tinubu a kingmaker and wonder why a kingmaker would want to be a king. Tinubu is a known kingmaker, especially in Lagos, where he is reputed to have installed all the governors that came after him. In traditional African mythology, kingmakers do not become kings.

Many people, unfortunately, do not have access or the courage to ask him questions bothering that border on his choice to become a king. Journalists, however, have observed that ordinary citizens may not have access, and are also reputed to ask difficult questions. Over the years and in many climes, the media have played, and still play, critical roles in questioning and probing individuals, institutions and governments to achieve good governance.

Iconographic Analysis

Holding the symbolic microphone marked 'news', the journalist asks Tinubu a question many Nigerians want an answer to. Wearing his iconic features, Tinubu confidently retorts about the lure of power and the ignorance of the journalists. Tinubu should know, having been a former governor with power and influence since 1999, when Nigeria returned to democratic governance. Bola Tinubu's answer to questions on his interest in the throne (presidency) suggests that he is purely driven by personal ambition. Another point worthy of note is how the interviewee is presented as being larger than the interviewer to imply that Tinubu believes he is more than a kingmaker, and should therefore, be the king.

Figure 6. Betrayed



Source: Nairaland, 6 June, 2022

Background

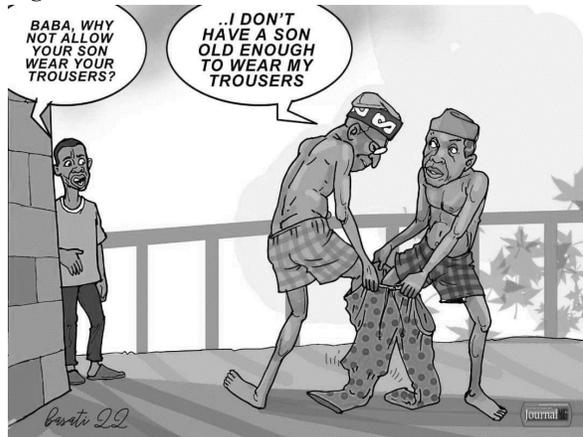
The Nigerian political scene, characterised by betrayals, selfishness and uncertainty, has many politicians who have felt the brunt. This cartoon aptly showcases a case of betrayal from a close political ally. Indeed, not all that glitters is gold. This also applies to Nigeria's political environment.

Iconographic Analysis

This single-panel, two-layer, non-textual cartoon captures the political betrayal many Nigerian politicians have suffered. Though traveling on the same train coach with Tinubu in picture one, the sudden desertion and abandonment of BAT by President Buhari, who represents the political class, in picture two may be an indication of what could happen to Tinubu in the run-up to the elections – betrayals, abandonments and disappointments.

This cartoon suggests that Tinubu, as depicted by the symbolic round eyeglasses and cap designed with broken hexagons, may be betrayed as the political train journeys to 2023. Even though he is the flag bearer of APC 2023 ambition, some analysts express concern that the ruling elite may still deceive BAT. These analysts expect last-minute disappointment and treachery even from Tinubu's "loyal" party members. In 2015, former president Goodluck Jonathan also suffered the same fate of betrayal, even from party members, which led to his loss of the election to the opposition.

Figure 7. I Don't Have a Son...



Source: Nairaland, 20 Apr., 2022

Background

In many African cultures, parents leave an inheritance for their children and also create avenues for their

children to do better than they. Politically, kingmakers, figuratively represented as parents, create pathways for political acolytes. The current Nigeria's Vice President, Prof Yemi Osinbajo, is a known disciple of Bola Tinubu. Not a few Nigerians expected Tinubu to support the presidential ambition of Osinbajo, unfortunately, Tinubu was also interested in the coveted seat. Both of them contested the party's primary elections to elect the party's presidential candidate for the 2023 presidential election, but Osinbajo lost.

Iconographic Analysis

Situated in a contest to wear trousers which cover the 'nakedness' of the contestants and symbolises the presidential seat, Tinubu garbed in his symbolic round eyeglasses and cap designed with broken hexagons, publicly denies and disowns a 'son', positing that his son is not old enough to contest Nigeria's presidential position with him. Osinbajo also wears the symbolic cap that he is known for. Tinubu is officially 70. Many believe he is much older, hence should rest from politics. His son, in this regard, is Osinbajo. Tinubu's determination to beat Osinbajo and wear the prized trousers shown in the efforts depicted in the cartoon is instructive. Age has become an issue in today's Nigerian politics after the incumbent, President Buhari spent a lot of time in hospitals with sickness suspected to be related to old age.

Discussion of Findings

Three research objectives guided the study. The reviewed cartoons provided data used by the researchers to answer the research questions in relation to the theory and other applicable literature of this study.

Research Objective One: To review political cartoons on Bola Ahmed Tinubu (BAT), especially regarding his intention to be the President of Nigeria in 2023. The cartoons were editorial cartoons on BAT's presidential ambition. The analysed cartoons utilised symbols and imagery which were simple and apt, typical of political cartoons. The iconographic symbols of Tinubu and other characters were adequately captured. The messages contained in the cartoons were unambiguous to the audience. The disputed result of the 2023 presidential election which declared BAT winner may not determine how well the audience agrees with the cartoons' messages or how well these cartoons have informed the social action of the electorate. Specifically, the reviewed cartoons expressed the nation's mood as many citizens were frustrated with the continuing foreign medical tourism Nigerian leaders embarked upon to the detriment of the development of the local health sector. Many Nigerians want the discontinuation of foreign medical tourism hence the health status of party flag bearers is a prominent theme in discussions concerning choosing the next President. Also, the reviewed cartoon highlights the challenge of insecurity as being closely linked to corruption by analysts.

Research Objective Two: To examine the iconographic representations of BAT's presidential ambition. BAT's presidential ambition is represented by different iconographic symbols in the cartoons, including a bus going to Aso Rock (figure 2), a moving train with the incumbent President and party supporters (figure 6) and the struggle for trousers between BAT and the incumbent Vice President who contested the party primaries alongside BAT (figure 7). BAT won. In all the reviewed cartoons, Tinubu spotted his emblematic round eyeglasses and cap designed with broken hexagons. These symbols are classic Bola Ahmed Tinubu. The cartoons also captured not-too-pleasant iconographic depictions that portray desperation and indiscipline (figure 2: holding a weapon in a scanty outfit and ready to fight dirty to get the driver's seat), incompetency (figure: 4), personal ambition and avarice (figures 3 and 5: hospitalised in a foreign hospital and sustained by blood transfused from a bullion van which represents the enormous wealth he has made as a former governor and kingmaker, betrayal (figure 6: disconnected moving train) and disputed age (figure 7: fighting with a widely believed son of his for a position he should readily accede). Using iconographic portrayals, the cartoons "convey particular meanings" (Tate, 2022) and "tell a story" (Kilroy-Ewbank, 2021).

Research Objective Three: To determine the effectiveness of cartoon communication. The reviewed cartoons were unequivocal that BAT should reconsider his intention to run for the office of the President. The cartoons

hinge their arguments on three major pedestals: (i) his uncertain health condition, (ii) his unclear age, (iii) his perceived involvement in corruption. With these three highlights, the cartoons posit that only parochial and selfish interests could motivate a man to aspire to be Nigeria's president. Since "cartoons contribute to setting the tone of public discussions and debates on national issues, according to Ifechelobi & Nwachukwu (2021), from the messages and submissions of the reviewed cartoons, it would be interesting to see how much and how far these cartoons affected BAT at the 2023 polls, which he debatably won, as the matter is in court. Eventually, BAT's victory or lack of it at the polls and courts would contribute to the discourse on Visual Rhetoric Theory and help measure the consequent persuasive effects (of an image) on an audience. Did Tinubu face a complex and herculean task at the polls, even as he was declared winner of the election due to the reviewed editorial cartoons centred on his political ambition? This question may necessitate further academic investigation.

The cartoons reviewed in this study affirm the postulations of scholars that cartoons are apt, sarcastic, simple to comprehend, appeal to the human sense and are the basis for social action. Cartoons are also used to make statements, express community feelings, and take positions on political, social and religious issues (Bello, 2020; Kurfi, et al., 2022; Ifechelobi & Nwachukwu, 2021; Onyike, et al., 2022).

Conclusion

The political cartoons on BAT examined in this study showcase iconographic features that expressed profound political opinions on his candidature and intention to become Nigeria's president. The reviewed cartoons also confirm the features of editorial cartoons identified by various scholars. As was noted, editorial cartoons possess universal appeal in expressing deep political thoughts subtly and humorously. Cartoons are also increasingly becoming an essential part of political communication requiring specialised study and research.

Since cartoons are reflective pieces of journalistic work that help to expose the excesses of governments, and the cartoonists' stock-in-trade has been to lampoon the excesses and moral foibles of political power holders, and cartoonists have been most unkind to misrule, abuse of power, and authoritarianism, cartoonists must therefore be informed in the practice and expression of this journalistic genre. Any seeming misrepresentation may have grave consequences. We are reminded of instances where political cartoons have instigated riots and disorder in the world. This puts a moral burden on cartoonists to be guided in the practice of their art in exposing and lampooning perceived excesses. The journalism ethics of objectivity, balance and fairness should be the watchwords for editorial cartoonists.

Recommendations

Arising from the observations made in this paper, it is thus recommended that:

1. Political actors should act with posterity in mind.
2. Cartoonists should eschew parochial interests in the practice of their craft. The effects of cartoons should be in their consciousness.
3. Further scholarly study on editorial cartoons in Nigeria should be embarked upon to contextualise the subject.

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