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**An Analysis of *Maddtimes* Online Cartoon
on Political Conflict: A Study of the Wike-Fubara Feud**

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Abstract: Political cartoons use imagery and text to comment on a contemporary social issue. They may contain a caricature of a well-known person or an illusion to a contemporary event or trend. Political cartoons serve as a powerful communicative weapon and form an integral part of Political Communication. Many studies have been carried on iconographic analysis of certain political cartoons. However, this work focuses on a particular cartoon by MaddTimes that was laced with irony, having no text, which depicts the Wike-Fubara feud which attracted so much media attention across the country. The cartoon which served as primary data was obtained from the official Facebook page of the magazine. This cartoon was chosen as it was the only one made about the Wike-Fubara Feud available to this researcher. It was particularly chosen as it generated hundreds of likes, comments and shares, due to its relevant sociopolitical theme, visual imagery, no-text nature, and as it was relevant to the study. The Connotative Meaning Theory, Framing Theory and Visual Rhetoric Theory were the theories on which the study was anchored. Findings revealed that through cartoons, intense political developments can be explained in the simplest of terms, while also presenting the true picture of occurrences.

Keywords: Godfatherism, MaddTimes, Political Cartoon, Wike-Fubara.

Introduction

Effective communication is only deemed to be effective when the targeted audience finds it easy to understand. As such, cartoons come in handy as a form of communication which many, especially the uneducated can more readily relate to. Cartoon is one of the satirical methods of transmitting ideas, emotions, feelings, thoughts, information and messages to others through illustrated visual

arts of drawing or painting for caricature or humour with scanty or no words. This type of communication is critical to journalism as a means to communicate messages in a humorous and sarcastic manner – howbeit, cartoonists in media organisations are able to convey serious information including political ones in ironic ways and manners. On the basis of the foregoing, several mediums have one or more cartoonists with the capacity to meet their daily need of satire for the audience.

According to Ekpe, (2016) [1], it is usually more serious in tone and commonly uses irony. Passing messages to others is at the heart of communication and in cartoons this takes the form of a caricature and humorous drawing to illustrate a point of view on current social or political issues. Since it appeals to all strata of the society, the uneducated, or in this case, those who have no prior knowledge of the incident being cartooned, will form an opinion which will more often than not tally with that of the educated. This is the unique nature of the type of journalism known as satirical journalism which Fadeyi and Ola (2023) [2] describe as the use of humour, satire and sarcasm to tell a story or disseminate information to the audience. The researchers also explain that regardless that cartoons are humorous, different interpretations are often ascribed leading to different emotions,

Cartoons appeals to a diverse and heterogeneous audience. The educated, for instance, leverage on their prior knowledge of the subject matter to draw a full picture in their mind, which guides them in better understanding the pictorial illustration, further enhancing humour. Cartoons and humour are media reserves that have immemorially maintained an undeniable presence and influence in the communication of the age-old social institution known as politics. Based on this communicative role played by cartoons and humour, the two have preserved a symbiotic relationship with politics; thus, they are known as political cartoons and political humour in extant literature. Political cartoons have been avowed to be powerful communicative weapons used to satirise governments without incurring the wrath of the affected persons and institutions (Oluremi, 2019). [3]

Among the genre of visual arts that proves potent in putting checks on the political class in the contemporary society is the art of political cartooning. Cartoonists are like traditional palace jesters who lampoon the political class using satire as tools (Akinloye, 2014). [4] Cartoons are a unique form of journalism which contrasts with conventional forms of communication. The images can cast a powerful interpretation on the day's news. They explain and explore stories in manners that articles cannot. More effective than writing or video, they capture the imitable human nature of their subjects in order to humanise the topic they depict. The use of animation, comic strips, and caricature is common with cartoons meant for the audience as media organisations see such as avenues to pass vital information to the readers.

According to Rt. Hon. George Osborne, a former British Politician and Newspaper Editor, “The great thing about a political cartoon is that it sums up the state of play at any moment in politics. It's clever, funny, amusing, it informs and entertains us. It does all the things in one drawing that a newspaper does throughout all of its pages.” With the use of such elements displayed conspicuously on its front page, newspapers can attract wide readership and patronage. The satirical character of this form of journalism adds to its appeal. By combining humour with the latest political news, cartoonists can reinforce their messaging, focusing on the frequently ridiculous nature of stories. Nevertheless, rather than despise this cross-examination, politicians regularly defend them, using their depictions as indications of their relevance in public life.

Cartoons do not only act as news sources, but they can translate into a historical record of the political climate. In a time when journalism is constantly evolving, political cartoons have remained a timeless method of political commentary. Particularly in a time of tremendous volumes of media output, the ability of cartoons to communicate a compelling and comprehensive message has undisputedly stood the test of time. Knieper (2023) [5] averred that political cartoons' subject matter is basically that of newsworthy political issues of current trends and readers exposed to them must possess prior knowledge of the issues at stake to have a full grasp of the information embedded. Therefore, the researcher described political cartoon as an artistic tool that combines satirical and metaphorical language with which discrepancies, contexts, and problems of a political situation is captured.

Recent political events have assumed intriguing dimensions drawing the attention of members of the public. Therefore, metaphorical and satirical representation of such events in form of cartoons has been the trend among print and online mediums in Nigeria. This study centres on a particular cartoon by *MaddTimes*, a magazine centre on socio-political cartoon on trending issues of national conversation. The cartoon which depicts former Rivers State Governor and Minister of the FCT, Nyesom Wike, and current Governor, Sim Fubara is a classic case of political conflict. Therefore, this work seems to give an in-depth analysis into that piece of Journalistic work which happens to be an irony of some sort.

Statement of the problem

Cartoons are a unique form of journalism which contrasts with conventional forms of communication. The images can cast a powerful interpretation on the day's news. They explain and explore stories in manners that articles cannot. More effective than writing or video, they capture the imitable human nature of their subjects in order to humanise the topic they depict. In communication, cartoons convey messages through visual and written means and considered

important means of communicating messages in different unique context and scenarios (Zarifan, 2020). [6] A sharp and straight-to-the-point cartoon image can paint a situation and succinctly captures it more a thousand words will. In reality, this provides good grounds for space management in print media. This explains why there is a wide acceptance of using cartoons as tools to disseminate political information from both an editorial and personal standpoint in modern journalism.

Political cartoons are an integral component in the framework of political journalism. They offer a brightly coloured alternative to formal news reporting, providing light relief from the ever-increasingly gloomy political discourse. With the ability to distil news and opinion into a caricature, cartoons present accessible and instant commentary and analysis of current affairs. Cartoonists use several methods, or techniques, to get their point across. Not every cartoon includes all of these techniques, but most political cartoons include at least a few. Some of the techniques cartoonists use the most are symbolism, exaggeration, labeling, analogy, and irony. In this case, this paper looks at the use of irony in a cartoon depicting political conflict in the Wike-Fubara feud. It further takes an in-depth look at the underlying meaning of the cartoon, in the light of the intrigues of the case, going beyond the surface.

Objectives of the Study

The study's objectives were to:

1. Demonstrate how cartoonists take advantage of irony to pass political messages in an understandable way.
2. Analyse the contextual background of the *MaddTimes* political cartoon on the Wike-Fubara feud, going beyond the irony of the illustration.
3. Emphasise how political cartoons appeal to all strata of the society irrespective of exposure to prior hard news.

Political Conflicts and Cartoons in Political Communication

Using imagery, metaphor, symbolism and other rhetorical devices, a cartoonist defines political situations, and attempts to interpret them visually in a way that is both amusing, and thought-provoking. In fact, they leverage on each cartoon to tell a tale about a circumstance or event. Significant among the elements in a cartoon is the metaphor. The visual metaphor is popular and it involves the use of visual picture to represent a thing, a place, person, concept while implying a point of resemblance or relationship (Pinto & Mustaffa, 2023). [7] Though issues are usually exaggerated, metaphors are used to paint a vivid or lucid scenario to the audience of the communication. Whether it is political or even other events, the use of metaphorical elements in political communication has gained ground even in the face of technological advancements.

Politics strives at building a stable nation, not a nation of instability. Therefore, the political reporter is supposed to play an ombudsman (middle man or mediator) role between the major players in the political field and conflict. He is also expected to play the role of a “go-between” between the political class and the entire society in his political coverage and reporting (Umechukwu, 2001). [8] He is never expected to be biased and subjective, although he could be objectively opinionated; he should play down on advocacy journalism and only strives to give the society the facts the way they are and allow them to take their individual positions (Galadima & Enighe, 2001). [9]

In political conflict reporting, the reporter should never be a player or combatant no matter what the level of provocation or involvement of his personal values is. In fact, the political reporter in reporting conflicts, especially in a pluralistic society like Nigeria, must remain aloof so that the players can see him as being in the center and consequently listen and heed to his call. Political cartoons, according to Jimoh in Onyike, Okoye & Labo (2022) [10] 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.

Political cartoons are effective means cartoonists use to express their thoughts and ideas about political issues, events or personalities in a particular period in a playful manner (Becker, 1959; cited in Sani et al 2012). [11] They are openly and discreetly used to make compelling statement and provide specific knowledge on contemporary socio-political issues. The goal of political cartoon is to raise public consciousness using figurative tone and graphical imageries to address crucial issues and criticize political leaders and their contemptible practices. In other words, the genre serves as a medium of political reporting, articulating a particular message from a particular point of view using language and imageries as prime tools (Ogbo & Nuhu, 2016). [12]

Political cartoons are visual images, with or without captions that comment on political occurrences in the society which are usually published on the pages of newspapers or on the social media platforms. Cartoons go alongside satirical caricature and comic art and have line as their principal element. They are forms of visual satire in mass media intended to entertain and to educate the audience on sociopolitical issues. By making satirical and metaphorical depictions of serious political events, political cartoons provide good points for understanding complex situations. Accordingly, they are considered to simplify complex political situations providing people with superior understanding of current events (Iloke, Okoro & Ushie, 2024). [13]

However, in recent times, political cartoons need not to be published in newspapers or magazines, as there are online platforms through which cartoonists disseminate their expressions (Kurfi, Maradun & Msughter, 2022). [14] Political

events such as elections are occasions for cartoonists to flourish and become extraordinarily active and creative. In political cartoons, cartoonists not only criticize the status quo but also attempt to highlight hidden discourses and sociopolitical stances in a humorous way.

Thus, the humor in cartoons should not be considered merely comical because political cartoons are meant to express the views, attitudes, and ideologies not only of the cartoonist but also of his/her society. Marie and Samantha (2016) [15] also buttress this point with the assertion that rather than just presenting issues in funny ways; political cartoons present the viewpoint of the cartoonist or even provide illustration to an opinion article or editorial captured in the print medium of a magazine or a newspaper. The humour created by exaggerations and caricatures and by analogies is only one aspect of cartoons. They function as attention-getters that are designed to invite the viewer to study the cartoon and uncover the hidden messages. They serve as visual commentary offering insights to the audience on different current events (Marie & Samantha, 2016). [16] These events can take any turn but the use of cartoons paints a scenario with few words and caricature of the situation.

Humor in political cartoons is used as an instrument to highlight solely current political situation and social issues in society. Thus, humor is seen a tool capable of exposing social and political absurdities of a moment (Kulkarni, 2004). [17] Moreover, it is a weapon used to ridicule humanity specifically political leaders in order to address their follies and irrational behaviors for the betterment of society. Thus, humor constitutes a significant element of the cartoon genre within the realm of wider political discourse because it creates in the minds of the audience a mental picture as depicted and may also provide room for imaginativeness and critical thinking.

Humor as one of the predominant rhetoric of the cartoons genre plays vital role in conveying messages in the cartoons' depictions; it is therefore regarded as one of the essential hallmark of Nigerian cartooning art. Therefore, it is important to note that cartoon humor results not only from the text embodied in it or the interaction of text and image, but also from the pictorial representation even if no text is added in the cartoon panel (Sani et al., 2012). [18] This demystifies the idea of packaging messages in words since a single character can tell same stories without text.

Cartoonists use five main elements to convey their point of view.

- 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, baldness, etc.

MaddTimes: Incorporating ‘Madness’ into Political Cartoons

Cartoons have over the years been a significant feature of newspapers and magazine content in Nigeria. Many newspapers and magazines have segments which feature various cartoons and comic strips covering issues on social, political, and economic affairs of the country. *MaddTimes*, unlike any other, is a full cartoon publication initiated by a remarkable cartoonist, Joseph Edgar (Duke of Shomolu).

The maiden edition debuted in June, 2023, and is an all-cartoon newspaper that takes a look at socio-political issues bothering the nation, presented in a funny; yet true comic depiction of such events. Accompanying such Cartoons, are articles written in a humourous, 'mad' yet factual manner. Interestingly, the 6-man team boasts of foremost newspaper cartoonists who have made their mark and left their prints in the sands of time, as far as the issue of cartooning is concerned. They are Business Day’s Mike Asukwo. Albert Ohams of *The Sun Newspaper*, who has been the cartoon editor of *The Sun* since 2003. Others include Joseph Edgar, Charles Ezirinne, Ifeanyi Eziukwu and Chidi Nebo.

Theoretical Framework

Connotative Meaning Theory

This is a theory of semiotics as it relates to the study of political cartoons. The connotative meaning theory suggests that the meaning of a cartoon is not fixed, but rather is dependent on the context in which it is interpreted. According to this theory, the meaning of a cartoon is created by the interaction between the image and the viewer, and is influenced by the viewer's background, knowledge, and experience.

This theory was developed by Roland Barthes, a French theorist who is considered to be one of the founders of semiotics. According to Barthes, the denotative meaning of a cartoon is the literal meaning that can be derived from the image. The connotative meaning, on the other hand, is the meaning that is created by the viewer's interpretation of the image. This interpretation is influenced by the viewer's culture, experiences, and biases. This theory is a strong anchor for this Study, as the meaning of the cartoon is dependent on the viewer's interpretation, which is explained by taking a look at the factors and occurrences necessitating that image.

Visual Rhetoric Theory

This study uses Visual Rhetoric Theory postulated by George Campbell in the 18th century. The basic assumption of the theory is that images or cartoons

are used to communicate issues in the public domain. The theory encompasses the skill of visual literacy and the ability to analyze images for their form and meaning. Within the theoretical lens, the use of image to communicate is fundamental as these images help in forming the case or arguing the point that the writer formulates. Visual rhetoric encompasses how people arrange segments of visual text on electronic media to comment on sensitive issues (Aonover, Oyeleye & Aonover, 2022). [19]

Gwandu (2019) [20] and Aonover et al (2022) [21] believe that in the application of visual rhetoric, the meaning should be deeper than the literal sense that a visual text holds. In this direction, there is a need to dissect a visual text to understand the meaning behind an image or text. As such, analyzing a text that includes a photo, painting or even cartoon of the bold eagle with additional written words would bring to minds the conceptions of strength and freedom rather than merely a conception of a bird. This theory is deemed appropriate for the study as visual rhetoric was employed in analysing the cartoon on the Wike-Fubara Feud. The meaning of the cartoon went beyond what was depicted, or better still, gave an in-depth explanation of the cartoon.

Framing Theory

The framing theory suggests that the media can influence how people think about and understand issues by framing them in a certain way. This is done through the use of language, images (could also apply to cartoons as in this case) and other storytelling techniques. In the context of political communication, framing can be used to influence people's opinions on political issues and candidates. It is also based on the theoretical premise that issues can take on different dimensions and also be so presented. This implies that such issues can be presented in different perspectives and constructed in ways that show their implication for multiple considerations (Chong & Druckman, 2007). [22]

Cartoons frame is actualised though situating the problem within the context of daily life and by so doing, exploit universal values through which readers are persuaded to identify with an image and then grasp the intended message (Greensberg, 2002). [23] The “frame” denotes how something is presented to and impacts the choices people make about how to process that information. Framing is related to the agenda-setting theory but expands the research by focusing on the essence of the issues rather than on a particular topic. In other words, political cartoons put events within a field of meaning (Mateus, 2016). [24] In like manner, this theory tallies with the cartoon, in the sense that though it depicts Wike and Fubara smiling as they shake hands, the portrayal of a dagger and matchete behind them clearly conveys a message that the war is not yet over.

Review of Related Literature

Several studies have been conducted on the use of cartoons to depict different situations. Political perspectives have also been explored by such studies. Ifechelobi & Nwachukwu (2021) [25] carried out a study that analysed the semiotic perspective of selected political cartoons by Mike Asukwo. The study sought to explore the inherent meaning potentials contained in political cartoons; to analyse their symbolic representations; to categorise them into specific conceptual and source domains; to investigate the multimodal resources deployed in creating such cartoons and finally, to align the findings with the shared cartoonist's vision of Nigeria. After analysing 6 cartoons, they found out that the cartoonist creatively harnessed the text and cartoon media to humorously communicate serious socio-political issues. The findings of the study demonstrate how cartoons are used in the media discourse to comment on current socio-political issues in order to transform people, keep them informed and abreast of topical issues that affect their lives.

In addition, another research conducted by Omolabi and Abiodun (2020) [26] was a focused on some selected political cartoons in Nigerian Newspaper. The researcher showed that cartoons enable readers to be conscious of every detail and element, with each element in the cartoon contributing to the intended meaning of the cartoonist. It enables the readers develop critical thinking, making them able to decode the image not from the surface level alone but also at the phase level. The implication of the foregoing is that with cartoon come the capacity to interpret situations through critical thinking.

Kurfi, Maradun and Msughter (2023) [27] carried out an iconographic analysis on Femi Fani-Kayode's visual genre of cartoons and political Communication. The study discovered that political cartoons in the Nigerian newspapers are such a strategic editorial piece, which cartoonists use to uncover social ills and satirise them for public enlightenment. Therefore, political cartoons are indispensable features of editorial pages and they influence public opinion and serve as a rhetorical object in lampooning the excesses of the political class. Whereas some may come as amusing to the political elites, others are considered to unsettle them providing the enabling environment for political discourse that tilts toward addressing societal ills.

There are other studies with an in-depth focus on iconographic analysis of cartoons as used in the political sphere. In such a study, Ochulor, Okereafor and Okocha (2023) [28] on their part carried out an iconographic analysis of Bola Tinubu's visual genre of cartoons and political Communication. They reviewed political and editorial cartoons on the ambition of Bola Tinubu to be President. As noted, editorial cartoons possess universal appeal in expressing deep political thoughts subtly and humorously. Any seeming misrepresentation may have grave consequences. These studies are related to the current one in respect of their focus

on cartoons but differ in the context. Whereas, the current study is focused on the *MaddTimes* online cartoons within the context of the Wike-Fubara feud, the reviewed studies had different political contexts.

Methods

Research Design

This paper is qualitative research with descriptive and textual analysis. It relies on secondary data sources. A cartoon used as a cover in an October edition of *MaddTimes* magazine was reviewed as the primary data. The study also reviews research works, academic papers, newspapers reports, personal account, television interview and newspaper columns on the Wike-Fubara Feud, which serve as secondary data. The study employs 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). [29] This method

Data collection

The study comprises the *MaddTimes* political cartoons on the Wike-Fubara Feud published in October 2023, during the heat of the moment. The cartoon which served as primary data was obtained from the official *Facebook* page of the magazine. This cartoon was chosen as it was the only one about the Wike-Fubara Feud available to this researcher. It was particularly chosen as it generated hundreds of likes, comments and shares, due to its relevant sociopolitical theme, visual imagery, no-text nature, and as it was relevant to the study.

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 (Ochulor, Okerefor & Okocha, 2023). [30] 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. 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, 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 1.1. *MaddTimes* Cartoon depicting feud between a political godfather and godson

Source: *MaddTimes* Magazine.

Background

Understanding the Wike-Fubara Feud: When A Godson Turns Against The Godfather

A Godfather could refer to a person who sponsors or provides care of support for a person or project. In the words of Akinola (2009) [31] “a godfather is a kingmaker, boss, mentor, and principal, while a godson is the beneficiary and recipient of the legacy of a godfather. He further states that ‘a godfather is someone who has built unimaginable respect...that secures victory for candidates of his choice.’” The researcher continued by saying that the politics of godfatherism involves the anointing of a godson who is expected to win an election by using the influence, wealth, political structure and political experience of godfather.

Godfathers are powerful individuals who determine who, what, when and how things operate and are usually in the corridors of power. Many godfathers in present-day Nigeria operate like the mafia by displaying similar violent scheming and aggressive ‘politicking’ coupled with manipulating devices of having their way by any means. They rely on Machiavelli's slogan, “the ends justify the means.” Following from the above, it is glaring that godfathers' role is sponsoring and bankrolling of bills. This is what gives them the power over their godsons and the penchant to wrench their powers at all cost if their will is not obeyed.

Furthermore, Uyi (2010) [32] opines that it is obvious that godfatherism involves, two parties, (godfather and godson), whose relationship is symbiotic in nature. Both parties need each other to survive and achieve their aim. The godfather bankrolls the campaign of the godson while the godson reciprocates by paying huge interest and awarding contracts to the godfather. Nigeria is not left out in this process, as most politicians rose to power with the help of a powerful godfather.

As the second term of Governor Nyesom Wike winds up, it was time to find a replacement. “Fubara is my boy, this one won't give me any trouble,” Wike was quoted to have told some of his confidants after the deal to present a newbie to the Rivers political landscape - Siminalayi Fubara. In an April interview with *Channels Television* in Port Harcourt, then Governor Wike was quoted as saying, “I will not be worried if Fubara turns against me.”

To many, Fubara's emergence was synonymous to a third term for Wike, who has now become a Godfather as it were. Following Fubara's taking over Government on May 29, the first set of commissioners and aides were said to have been single-handedly picked by Wike. However, things took a drastic turn, as five months into his administration Fubara fell apart with this Godfather.

There was no known serious indication of misunderstanding between both actors before then, other than some muffled rumours of disenchantment by Fubara on the overbearing control and influence of the immediate past governor, Wike on his (Fubara's) running of the state. The raging political conflict between

Chief Nyesom Wike, Minister of the Federal Capital Territory (FCT) and Governor Siminalayi Fubara, Governor of Rivers State blew open in the early hours of October 23, with the State Assembly Complex providing the main battle ground.

The Assembly was blown up in an incident that was preceded by a reported fire outbreak at the main chamber of the complex said to have been caused by yet-to-be identified assailants. But as the day wore on and further events began to unfold, it was clear that the state was being led into a period of political turmoil with the main gladiators being the two most recent political benefactor (Wike) and his beneficiary (Fubara). The crisis was like a bolt from the blues as there was no known serious indication of misunderstanding between both actors before then, other than some muffled rumours of disenchantment by Fubara on the overbearing control and influence of the immediate past governor, Wike on his (Fubara's) running of the state.

The events at the state assembly complex clearly showed the reasons for the fight. It was a clear demonstration that Wike and Fubara, his political son, were no longer agreeing. The governor was beginning to feel frustrated at his inability to act with little independence as events in the state indicated. Twenty-six members of the house led by the Speaker, Honourable Martin Amaewhule, despite the fire at the main chamber the previous night, held plenary that morning and the main item on the order paper was to serve impeachment notice on Governor Siminalayi Fubara. At the unusual sitting, which took place between 7am and 9am, the members stated that the governor's sin was "misconduct unbecoming of the person of the governor," without any further details. Before the announcement of the decision of the house on the impeachment proceedings, the lawmakers had suspended Majority Leader of the assembly, Honourable Edison Ehie and five other members of the assembly (Nigerian Tribune, November 29).

However, in a swift turn of events, the faction loyal to Fubara led by Ehie sat and voted Ehie the new speaker and sacked Amaewhule and suspended the 25. It now became a case of 25 versus 8, just like the case of 27 (for Amaechi) and 5 for Wike in 2014. The new 'speaker' and his group allegedly issued an order against the state's chief judge and asked the governor to appoint an acting one. Ehie was the House Leader until he was suspended on Monday. But he told reporters at the Government House, Port Harcourt later that 26 members of the House sat and elected him Speaker.

He said, "As you can see, the House just rose from plenary and with all humility I must thank my colleagues, 26 Assembly members who have just elected me as the new Speaker of the 10th Rivers State House of Assembly."

Wike, who later gave his own account of the development in the now famous statement on political structure, declared that he would not allow anybody to take away his political structure saying he would do all it would take

to maintain it. He bore his mind after meeting with some governors elected on the platform of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) in Abuja.

The immediate past governor of the state, who said he could not be “intimidated” by anyone, explained that impeachment was not a coup, making reference to the planned impeachment of Fubara by his pro-24 legislators. “Nobody can take away the political structure in Rivers,” Wike declared. “Nobody can intimidate me. If I want to do something, I will do it. The impeachment is not a military coup, it is provided under the constitution,” he added.

Analysis

This image pictures the Governor of Rivers State, Siminalayi Fubara and former Governor, Nyesom Wike standing on a green grass. They shake hands with smiling faces, but behind them are sharp drawn weapons, insinuating that the smiles on their faces is not from the heart.

To resolve their dispute, President Bola Tinubu on Tuesday, 31st October 2023, at the Aso Rock Villa intervened to reconcile Rivers State Governor, Simi Fubara, and his estranged predecessor and Minister of Federal Capital Territory (FCT), Nyesom Wike, both of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP).

Fubara and Wike, who had been embroiled in battle of political wits over control of the State, however, met and *exchanged pleasantries* at the State House, Abuja where they both attended the meeting of the Nigeria Police Council, which is chaired by the President. It was from this meeting that a cartoon by *MaddTimes* was drawn to show the handshake, while also depicting that the battle is not yet over.

To buttress this fact, a number of occurrences are to be analysed. Despite reconciliation moves by the President, the battle still rages on.

In a November 1, 2023 report on *Daily Post*, former Governor Wike was quoted as saying that he will not back down. Wike said, “You know I will not agree. If heaven will come down, let heaven come down so that everybody will be at rest. Anybody who knows me knows too well: what I'll never take is threat. You know I will not agree. If heaven will come down, let heaven come down so that everybody will be at rest.”

Further, the battle over who presides over the Rivers State House of Assembly is still on, between the loyalists of Wike and Fubara. Martin Amaewhule is the speaker of the faction backed by Mr Wike while Edison Ehie, a former leader of the assembly who was removed for not supporting Governor Fubara's impeachment is the speaker of the faction loyal to the governor.

Premium Times had reported how on November 21, 2023, the two factions held parallel sittings. The faction supporting Mr Wike reportedly held a plenary at the partly damaged House of Assembly Complex, a development that triggered

the redeployment of the clerk of the assembly and his deputy by the state government.

In a November 17 media chat with a private Television station, Africa Independent Television (AIT), former Governor Wike described Governor Siminalayi Fubara as an “ingrate.” He said, “Let me tell you, I don’t like ingrates; I don’t like it. What is happening now is what Odili said in his book; ‘Give a man power and money, that’s when you will know the person.’ If you have not given a man power and money, do not say you know the person.”

Furthermore, on Friday, November 24, the National Working Committee of the ruling All Progressives Congress inaugurated members of the caretaker committee for the Rivers State chapter of the party, headed by Chief Tony Okocha, a long-time ally of Governor Wike. Given the latest scenario, the supremacy tussle between the camp of Wike and the governor seems to have assumed a more curious dimension. The battle for the soul of the state could be a long-drawn battle, notwithstanding the intervention by President Tinubu for ceasefire by the belligerent forces.

To many political commentators, this is a strategy to hand over the party to Wike, and undermine former Governor Rotimi Amaechi. A Port-Harcourt-based Political Journalist and veteran, Ignatius Chukwu, in a *Business Day* article titled Rivers' Political Turmoil and The Thorny Path Ahead, gives the implication of this new CTC Ctee and how it further deepens the Wike-Fubara Feud.

In his analysis, he posits that the new group will serve as an anti-Fubara group in due time.

The first move was to swiftly remove Fubara like a fly, but it failed. Ceasefire was called. He seems to have used the opportunity to rework his strategies, but it is not clear if Fubara also used the period to rearm. Now, Wike seems to launch his most famous left hook, which is to capture structure with which to capture all other things. Now, the NEC of APC has dissolved the Rivers State Executive Committee that was loyal to Amaechi and appointed Okocha with six others to repopulate the party. After this, the new caretaker will organize congresses into the LGAs and State, during which Wike/Tinubu men are expected to take over. Amaechi and Abe have been run out. Amaechi men are said to consider legal action, but they are said to be advised to pursue more of political action than legal, except to use some lightweights for legal and heavyweights for political action. Many may wonder who would populate the new APC. The first plan may be to isolate Fubara in the PDP. This would be done by moving all the PDP members into the new APC. They could also use the 25 loyal lawmakers and the 23 LGA bosses to move grassroots membership from PDP to the new APC. If it is true that almost all the commissioners are Wike nominees, it would also mean that they may resign and move en mass. Fubara may become lonely.

Then, the Amaechi APC and the Atiku PDP may be courted into the empty PDP shell. It is clear if this would create a balance of power. One other strategy the Wike team may spring as surprise to Fubara is to obtain a court order any moment soon to stop sack of the LGA bosses, the fighting force of anybody who controls them. The order may also block the governor from freezing their accounts based on a motion the 25 lawmakers loyal to Wike may issue. With this, Wike would control half of the state while Fubara would control half, but the Wike half with federal might may be very powerful with LGA cash and security agencies on their side. Most of the new friends Fubara would attract would be spent forces that do may not control funds or forces but strong voices that have more value in the media than elsewhere. Wike is believed to have bigger financial fortress than Fubara and has bigger spending appetite for whatever he wants, far more than Fubara, who may be husbanding state financial resources like most accountants would do. Warfare may not be Fubara's area of advantage. In this scenario, it is a matter of where the 'boys' would want to align. Who would Tinubu support? Who would Abdulahi Umar Ganduge support? Who would the police obey? Who would the jungle boys support? Answers to these questions would determine how the war would be prosecuted. Wike defeated Amaechi in this jungle political war, and Fubara watched it live, Now, Wike may be up against Fubara. Would he (Fubara) also sit and watch?

Conclusion

The political cartoon on the Wike-Fubara examined in this study showcase features that show that the battle is not yet over. The study discovers that political cartoons are strategic and important to keep people abreast of political events. Through cartooning, visual rhetoric can be performed effectively while the media still create humour to amuse the audience. The reviewed cartoon also confirms the introduction of irony in political cartooning, and how this adds a unique meaning to the visual imagery. The artists were able to shape people's understanding by employing the Framing Theory into the cartoons to present the political events in their own opinion, which coincidentally is the true state of affairs. As seen, political cartoons of this nature, even though without a single text 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. They serve as avenues for furtherance of political communication beyond words, commentary and social debates on not just politics but policy issues of government as well as developmental matter of public importance. In light of this, cartoons should be used more frequently to explain key political issues that have a bearing on the lives of Nigerians in comic, yet easy-to-understand modes

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