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ARAB POLITICAL CARTOONS

The 2006 Lebanon War

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Abstract:

The essay seeks to gain a basic understanding of Arab political humor through the examination of the Arab political cartoons of the 2006 Lebanon war. It is assumed that political cartooning is a pop-cultural form of satire. The function of satire in society is discussed, and the relationship between satire, Arab political humor and Arab political cartoons is investigated. It is suggested that satire and political humor are more relevant in conflict-ridden societies than in countries with a long history of peace. Further, the conditions of political cartooning in the Arab world are discussed, especially in regard to censorship and limited freedom of expression. It is suggested that these factors greatly affect both cartoons and cartoonists. It is further suggested that the regionalization of the Arab mass media has steered the cartoons into focusing on regional and international issues rather than domestic ones. A brief summary and timeline of the Lebanon war is provided to establish the historical context of the political cartoons. The analysis searches for common themes tackled by the cartoonists and the cartoons are divided into categories according to these findings. An attempt is made at establishing the messages the cartoonists are trying to convey. Concluding the essay, it is suggested that political cartooning is a Western art form adopted by the Arabs; political cartooning is thus aesthetically more related to the West than to the Arab world. Arab cartooning further bears traces of the modernist cartoonists of the 1950s who strived for universality rather than to generate laughter. In some respect Arab humorists of classical times had similar functions as the contemporary Arab political cartoonists, and some aspects of Arab political jokes reappear in the cartoons. As a form of pop-cultural satire, it is suggested that Arab political cartoonists generally try to be mean and to the point, rather than funny. A remarkable Arab solidarity is displayed in the cartoons, considering the hibernating state of pan-Arabism at the political level. Due to press regulations, ownership patterns of the mass media and the general political climate of the Arab countries, however, Arab political cartoonists were not free to criticize and ridicule whoever and whatever they wanted to during the war.

Keywords: Arab political cartoons, Arab political humor, satire, Lebanon, Hezbollah, Israel

Characters (including spaces): 123 906

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1. INTRODUCTION

Cartoons can prove to be powerful symbols. I once walked into a bar in Amman, wearing a *Ḥanẓala* (Handala) T-shirt. Handala could perhaps be said to be an Arab cartoon celebrity. The character was created by late Palestinian cartoonist Najil-Ali, and has become a symbol of Palestinian suffering, endurance and resistance.[1] The T-shirt was given to me by a friend, as a souvenir present from Jerusalem. I was already familiar with the character, but I had perhaps not realized the full extent of its symbolic power. As soon as I had entered the bar, I heard from a corner: "Handala!" I turned around and found a group of men sitting there at a table. Apparently they were Palestinians. "So you like Palestine, yes!?" I was obliged to say "Of course!", whereupon the guy immediately exclaimed "Welcome, my friend!" We talked about Palestine and I was offered free drinks the rest of the night.

From my own experiences, I always thought of the Arabs as a warm, friendly and good-humored people. Some years ago, my father and I were invited by the Imam of the Yemeni Community in Liverpool for dinner at his house. Considering him being a pious man, and us perhaps not as pious, we anticipated a quite formal occasion and not the most relaxed of meals. To our surprise the man was a political jokes aficionado, and he just would not stop telling us his anecdotes and stories. At that time my Arabic was not good enough to follow all the twists and turns of these, but my father translated some of them for me. Apparently this Imam was a natural born entertainer, and his jokes were everything but innocent.

Experiences like these gave me the notion that political humor and political cartoons are common and popular phenomena in the Arab world. I felt they were worth a closer look. Furthermore, Arab humor is an interesting subject today, considering the media's constant reports on religious fundamentalism, human rights violations, terrorism and other problems. Upon hearing these things being attributed to the Arabs, humor is not exactly the first word that comes to mind. Studies of Arab humor then should be a welcome complement in the field of Arabism. The Arab world must not be understood simply as a world of problems, but as a world of problems in which people would not get by without humor.

On a general note, I was always fascinated by satire in pop-culture. Satirical television series like *Spitting Image*, *The Simpsons* and *South Park* entertain their audience by severely ridiculing people and issues in politics and society. It seems that by labeling something *satire*, you can get away with a lot of things. As part of my Arabic studies then, I could think of no better subject than to study the pop-cultural satirical expression of Arab political cartoons.

It is interesting to see how this light form of entertainment treats something as grave and tragic as a war. I followed closely the sad and perplexing Lebanon war last summer by zapping between CNN and Al Jazeera. Just the difference of these news channels' coverage of the war would be ample material for a PHD dissertation. My humble approach to the war, however, will be to examine what the Arab political cartoonists had to say about it.

[1] See for instance *http://najialali.hanaa.net*

1.1 PURPOSE

The main purpose of writing this essay is to get a basic understanding of Arab political humor, in particular the way it was utilized in the Arab political cartoons of the 2006 Lebanon War. The discussion is based on the assumption that political cartooning is a form of pop-cultural satire, wherefore the word *satire* will run as a main thread through the text. Satire, political humor and political cartoons are thus related, and I will investigate this relationship in its Arabic context.

An additional question would be if satire, political humor and political cartoons might have an extra dimension of relevance in the Arab world today compared to for instance Sweden and Europe, and if that is the case, why?

1.2 METHOD, MATERIAL AND DISPOSITION

For the examination of Arab political cartoons, I chose the limited time span of the 2006 Lebanon War (12 July to 14 August). The approximate month of duration implied a reasonable amount of cartoons to go through. As background to this examination I will be discussing the terms satire, Arab political humor and political cartoons.

The founding chapter on satire is based mainly on the booklet, *Finns det inga gränser?: Om satir, massmedier och tryckfrihet,* by Ricki Neuman. This booklet is a survey of modern satire in Swedish media, and the author presents a number of perspectives on the subject, some of which are relevant for the Middle Eastern context, not least the function of satire in times of war.

For the study of Arab political humor, I was lucky to find Khalid Kishtainy's *Arab Political Humour*, both the English original and the Arabic translation. The book is a treasure chest of political jokes and anecdotes, ranging from the nineteen eighties all the way back to the time of the Prophet Muhammad.

I was provided with a historic overview of Arab/Turkish/Iranian political cartoons in *Political Cartoons in the Middle East,* by Fatma Müge Göçek (Ed.). The book's focus is perhaps more on Turkish and Persian cartoons than on Arab ones; still, the common history of the peoples of the Middle East, regarding for instance European colonialism and imperialism, makes the book relevant for this essay.

Quite a large portion of the background chapter revolves around censorship and limited freedom of expression, since these are recurring issues in the writings about published and broadcast media in the Arab world. Material for this discussion is taken from the above mentioned texts, as well as additional literature: *Mass Media, Politics and Society in the Middle East,* by Kai Hafez (Ed.), and *The Making of Arabic News,* by Noha Mellor (Ed.), mostly focus on broadcast media; however, there are interesting links to the published media. Allen Douglas and Fedwa Malti-Douglas's *Arab Comic Strips: Politics of An Emerging Mass Culture* is mainly about Arab children's comics, but censorship is just as much an issue here as in other forms of pop-culture. Susan Slyomovics's article, "Sex, Lies and Television: Algerian and Moroccan Caricatures of the Gulf War", from the book *Women and Power in the Middle East*, (Slyomovics and

Suad Joseph, Eds.) was perhaps the spark that some years ago ignited my interest for this subject.

To be able to historically contextualize the cartoons, I have assembled a summary and timeline of the Lebanon war from some articles on the web encyclopedia, *Wikipedia*.

There was no way for me to acquire all the Arab newspapers required for the study of the Lebanon war cartoons. Instead the internet became my main place of refuge. I managed to collect approximately three hundred cartoons from mainly the following websites: 1) *www.aljazeerah.info* 2) *arabcartoon.net*, 3) *www.mahjoob.com*, and 4) *www.aawsat.com*. Al-Jazeerah Peace Information Center is a U.S. news and research web publication, not related to the Qatari TV station. At the time of my research, it kept a daily updated archive of cartoons from a variety of Arab newspapers, most of them well known. Arabcartoon.net (*Bayt al-Kartūn*) is a forum for Arab political cartoons and cartoonists. It keeps a register of a number of cartoonists and the web addresses to those who have one. The site publishes articles on cartoon related subjects and some of these contain cartoon collections. Mahjoob.com is the website of Jordanian cartoonist Emad Hajjaj. The site keeps an archive of both his political cartoons as well as his locally popular cartoon series, Abu Mahjoob. The website of newspaper Al Sharq Al Awsat keeps an archive of their main cartoonist, Amjad Rasmi.

Most of the cartoons in my analysis were published in large pan-Arab newspapers, yet the collection should not be seen as representing the Arab world as a whole, but as a sample of what was available on the web at the time of my search. I am not using any specific theory for examining the cartoons. Firstly, I try to understand them, which is some times easier said than done. It requires a deconstruction of symbols, a deciphering of expressions and colloquial passages, and an establishment of the historical context to understand what the cartoons are commenting. Secondly, I look for recurring themes and categorize the cartoons according to my findings. I will be interpreting the cartoons in an attempt to establish the messages the cartoonists want to convey to their readers.

The thing that makes political cartoons both interesting and problematic as a resource for studying social and historical topics is their overt subjectivity:

> Day in and day out the cartoonist mirrors history; he reduces complex facts into understandable and artistic terminology. He is a political commentator and at the same time an artist.[2]

The artistic aspect means that the cartoonist is freer to express his personal views than for instance the journalist who is under a moral oath to be as objective as possible. By analyzing the cartoons I am trying to discover the cartoonists' messages, not to project things that are not there onto them. In the end, however, an analysis of art requires interpretation. There is hardly one sole correct way of doing this, and one's own outlooks and attitudes will undoubtedly influence the analysis. I am trying hard to keep an objective distance to my subject; if I succeed

[2] Art Wood, quoted in Gerdes, Louise I. (Ed.), *Examining Issues Through Political Cartoons: The Vietnam War*, Greenhaven Press 2005: 4

is up to the reader to decide. I am taking this caution since I am dealing with material that could be perceived by some as provocative.

1.3 TRANSLITERATION

As far as possible I have used Latin letter approximations of Arab names for comfortable reading. Words and sentences, on the other hand, are transliterated according to the standard model. In my research material, I frequently came across variants such as *Al Jazeera* and *Al Sharq Al Awsat*. Thus, I use these forms instead of *al-jazīra* and *ash-sharq al-'awsaṭ*. When it comes to proper nouns, some artists seem to have standard "English" versions of their names, not least those whose cartoons have reached English domains, on websites, in magazines and newspapers. Emad Hajjaj (*'Imād Ḥajjāj*) and Amjad Rasmi (*Amjad Rasmī*) are two examples. Others have apparently chosen a certain form, used for instance in their internet addresses, and so there is no reason for me to write them differently. When there does not seem to be a standard Latin letter version of an artist's name, I will approximate a transliteration in a similar fashion as the above.

1.4 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My heartfelt thanks go to Emad Hajjaj, who was kind enough to personally answer the questions I e-mailed to his website. Hajjaj was the one recommending *www.aljazeerah.info* and *arabcartoon.net*, two websites that provided me with several names of Arab cartoonists as well as many of the cartoons used for this essay.

2. BACKGROUND

The background chapter consists of four parts. First, I briefly discuss satire, the term that will be the common thread through the essay. The chapter begins with the roots and meaning of the word, and continues with some definitions, views and perspectives on satire, among them the legal perspective. I ask if the conditions for satire are different in Sweden and Europe than in the Middle East. Secondly, I look into Arab political humor as presented by the Iraqi author and *Al Sharq Al Awsat* writer, Khalid Kishtainy. Thirdly, I discuss political cartoons, both in general terms and in their Middle Eastern context. A large part of the discussion revolves around censorship and limited freedom of expression. Finally, before moving onto to the analysis of the cartoons, I offer a summary and timeline of the Lebanon war, assembled from *Wikipedia*.

2.1 SATIRE

The roots of the word satire are to be found in Latin. *Sátura* was the feminine form of an adjective that meant full or saturated. A meal of mixed dishes was also called *satura*. Further, the term came to be used for a literary mix: poems composed of differing contents, or a mix of poetry and prose. It was not until poets such as Horace and Juvenal, that this literary style became what we today refer to as satire.[3] The current meaning of the word is approximately something spoken, written or depicted, that in a witty and mean, often ironic or sarcastic manner scourges or ridicules individuals, groups or conditions in the private or public life.[4] "Though it comes in many complex forms (broadside, caricature, invective, lampoon, parody, travesty) and tones (from gentle and affectionate to out-and-out furious to ice-cold and deadly) and can be aimed at any number of targets, its purpose is always to ridicule."[5]

Among its many requirements, according to Neuman, satire should be A) mean, B) to the point and C) funny. Malice does not require as much talent as the other two, but is nonetheless often the dominant component. In other words, it is easier to smear than to be to the point and funny.[6] Satire does not necessarily have to be funny. The Swedish satirist Erik Blix said that "humor helps, but if I had to choose between being to the point or being funny, without a doubt I would choose the first".[7]

According to Neuman, satire as a literary tradition enjoys a bad reputation since old times:

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[3] Neuman, Ricki, *Finns det inga gränser? Om satir, massmedier och tryckfrihet*, Stiftelsen Institutet för Mediestudier 2004: 81 (excerpt from Bergman, Gösta, *Ord med historia*, Prisma 2003); see also Scott, James, *Satire: From Horace to Yesterday's Comic Strips*, Prestwick House 2005: 5

[4] *http://g3.spraakdata.gu.se/saob/satir* (Svenska Akademiens ordbok)

[5] Scott 2005: 5

[6] Neuman 2004: 12

[7] Ibid: 32

> In the literary hierarchy, satire remains at the bottom, as some sort of wildly grown graffiti, filled with wrath and mostly bordering on the forbidden. It is often regarded as something dirty and evil, something that needs to be educated, and something that does not plead to our good or positive feelings, like love and generosity, but rather provokes jealousy, envy and malicious pleasure.[8]

Satire is by its very nature controversial. Scott points to the fact that "the political implications of satire are so strong that tyrannical and totalitarian regimes throughout history have censored, exiled and even executed satirists". Thus the Roman poet Juvenal, the French satirist Voltaire and the satiric playwrights of Czarist Russia have in common that they all went through a lot of trouble as a result of their satirical works.[9]

Even in modern times, every now and then someone manages to cross the thin line between satire and slander, whereupon the dispute between the satirist and the offended has to be settled in court. Neuman provides some interesting Swedish examples. Lawyer Hans Göran Frank defended a journalist who wrote a satirical article in Aftonbladet 1978, picturing Prime Minister Thorbjörn Fälldin as a schizophrenic. In his closing arguments, Frank described satire as "joking, ridiculing and sometimes frightening exaggerations which contain a core of truth… There is no inherent claim in satire to be taken seriously, merely to find in the exaggeration a core of truth".[10]

From this and other examples we learn that framing satirists seems to be easier said than done, at least in Sweden. In countries with relatively functional legal systems, liberty of the press usually makes satire the winner. It might even prove difficult to distinguish satire. Hans-Gunnar Axberger suggests that we can say about satire what has been said about pornography: "nobody knows how to define it, but one recognizes it upon seeing it". The satirical message is hidden until the moment of discovery. Satire thus belongs to the noble art of writing between the lines, and "can not be explained without being volatilized or rather trivialized".[11]

Swedish society today is more pluralistic, culturally diverse and fragmented than it used to be; there is no longer one big audience for satire, but rather a number of sub audiences. Professor Dick Harrison, Swedish historian and scholar of humor, envisions a kind of "inflation in satire", i.e. more and more subgroups, where artists, writers and people at the receiving end share similar views and references. Satire is successful and understood as long as it is being circulated inside such a subgroup. Problems do not arise until someone crosses the line, from one subgroup to another, to partake in the "internal satire". The outsider will not be able to read between the lines, in the way that is intended, and there might be misunderstandings, hurt feelings and legal suits. Conflicts of that type will increase, predicts Harrison, but in such a battle, satire and freedom of expression

[8] Ibid: 20
[9] Scott 2005: 6
[10] Neuman 2004: 19
[11] Axberger, Hans-Gunnar, in Neuman 2004: 72

will always win, "because in the end it is about petty crimes, texts or drawings that ridicule people, in other words no serious violations".[12]

Harrison's prediction concerned Swedish society. Will satire and freedom of expression always win in Arabic societies too? We have seen the uproar the Danish derogatory cartoons of the Prophet of Islam caused. Could this have been a case of one subgroup crossing the line to partake in the "internal satire" of another, but on an international scale? Perhaps cartoons are not seen as petty crimes in the Arab world? If we turn the tables, could the satire of Arab political cartoons be misinterpreted by outsiders? What do Arab cartoonists primarily aim to be: mean, funny or to the point?

2.2 ARAB POLITICAL HUMOUR

This chapter is based on Khalid Kishtainy's book, *Arab Political Humour*. I will first look into the rich heritage of humor from the Golden Age of the ʿAbbasid Empire that, according to the author, laid the foundation for later Arab political humor. Secondly, I will quote and discuss a sample of modern jokes from *Arab Political Humour* that I thought of as representative examples, hoping to find connections to Arab political cartooning.

2.2.1 Shu'arā', Udabā', Ẓurafā' and wise fools

> [D]espite a rich and varied literature, the Arabs are not so readily associated in the minds of Westerners with humour or wit, which usually makes up a sizeable chunk of any nation's literature and oral folklore. Indeed, one can perceive the opposite, i.e. temper, ill-humour, melancholy, gloom, stern looks, etc., is the generally accepted picture associated with the Arab character.[13]

Historically, it could have been Arab humor's intimate relationship with the Arabic language that tended to make it largely invisible to non-Arabs, as "the bulk of Arabic literary and verbal genius depended on the beauty and force of the words, their sounds, their arrangement, their rhythm and their association".[14] The author emphasizes the central position of the Qur'an in the Arabic language. It might be difficult for non-Arabs to understand just how revered the Qur'an is on a linguistic level, as part of the "proof" of its divine origin rests in the greatness of its language. According to Kishtainy, "to most Europeans, the Holy Qur'an, translated into their own languages, is one of the most tedious, repetitive and incomprehensible books".[15]

Something similar could perhaps be said about humor in classical Arab literature. Poetry was one of the genres that offered opportunities for the humorous minded. For instance, there was the *hijā'*, the satirical poem used as weapon in verbal warfare between tribes, a continuation of traditions from pre-

[12] Neuman 2004: 62-64
[13] Kishtainy, Khalid, *Arab Political Humour*, London 1985: 11
[14] Ibid: 12
[15] Ibid: 12

Islamic times. Kishtainy quotes a particularly merciless poem by the famous al-Mutanabbi (915-68), targeted at someone called Dhabba al-Atbi, which eventually led to the murder of the poet. In English, this *hijā'* appears crude and vulgar with its explicit sexual vocabulary and slander of al-Atbi's mother. In Arabic it is no less vulgar, but there is also elegance in the rhymes and arrangement of the words that is lost in the translation.[16] Thus, Kishtainy gives credit to the poets (*shu'arā'*), at least the witty among them, for being early political humorists in Arabic society. Poetic humor depends to a large extent on the rhymes, arrangement and associational power of the Arabic language, and is therefore not easily accessible to the non-Arabic speaking.

A middle ages genre that naturally encompassed the use of humor is the literature known as *adab*. Developed in the early ʿAbbasid period, it consisted of prose "intended to edify and to entertain".[17] The word *adab* is frequently used for literature or letters, but also has other connotations such as culture, refinement, good manners etc.[18] The foremost practitioner of *adab* was Al-Jahiz (d. 869), "a writer of exceptional range, and vividness of response, expressed in an exemplary language".[19] Many of his books have become classics in Arabic literature and they share "a preoccupation with the funny side of life". His most famous book is arguably *Kitāb al-Bukhalā'* (The Book of Misers), in which the author included "all kinds of anecdotes and epigrams about misers and miserliness underlining, from a sociological point of view, the poverty of the masses, the obsession with food and eating and the clash between the old Arab tradition of hospitality and generosity with the new city modes of life based on thrift, wealth, accumulation and security".[20] Al-Jahiz (*Al-Jāḥiẓ*) was also famous for his ugliness (his name indicates that he had protruding eyes), something he often made fun of himself. The *adab* humor too was intimately linked to language. Some of the many Al-Jahiz anecdotes might be hard for the non-Arabic speaking to understand due to for instance Qur'anic references. Al-Jahiz and other leading *udabā'* (men of letters/authors) of his time, such as Ibn Abd Rabbih, advocated humor as a means to educate their readers.[21]

Kishtainy uses the term *ẓurafā'* (plural of *ẓarīf* which means elegant, charming or witty) to describe a certain kind of cultured wits of the elite of ʿAbbasid Baghdad. If he includes Al-Jahiz among these, is not clear. Linguistically, the two terms *udabā'* and *ẓurafā'* have similar connotations. It seems to me though that *udabā'* is a somewhat more prestigious term than *ẓurafā'*, since the former indicates authorship, whereas the latter is used as a general term for wits and humorists. The *ẓurafā'* of the classical era, however, were reminiscent of the wits of seventeenth-century England, but more religiously oriented, and known for their elegant lifestyles and sense of humor.[22] Perhaps

[16] Compare the two versions in Kishtainy 1985: 16; and Kishtainy, Khalid, *As-sukhrīya as-siyāsīya al-'arabīya*, translated by Dr Kamal Al-Yazijy, Dar Al Saqi, Beirut/London 1988: 29
[17] Hourani, Albert, *A History of the Arab Peoples*, Faber and Faber 1991: 52
[18] Wehr, Hans, *A Dictionary of Modern Written Arabic*, Libraire du Liban 1980: 9
[19] Hourani 1991: 52
[20] Kishtainy 1985: 30
[21] Ibid: 27
[22] Ibid: 24

they are to be contrasted with their less humor-oriented colleagues, the *'ulamā'* (the learned), since the *ẓurafā'* loved to ridicule pedantry, or "the sacred cows of Arab education, grammar, language, *fiqh* and jurisprudence"[23], in other words all those things the *'ulamā'* were deeply serious about. Or they are to be contrasted with the *mutazammitūn* (the dogmatists) who objected to obscenity and use of vulgar sexuality, something the *ẓurafā'* had no problems with.[24]

> [The *ẓurafā'*] often wrote and said things which no contemporary writer of our time could dream of writing… Fortified by their apparent religiousness, probity and integrity, and strengthened by their self-confidence, high breeding, education and knowledge, they were like the seventeenth-century gallants of European literature and showed similar greatness in self-criticism, irony, cynicism and satire, from which not even their own professions and hobbies were free.[25]

Apparently, the *ẓurafā'* hated hypocrisy; thus, literary theorist Ibn Qutayba (828-89) wrote in his *'Uyūn al-Akhbār*:

> انما مثل هذا الكتاب مثل المائدة تختلف فيها مذاقات الطعوم، لاختلاف شهوات الآكلين. فإذا مر بك حديث فيه افصاح بذكر عورة او وصف فاحشة، فلا يحملنك الخشوع او التخاشع على ان تصعّر خدّك أو تعرض بوجهك، فان اسماء الاعضاء لا تؤثم، وانما المأثم في شتم الاعراض، وقول الزور، واكل لحوم الناس بلكذب...[26]

> (This book is like a banqueting table on which is laid food with different flavours on account of the different palates of the eaters. Should you come across some account referring to private parts, vagina or a description of coitus, you should not, out of piety or piosity, raise your eyebrow and look askance, for there is no sin in mentioning the [sexual] organs. The sin is to defame honour, tell lies, give false witness and devour people's flesh in ignorance.)[27]

A fourth group of classic Arab humorists are the equivalents to the European court jesters, characters such as Nuʿayman and Ashʿab the Greedy (d. 711). Whereas Nuʿayman was an early follower to the Prophet appreciated for his sense of humor, Ashʿab was "the first professional wit and comedian in Arab history", as he was hired as court jester by the second caliph, ʿUthman.[28] Wits like these are historical persons, but they also became folkloric legends that took on a life of their own. Thus, they became comedians of the people. Of the folkloric legends, the most famous funnyman of them all is undoubtedly Juha, the wise fool. "Al-

[23] Ibid: 25
[24] Ibid: 27
[25] Ibid: 25
[26] Kishtainy 1988: 41
[27] Kishtainy 1985: 27
[28] Ibid: 18-21

Jahiz wrote for the literate élite; Juha spoke for and to the general masses, expressing their cynicism and frustration".[29] Ask any Arab, and he will tell you a Juha story. In fact, Juha is famous all over the Islamic world, but goes under different names: in Turkish he is known as Khawaja Nasrildin, and in Persian Mullah Nasrildin. There might have been an Arab prototype for this character, but no one seems to know for sure.[30] Court jesters and wise fools, such as Juha, Ashʿab, Nuʿayman, Abu Dulama, Abu Nuʿas, Muzabbid, Abu al-Harith Jamiz and Abu Sadaqa became household names "around which endless stories and witty remarks were woven and fabricated".[31]

Thus, there is a heritage of humor that extends back to the *shu'arā', udabā', ẓurafā'* and wise fools of the classical era. Indeed, "contemporary humorists, politicians, caricaturists and columnists recycled, in varying degrees, the humorous treasures of the past to serve the political slogans and aspirations of the present"[32], and oral and written folklore of the Arab world "were destined in more recent history to become sources of inspiration in the field of contemporary politics".[33]

In other words, humor was a vital part of society back then, and has remained so in modern times. Perhaps humor is more needed than ever today. The following quote neatly sums up why:

> In the contemporary world of the Arabs, we can find practically all the reasons which make humour relevant to politics. There is the great gap between the earlier promises and hopes, the sense of past glory, the rich resources, the strategic position and the human potential on the one hand, and the political chaos, tyranny, dismemberment, fratricide and successive failures and defeats on the other. It is a perfect contrast between the conception and reality. What is more, the Arabs seem to find themselves in an inescapable situation. So much has been invested in the feud with Israel, yet they find themselves less and less capable of doing anything about it. The promises of justice and welfare are frustrated by the centuries of corruption and nepotism, and aspiration towards democracy and freedom is blocked by an even longer history of despotic rule. Deprived of the channels for free discussion, criticism and self expression, the citizen is left with nothing but escapism. The skilled and qualified do it physically by emigration, the religious by resorting to fundamentalism, the dissipated by indulging in sex, drugs and drink, the rational and witty by laughing – and the poor by crying.[34]

2.2.2 Jokes

The collection of jokes and anecdotes in *Arab Political Humour* clearly reminded me of the Imam of the Yemeni Community in Liverpool and his sense of humor. Neither his nor Kishtainy's jokes are necessarily of Arabic origin:

[29] Ibid: 32
[30] Ibid: 62-63
[31] Ibid: 24
[32] Ibid: 33
[33] Ibid: 63
[34] Ibid: 8

> [T]he Arabs imported many of their jokes in the thirties and forties from western Europe whereas eastern Europe became the source in the seventies and eighties, signifying not only the fruition of the new contact with the socialist countries but also disenchantment with socialism.[35]

Whatever the origin of individual jokes, reading *Arab Political Humour* made me think I could discern some recurring themes in Arab political humor:

A) stupidity/foolishness
B) wordplay/"scriptplay"
C) sex/below-the-waist-humor
D) censorship/suppression of opinion

I will quote some jokes to give a sense of this Arab political humor. In many cases the categories overlap each other. The idea is to see if the cartoons bear traces of this type of humor, if there is a link between them, or if Arab political cartoons perhaps originate from elsewhere.

No category of jokes seems to outnumber the one revolving around the stupidity and uselessness of despotic rulers. Kishtainy talks about an explosion of political humor during the presidency of Gamal Abdel Nasser, and that this explosion should be seen as "a classic example for the thesis that laughter emanates from the discrepancy between reality and conception and the sudden collapse of expectation".[36] Nasser's failure to fulfill promises of "freedom, dignity, prosperity and socialism" for the Arab nation, set the stage for the wits and their creativity.[37] Nasser was an admired leader by many, and the jokes about him mostly ridiculed his regime, policies and methods; they rarely dared to touch his person. The same can not be said about his successor, Anwar Sadat, who became the butt of jokes that were "caustic, vicious and almost always personal and scandalous".[38] A couple of Sadat jokes will serve the purpose of exemplifying the "stupid leader" theme:

لا شك في ان عبد الناصر كان غبيّاً، وإلاّ فكيف تفسِّر اختياره لحمار يعيّنه خلفاً له؟

> (No doubt that Abdel Nasser was stupid. How else can you explain his appointment of an ass for a successor?)[39]

Donkeys and dogs are recurring animals in *Arab Political Humour*. Calling someone a dog is a great insult in Arabic, whereas "donkey" perhaps is the milder of the two. The second anecdote pictures Sadat as incompetent, even for being a donkey:

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[35] Ibid: x
[36] Ibid: 151
[37] Ibid: 147
[38] Ibid: 164
[39] Kishtainy 1988: 179; Kishtainy 1985: 164

كانت الضائقة الاقتصادية قد اصابت الجميع في قرية المنوفية (قرية السادات) حتى الحمير. وعندما اجتمعوا للتداول في امرهم، قال احدهم: ان اخانا هو رئيس البلاد، فلماذا لا نذهب اليه ونلتمس الخلاص على يده؟ فوافق جميع الحمير على تأليف وفد منهم وذهبوا اليه. فاستقبلهم بالترحاب وأصغى الى مطالبهم. وعند عودتهم الى القرية سألهم رفاقهم عن مصير مطالبهم فاجابوا: هو لا يزال يحاول ان يفهمها!

(The economic plight hit everybody including the donkeys of al-Manufia, Sadat's village, who met and discussed their problem. 'But we have our brother as head of this country. Let us go to him.' The donkeys organized a delegation, which was kindly received by the president, and their spokesman put their problem most eloquently to him. Upon their return to the village, the rest of the donkeys asked them what the president had said about their problem. 'He is still trying to understand it', the delegates replied.)[40]

A type of joke that does not travel easily to other languages is the one based on letters. The Arabic script, with its system of dots and customary omission of vowels, invites the humorous minded to manipulate these to create puns. The English version of *Arab Political Humour* includes the following example:

Some humble person married a rich widow with whose money he built himself an imposing mansion which he piously adorned with the legend, carefully engraved over the door:

هذا من فضل ربّي

(Such are the blessings of my God)

The local wit hastened under cover of darkness to put matters right by adding the missing dot to change the hallowed phrase into:

هذا من فضل زبّي

(Such are the blessings of my penis)[41]

The joke in itself is not that political perhaps, but interestingly enough it is nowhere to be found in Dr Al-Yazijy's Arabic translation. The omission then could be seen as political, most likely carried out as a precaution to censorship or religious sentiments. Dr Al-Yazijy has instead replaced the above joke with a poem that was written in praise of the noble Arabs. An anonymous wit changed a few letters and altered the vocalization to achieve the exact opposite meaning.[42]

[40] Kishtainy 1988: 177; Kishtainy 1985: 162
[41] Kishtainy 1985: 12-13
[42] Kishtainy 1988: 25

Both examples demonstrate that minor alterations of the Arabic script can achieve great differences in meaning.

For the Westerner who thought that Arab-Islamic society was made up of a number of prohibitions, i.e. everything appears to be *ḥarām*, it might come as a surprise that a sizable chunk of Arab humor consists of below-the-waist humor:

> [S]exuality and excrementalism, which Freud links in an inextricable bond with sex, form a large section of Arab humour and Arabic jokes… [T]his indulgence found ample material and exciting fields in the crazy world of harems, concubinage, polygamy, permissible homosexuality and altogether decadent society of the late Abbasids. In the world of contemporary Arab politics, all this joke technique was shifted from its conventional usage, sublimated and reintroduced into the arena of the national struggle and partisan feuds as sheer political smut.[43]

The following two jokes will illustrate the below-the-waist-tendency, regardless of the object of ridicule. The first one concerns the infamous overpopulated Arabic bureaucracy:

> A castrated man got the coveted job as a civil servant in one of the service's many offices. His new boss told him:
>
> ــ الدوام يبدأ كل يوم في الساعة التاسعة وعليك ان تحضر في الساعة الحادية عشر.
>
> ('Office hours begin every day at nine, but you can come in at eleven.')
>
> ــ ليش استاذ؟ الدوام تقول ساعة تسعة؟
>
> ('Why, Sir? Office hours say nine?')
>
> ــ نعم. الدوام ساعة تسعة والموظفون يحضرون الساعة تسعة ويبقون يلعبون ببيضاتهم للساعة الحادية عشرة. انت ما عندك بيضات, عليش تجي بكير؟
>
> ('Yes. Office hours are nine and the employees come in at nine and remain playing with their balls until eleven o'clock. You have no balls, so why come in early?')[44]

The second anecdote involves the wife of President Sadat and concerns the suppression of opinion, another bulky chapter of Arab political humor:

[43] Kishtainy 1985: 22
[44] Ibid: 132; Kishtainy 1988: 146

فقد كانت عقيلة انور السادات يوماً في احد المخازن الكبرى، فأفلت احد المساعدين امامها ريحه. فاغتاظت السيدة الأولى وصاحت به: «قليل الأدب»! فأجابها الشاب معتذراً معاتباً: سيدتي، رفقاً بنا... لقد سدَّ زوجك افواهنا، فهل تودّين انت ان تسدّي أدبارنا؟!

(Mrs Sadat was in one of Cairo's luxury shops when the shop assistant broke wind. 'How dare you!' shouted the first lady. 'Madam', replied the assistant, 'your husband shut our mouths, and now you want to shut our behinds?')[45]

The weapon of sexual insinuations, or outright slander, of the women of the enemy camp was used in the days of al-Mutanabbi, as we have seen, and it does not seem to have lost its popularity in modern times. In fact, "[f]emale emancipation and the free discourse between men and women have brought the female sex and the wives and relatives of political opponents into the firing line more than ever before."[46] A certain queen (Kishtainy interestingly does not mention who) was particularly vilified with jokes about her promiscuity. One of the more innocent ones about her went like this:

جلست مرة وقد صالبت ساقيها، فقالت احدى ساقيها للأخرى: اين انت؟ لم اختمع بك منذ دهر!

(As she once sat with her legs crossed, one of them said to the other, 'Where have you been? I have not seen you for ages!')[47]

Yet another suppression of opinion anecdote, not belonging to the below-the-waist category, concerns the everyday realities of living in regimes ruled by the army:

A man in a bus stood on the foot of another until the latter could endure it no longer, and opened his mouth.

ــ تسمح تقول لي حضرتك ضابط؟

('Please tell me, your Excellency, are you an officer?')

ــ لا

('No.')

[45] Kishtainy 1988: 152; Kishtainy 1985: 137
[46] Kishtainy 1985: 138
[47] Kishtainy 1988: 153; Kishtainy 1985: 138

ـــ ابوك ضابط؟

('Is your father an officer?')

ـــ لا

ـــ انت متجوز بنت ضابط؟

('Are you married to the daughter of an officer?')

ـــ لا

ـــ ما فيش عندك واحد ضابط الخيش؟

('Is there no relative of yours serving as an officer in the army?')

ـــ لا

فانهال عليه الرجل ضرباً ولكماً.

(The man then punched him in the face.)

ـــ يا ابن، الكلب، امال انت واقف على رجلي كده ليه؟

('You Son of a Dog, what is your problem standing on my foot like that?')[48]

Thus, I will look for the recurring themes of stupidity/foolishness, wordplay/"scriptplay", sex/below-the-waist-humor, and censorship/suppression of opinion when examining the political cartoons of the Lebanon war. Prior to that, however, I will discuss political cartoons and their relevance in the Middle Eastern context.

2.3 POLITICAL CARTOONS

This chapter firstly deals with political cartoons in general terms, secondly with the specificity of cartoons in the Middle East. One of the obstacles Arab cartoonists can not ignore is the often severe, sometimes less strict, but nonetheless always present censorship exercised by the Arab regimes. How does this affect the cartoons? Further, it is questioned if political cartoons and political humor are important at all. Finally, I discuss the new media scene of the Arab

[48] Kishtainy 1988: 186; Kishtainy 1985: 171

world, something that has changed considerably since the 1991 Gulf War. I ask if this change has affected the cartoons.

2.3.1 Political cartoons?

Political cartoons, also called editorial cartoons since they typically appear in the editorial pages of newspapers, express opinions about newsworthy events or people. They are openly subjective and therefore bear more similarities with personal columns than other forms of journalism.[49] This makes them interesting from a historic point of view, since they often mirror currents and opinions circulating in the society and time of their conception. In addition to that, I think that the unveiled subjectivity of the cartoons makes political cartooning a relatively honest medium. They might be conformist or subversive, politically correct or totally prejudiced. Whatever the case they do not have any pretensions of being neutral and objective, like for instance the news media does. "Condensing history, culture, gender and social relationships within a single frame, a cartoon can recontextualize events and evoke references in ways that a photograph or a film cannot. As do graffiti, jokes, and other genres of popular culture, cartoons challenge the ways we accept official images as real and true."[50]

Ayhan Akman writes about the new generation of Turkish cartoonists, who in the 1950s and 60s "introduced cartoons that were politically conceived and politically motivated. Their understanding of politics involved issues such as the unjust social order, class struggle, critique of the state, the functioning of democratic institutions, and the possibility of social and political revolution."[51] From having consisted mainly of lighter forms of satire, ridiculing lesser problems of everyday urban life, the Turkish cartoons now became more politically ambitious. Influenced by American cartoonist Saul Steinberg and the "New Yorker Style", the modernist cartoonists broke with previous aesthetic conventions, such as the utilization of lines, shading, toning and dotting. The cartoons became simpler and more stylized, and the use of words began to be avoided. "[M]odernist cartoonists were revolutionary both in their graphic practice, which drastically transformed the conventions and techniques of the previous era, and in their espousal of a modernist/leftist ideology."[52] Cartoonists became much more serious about their art:

> Modernist cartoonists did not want to do merely local or daily cartoons. They wanted to produce works with universal value. Universality was the key to going beyond the merely temporal or ephemeral; to reaching a level that would be valid across cultures and time.[53]

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[49] Gerdes 2005: 4; Axberger, in Neuman 2004: 76-77
[50] Slyomovics, Susan, "Sex, Lies and Television: Algerian and Moroccan Caricatures of the Gulf War", in Slyomovics, Susan and Joseph, Suad (editors), *Women and Power in the Middle East*, Pennsylvania 2001: 72
[51] Akman, in Göçek, Fatma Müge (ed.), *Political Cartoons in the Middle East*, Princeton 1998: 108
[52] Ibid: 110-112
[53] Ibid: 113

One result of these ambitious cartoons striving for universal value was the elimination of humor. "Humor began to be seen as a problematic diversion (an auxiliary element of cartoons, at best) incompatible with the demands of a politically motivated art."[54] As the new generation of cartoonists advocated cartooning as a weapon in a broader and social struggle, the cartoons started to loose in popularity. The elimination of words and humor coupled with the striving for universality tended to make the historical and social context of the cartoons non-specific, in other words hard to identify with for ordinary people. In spite of increased marginalization during the 1970s and 80s, modernist cartoons survived through the institutional network Cartoonists' Association founded in 1969.[55]

2.3.2 Cartoons in the Middle East

Today, both the Arab world and the West overflow with images - TV, films, commercials, comics, cartoons etc. In the history of Arabic culture, however, the image never had the status it enjoys in Western culture. Douglas and Malti-Douglas talk about Western comic strips being linked to "iconographic modes of communication, of which church decoration ("the book of the illiterate") is but one example", whereas "in Arabo-Islamic civilization it was the word that was sacred and the image suspect".[56] In other words, Western imagery is linked to religion, whereas Arabic imagery is not. The Qur'an bans pictorial representation of the Prophet Muhammad, whereas the Bible does not prescribe the same strictures for depicting Jesus. Ignoring the Qur'anic prohibition, even if done by non-Muslims, can have serious consequences, something that became evident last year when the cartoons in Danish newspaper Jyllandsposten caused protests and unrest worldwide.

Indeed, Islam is an important part of any explanation to the historical scarcity of images in Arabic culture. But perhaps there is more to it than that. The Arabs have been called "people of the tongue", meaning literature and language.[57] Kishtainy returns to the Bedouins to explain the development of Arabic culture:

> As desert nomads ever on the move, the natives of the Arabian Peninsula could not develop any art which presupposed a settled life – like architecture, sculpture, painting and drama. The only art form which the nomad could afford was the one which required the least carriage, weight and space.
> …
> [E]verything conspired to make the mental and artistic preoccupation of the Arabs utterly abstract. Algebra, music, geometric art, symmetrical decoration, austere monotheism, rhythmical poetry, geometrical rhymes, linguistic disputations and intricate figures of speech became the intellectual pleasures of the Arabs.[58]

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[54] Ibid: 114
[55] Ibid: 116
[56] Douglas, Allen and Malti-Douglas, Fedwa, *Arab Comic Strips: Politics of an Emerging Mass Culture*, Bloomington & Indianapolis 1994: 2
[57] Al-Jahiz, in Kishtainy 1985: 11
[58] Kishtainy 1985: 11-12

The tradition of pictorial art instead came to Islamic lands from outside. Cartoons started appearing in the Middle East during the mid-nineteenth century and coincided with the growing Western influence in the Ottoman Empire. Göçek traces this development:

> [Political cartoons] accompanied Europe's gradual technological, economic, and political domination over the rest of the world. The non-Western world including the Middle East promptly started to employ this medium to scorn their own Westernizing selves and to ridicule and delegitimate their Western rulers. Local myths, folktales, and aesthetic forms were quickly synthesized into these new interpretations, first to symbolically authenticate the burgeoning nationalist movements and then to resist them.[59]

The art form was thus imported and adapted to local needs. Should this be seen as something positive, or was it just another aspect of Western expansion? Should the influx of European culture into colonial areas be interpreted as "cultural imperialism"? Some would say so, whereas others claim that those dominated by a colonial power eventually learned to use their newly acquired forms of culture to their own advantage.

As for political cartoons, according to Göçek, the mix of an essentially Western art form with authentic Middle Eastern ingredients resulted in a hybrid. It added an extra layer of ambiguity to the cartoon that offered space for variant readings. But, "[e]ven though cartoons in the Middle East interpret Western images with a local twist, and thus partially subvert the embedded Western images and values, they fail to alter the existing Western forms of domination".[60]

The fact that political cartooning is not an authentic Arabic art form does not mean it is merely a copy-cat. "There are affinities and a shared visual vocabulary between Western and Arab notions of caricature, but the traditions and public roles to which they are linked are very different."[61] Slyomovics writes about the 1991 Gulf War and the function of political cartoons in the media coverage of that war. Satellite dishes were something relatively new in the Middle East at that time, and as people zapped between international news channels and local ones, it soon became obvious to them that the news were not objective. Cartoons during this period often satirized media related issues and made people question what they saw on the television screen. Even though cartoons simplify complex matters into an easily understandable mix of image and text, they make people think in a way that television perhaps does not encourage:

> Caricatures explicitly reduce the political expression of a country, say Iraq or the United States, to a single individual: Saddam Hussein, Bush, or to a woman who symbolizes that country. At the same time, the graphic image allows for a speculative and interrogative dimension. In contrast, television discourages reflection upon complex issues of context, history, gender, culture, and

[59] Göçek 1998: 6
[60] Göçek 1998: 8
[61] Slyomovics 2001: 73

> international relations. Images are discrete and self-contained and exclude any discussion. Television, then, is amore powerful caricature, if you will, than any cartoon.[62]

2.3.3 Censorship

Caricaturists in the Arab world operate within regimes of censorship and state control. The abundance or scarceness of cartoons might be an indicator of shifting press regulations. To caricature the King, political leaders or ministers is often an imprisonable crime. Governments frequently find ways of impeding free expression and blocking unwanted cartoonists, for instance through strategic "shortages" of film and newsprint and official distribution and circulation monopolies.[63]

Those subjected to censorship often displayed great creativity in finding ways to get around it. Göçek relates how Ottoman caricaturists, after the 1909 press law limiting freedom of the press, used to send politically correct, but erasable drawings for approval and then replaced these with more politically provocative material. Others asked newspapers to leave the place of the censored cartoon a blank space. Accompanied by a denunciation of the government's action and sometimes a detailed description of the banned drawing, this was a commonly used technique of resistance both in Ottoman and European contexts.[64]

An important reason why censorship is still a big issue in the contemporary Arab world is that the majority of Arab countries have been frequently in and out of a technical state of war ever since the 1948 war with Israel. This explains for instance the politicization of children's comic strip magazines, as these frequently encompass morally oriented political and ideological material to a much larger extent than what "we" (as in Westerners) are used to.[65] We will see later that press regulations were not so slack in our part of the world either during times of war. When freedom of expression is limited, and open political debate is restricted, politics is pushed into other areas, such as literature, poetry and comics:

> [C]ensorship breeds sharp readers, and Arab readers have more than matched their writers and artists, in the search for hidden political and ideological messages. The politicization of Arab comics, generally designed to serve the interests of the regimes, can be a double-edged sword. In the Arab states, as in most of the Third World, culture is seen by virtually everyone as an essentially political domain. This consensus of artist and public can produce effects both conformist and subversive.[66]

Legally, it might prove hard to convict a satirist. The accusation must be based either on what is said literary, or what is said between the lines. What is said

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[62] Ibid: 97
[63] Ibid: 73; see also Amin, Hussein, in Hafez, Kai (Ed.), *Mass Media, Politics and Society in the Middle East*, Hampton Press 2001: 24
[64] Göçek 1998: 8-9
[65] Douglas and Malti-Douglas 1994: 5
[66] Ibid: 5-6

literary is not often the point or the real meaning of the satire, so the accusation does not have any effect. If the accusation is based on what is said between the lines, the satirist can always claim he never said so.[67]

That is if the legal system works. If the satirist operates within a state with an arbitrary legal system, the authorities do not need any specific reasons to act. Jordanian cartoonist Emad Hajjaj, creator of the locally popular satirical character Abu Mahjoob, is a point in case. Hajjaj relates how he started breaking "caricaturial barriers" and pushing social limits after landing a job at *Ar-Ra'ī* (Al Rai) newspaper, the most read "daily" in the country. He drew Abu Mahjoob hugging his wife in the bedroom, or complaining about the government, which was daring by Jordanian standards. According to the artist, he was the first person in the country who dared to draw ministers' faces. Eventually, he even dare deviled to draw the King (five caricatures in total), at which point people "high up" started to protest. An article in a local paper suggested Hajjaj be put in jail for such trespassing, but no legal action was taken against him. Instead, His Majesty King Abdullah issued a statement saying that "the sky is the limit" for the freedom of the press. Journalists were overjoyed and started criticizing a number of large private and public organizations. When Hajjaj published a sketch depicting a local telecommunications company monopolizing the mobile phone market, he was fired from *Al Rai* (the newspaper is stately owned). Hajjaj published his story in a number of media outlets, and the exposure this generated was invaluable to the artist. Today he is working for the Jordanian *Al Ghad* newspaper and the pan-Arab newspaper *Al Quds Al Arabi* (London).[68]

2.3.4 Important or insignificant?

To Göçek, the political cartoon is an important social force with the potential to generate change "by freeing the imagination, challenging the intellect, and resisting state control".[69] The medium is often feared by the authorities, she claims, and some of the more controversial Middle Eastern caricaturists have been forced to put up with being continuously monitored and sometimes silenced.[70] Kishtainy's opinion about political humor in general is not as enthusiastic:

> Humour as a 'weapon in battle' has become a slogan in many lands including the Arab World, where many journals and newspapers have been clamouring for a revival of this weapon, long put under lock and key by the present rulers. Yet, there seems to be an overstatement of the case of humour as a remedy. In fact, the opposite may be true, and we may well find that joking about things is only a form of escapism… [A]s a positive weapon in the battle against oppression, its use is of doubtful efficacy. People joke about their oppressors, not to overthrow them but to

[67] Axberger, in Neuman 2004: 72
[68] Mango, Mutaz, "Art Imitates Life", *JO Magazine*, March 2004: 76-79; see also *http://www.mahjoob.com/en/emad/index.php*
[69] Göçek 1998: 1
[70] Ibid: 1-4

> endure them, and the more durable and formidable the regime may be, the more resort is made to humour.[71]

This matches Professor Harrison's view of satire: "Together we attack a victim outside the group and laugh at him or her. It is not necessary that the victim hear or reads what is expressed. If the satirist had been genuinely interested in change, he had instead become a politician."[72]

However, in an authoritarian state, the satirist might instead be regarded as a noble hero, someone who tells the truth when nobody else dares. Neuman cites the former communist state of Poland as a vivid example. According to Polish art critic Andra Rottenberg: "The satirists were tremendously important, especially for us who were young. They gave us hope; they demonstrated that one in fact could speak publicly about what was important, even if it was done in a concealed way."[73]

This importance and relevance ascribed to the satirist is unusual in a country like Sweden, where we have long been spoiled with democracy and freedom of expression. However, the freedom we now take for granted can be swept aside at the blink of an eye if war is imminent. Neuman relates the story of Karl Gerhard and his famous satirical song, *Den ökända hästen från Troja* (The notorious horse from Troy). The song was part of a revue played in Stockholm 1940, which satirized the European countries' lack of courage in standing up against the Third Reich. The Prime Minister, Per Albin Hansson, urged Gerhard to remove the act since the German ambassador had complained that it contained insults against Germany. Gerhard refused initially, but with threats of prosecution rising, he eventually removed the song. However, he kept the prop, the wooden horse, on stage while reading aloud every night to the audience letters from the police directed at the theater. In addition he would hum the melody of the removed song. In this way, he did not do anything he could be prosecuted for. The audience, however, knew the story, and so the message was still being communicated.[74] This is a good example of "us against them" and of how satire tends to find a way around censorship.

Even political cartoons seem to acquire an extra dimension of relevance during times of war. During World War I, Germany was the first nation to recognize the significance of political cartoons as a medium of warfare, as these "were used to mobilize the population both morally and intellectually for the war, explain setbacks, confirm belief in the superiority of the fatherland, and proclaim the hope of final victory; against the enemy, political cartoons were utilized to put the population in dismay through ridiculing them, and constantly displaying their ineptitude, cowardice, and effeminacy."[75] During the nineteen hundreds, political propaganda became an important part of warfare, and cartoons were part of this development. By the end of World War II "all major military powers had

[71] Kishtainy 1985: 6-7
[72] Neuman 2004: 14
[73] Neuman 2004: 22
[74] Ibid: 22-26
[75] Göçek 1998: 5

propaganda offices that recognized and employed political cartoons to influence public opinion".[76]

According to satirist Olof Buckard, "the greater the conflicts are in a society, the more tense the spiritual, cultural and political climate is, the more ardent resistance a regime provokes in the common citizen, the more glaring and feverish becomes the aesthetics of resistance that bears the stamp of satire".[77] Buckhard's description seems to have been tailor made for the Middle East, and we should expect to find in the Arab political cartoons of the Lebanon war, a satire less nuanced, and probably "more glaring and feverish" than the satire we are used to in a country like Sweden. Perhaps it is not wrong to say that the frequent political and religious unrest in the often despotic Arab regimes is what makes satire, political humor and political cartoons extra relevant in the Arab world today.

2.3.5 Regionalization of Arab media

The 1990s witnessed a phase of Arab media technology development "characterized by a global, digitally based information explosion and sweeping market-oriented thinking… A key feature of this phase has been the launch of numerous commercial media projects inside and outside the Arab region, mainly as part of Saudi Arabia-based media conglomerates".[78] The broadcast news media available to the Arab viewer has multiplied several folds since the 1991 Gulf War, "when CNN and BBC were Arabs' eyes on the war. Now, Al Jazeera, Al Arabiya, and Abu Dhabi, among other channels, are competing with the foreign channels in covering wars and crises in the area, offering the Arab version of the story".[79]

This unprecedented international competition has undoubtedly been a positive force, pushing media content into becoming more critical and less afraid of tackling sensitive subjects.

> Print media content critical of domestic government policies is common in the press systems of Egypt, Morocco, Kuwait, Jordan, and Lebanon. More space is being devoted to readers' views and to those of intellectuals on issues ranging from Arab solidarity, to the stalled Middle East process, to the rehabilitation of Iraq. Issues of this critical caliber are also being boldly tackled by certain satellite TV programs such as Orbit's *On the Air*, Al-Jazeera's *Opposite Direction*, and MBC's *Dialogue with the West* and *Beyond Events*.[80]

Especially programs such as The Opposite Direction (*Al-Ittijāh Al-Mu'ākis*), with its heated debates and freedom of expression to a degree previously unheard of in Arabic media, generated among scholars great optimism for the future of the Arab

[76] Ibid: 6
[77] Neuman 2004: 29
[78] Ayish, Muhammad I., in Hafez 2001: 116
[79] Mellor, Noha, *The Making of Arabic News*, Rowman & Littlefield 2005: 143
[80] Ayish, in Hafez 2001: 124

world. The argument seemed to be that if democratization had started in the new Arab news media, the Arab regimes and societies were soon to follow.

Writing in 2005, Noha Mellor questioned this notion. The factor that has led to the popularity of the news media, their regionalization, is the same factor that diminishes their political impact, she argues. "The news media outlets are in harsh competition to attract more regional audiences, and consequently they are forced to prioritize foreign policy and inter-relational issues at the expense of more immediate, internal problems, which differ from country to country."[81] Fandy (2000) called this phenomenon "anywhere but here", meaning that "if Egyptians want to know about Egypt, they are better off watching Al Jazeera, while a Qatari is better served by reading Arab newspapers from outside Qatar to keep informed of what is happening inside Qatar".[82]

Could the "anything but here" phenomenon, the regionalization of the news, be reflected in the political cartoons? Do cartoonists focus too much on regional issues, and too little on domestic ones? We should keep these questions in mind when examining the Lebanon cartoons. There is definitely a link between cartoons and the broadcast media. Al Jazeera for instance frequently includes "cartoons of the week" in their newscasts, and cartoons often comment on the media, as Slyomovics has shown.

Another thing that has changed is the pattern of ownership. Arab media has gone through a process of privatization, which became another source for optimism regarding an eventual opening up of the region. Privatization is, however, no guarantee for democracy, according to Hafez:

> With the concentration of private capital, especially Saudi capital, there is an inherent danger that the Arab states' broadcasting monopolies will merely be replaced by private oligopolies. If this is the case, even privatization is no guarantee for liberalization and diversity. Moreover, privatization is sometimes a form of continued, but disguised state control, as in the case of Saudi satellite TV where the private owners of the new media are in fact relatives of the ruling Saud family and the Saudi King.[83]

Saudi Arabia further owns a large share of what Ayish calls "the migrating Arab press", i.e. Arab press published outside the Arab world. Among these we find the two most widely distributed private pan-Arab newspapers, the London based *Al Hayat* and *Al Sharq Al Awsat*.[84] Saudi Arabia is not a state famous for its liberal values and democratic practices; still, according to Ayish, publications such as the above mentioned seem "to have benefited from free speech and advanced communication technology environments in host countries, and have produced some of the finest Arab-world publications, thus setting new standards of excellence in modern Arab journalism."[85]

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[81] Fandy, in Mellor 2005: 3
[82] Ibid: 145
[83] Hafez 2001: 9
[84] Amin, in Hafez 2001: 23; and Hafez 2001: 8
[85] Ayish, in Hafez 2001: 115

With so much of the media being dependent on Saudi capital, we are not likely to find excessive amounts of critique against Saudi interests in the cartoons, at least not in those that get the widest exposure through the large pan-Arab newspapers.

2.4 THE WAR

To understand political cartoons we need to be familiar with the political and historical context in which they were conceived:

> Political cartoonists (reasonably) assume that the typical reader of a newspaper's editorial page already has a basic knowledge of current issues and newsworthy people. Understanding and appreciating political cartoons often requires such knowledge, as well as a familiarity with common icons and symbolic figures (such as Uncle Sam's representing the United States). The need for contextual information becomes especially apparent in historical cartoons.[86]

Therefore, to refresh our memories of the war last summer, I have assembled a short summary and timeline from some articles found on *Wikipedia*, "The Free Encyclopedia". The sources for Wikipedia's articles on the Lebanon war include a number of newspapers such as *Jerusalem Post*, *The Guardian*, *Washington Post*, news services such as *Reuters*, *Associated Press* and *BBC News*, human rights organizations such as *Amnesty International* and *Human Rights Watch* etc. Few of Wikipedia's sources are Arabic, wherefore the articles perhaps could be accused of seeing the war through western glasses. Even so, it seems to me that at least some caution has been taken when choosing from contradictory information. For instance, when it comes to death tolls, Wikipedia accounts for Israeli sources, Hezbollah sources, as well as outside monitoring sources, before offering a rough estimate.

I have tried to assemble the timeline as to show not just Israeli and Hezbollah action, but also a sample of the international response. The war was the center of world attention and debate and the cartoons were likewise often international in their approach.

2.4.1 Summary [87]

The spark that ignited the already tense political situation was Hezbollah's firing of Katyusha rockets and mortars at Israeli border villages on 12 July, diverting attention from another Hezbollah unit that crossed the border, kidnapped two Israeli soldiers and killed three others. Israeli troops attempted to rescue the abducted soldiers but were unsuccessful, losing five more in the attempt. Israel retaliated with massive air strikes and artillery fire, an air and naval blockade, and eventually a ground invasion of southern Lebanon. Hezbollah continued

[86] Gerdes 2005: 5
[87] Assembled from *http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2006_Israel-Lebanon_conflict*

launching rockets into northern Israel throughout the war and engaged the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) in guerilla warfare.

The conflict killed over a thousand people, most of whom were Lebanese, destroyed large parts of Lebanese infrastructure, caused enormous environmental problems, displaced 700 000-915 000 Lebanese and 300 000-500 000 Israelis, and disrupted normal life all across Lebanon and northern Israel. Even after ceasefire, much of southern Lebanon remained uninhabitable due to unexploded cluster bombs.

On 11 August, the United Nations Security Council unanimously approved UN Resolution 1701 in an effort to end hostilities. The resolution called for the disarmament of Hezbollah, the withdrawal of Israeli forces from Lebanon, and for the deployment of Lebanese soldiers and an enlarged UNIFIL (United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon) force in southern Lebanon. Both the Lebanese and the Israeli governments approved the resolution and an official ceasefire was put into effect on 14 August.

The Lebanese army began deploying troops in the southern areas on 17 August. The blockade was lifted on 8 September. Most Israeli troops withdrew from Lebanon on 1 October, although some troops remained in the border-straddling village of Ghajar until 3 December. As of yet, Hezbollah has not been disarmed.

2.4.2 Timeline [88]

12 July
Hezbollah fires rockets into Israel, kidnaps two Israeli soldiers and kills three. Five more are killed on the Lebanese side of the border after a failed attempt by Israel to rescue the abductees.

13 July
Israel starts to attack Lebanese civilian infrastructure to cut off arms replenishment to Hezbollah. Rafiq Al-Hariri International Airport is bombed and forced to close. An air and sea blockade is imposed on Lebanon, and the main highway between Beirut and Damascus is destroyed. Hezbollah launches rocket attacks at Haifa for the first time. The Lebanese government calls for a cease-fire, claiming that the Israeli response is “disproportionate”, a view echoed by France and Russia.

14 July
The IDF bombs Hezbollah leader Hasan Nasrallah’s offices in Beirut. Nasrallah declares war. Hezbollah attacks an Israeli missile boat enforcing the naval blockade, with what was believed to be a radar guided anti-ship missile. Four sailors are killed and the warship is seriously damaged and towed back to port.

[88] Assembled from *http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2006_Israel-Lebanon_conflict*; and *http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Timeline_of_Military_Operations_in_the_2006_Israel-Lebanon_conflict*

15 July
Saudi Arabia blames "elements" inside Lebanon for the violence with Israel, in unusually frank language directed at Hezbollah and its Iranian backers.[89]

16 July
Vladimir Putin says that "Israel may be pursuing other aims than saving two soldiers taken hostage".

17 July
Hezbollah hits an Israeli railroad repair depot, killing eight workers. Hezbollah claims that the attack was aimed at a large fuel storage plant adjacent to the railway facility. A private conversation at the G8 summit between Prime Minister Tony Blair and President Bush is caught on tape, with Blair saying "I think the thing that is really difficult is you can't stop this unless you get this international presence agreed", and Bush responding "What they need to do is get Syria to get Hezbollah to stop doing this shit, and it's over".[90]

19 July
The Bush administration openly rejects calls for a ceasefire. The New York Times reports that U.S. and Israeli officials have agreed that the bombings will continue. The U.S. is said to have given Israel "the green lights" to continue its course of action.

22 July
American officials are said to have confirmed deliveries of precision guided bombs to Israel due to an Israeli request. The shipment is not publicly announced.

23 July
Israeli land forces enter Lebanon in the Maroun al-Ras area, which overlooks several other locations said to be used as launch sites for Hezbollah rockets. Israeli officials state they would accept an international force led by NATO to keep Hezbollah guerillas away from the border. Syria says it will enter the war if the IDF threatens Syria, and indicates a willingness to engage American officials in talks about a ceasefire. U.S. Ambassador to the UN, John Bolton, rejects Syrian-American dialogue but is open to a NATO-led force in Lebanon.

25 July
The IDF engages Hezbollah forces in the battle of *Bint Jbeil*. Nasrallah says the Israeli onslaught is an attempt by the U.S. and Israel to impose "a new Middle East" in which Lebanon would be under U.S. hegemony.[91]

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[89] *http://english.aljazeera.net/English/archive/archive?ArchiveId=24500*
[90] *http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/International_reactions_to_the_2006_Israel-Lebanon_conflict#.C2.A0United_States*
[91] Ibid

26 July
Israeli forces attack and destroy a UN observer post, killing the four observers stationed there, in spite of repeated calls from the UN staff to the Israelis. The U.S. blocks the UN Security Council from issuing a statement that would have condemned Israel's action.[92]

27 July
Hezbollah ambushes Israeli forces and kill eight of their soldiers in Bint Jbeil.

28 July
Israeli paratroopers kill twenty six of Hezbollah's commando elite in Bint Jbeil. The IDF claims that eighty fighters were killed in the Bint Jbeil battles. Iran's state news agency confirms Nasrallah's presence in Damascus. Although Hezbollah has received significant Iranian assistance in the past, Iranian officials deny assisting Hezbollah in the current conflict.

30 July
Israeli air strikes hit an apartment building in *Qana*, killing at least twenty eight civilians, of whom sixteen are children, with thirteen more missing. Lebanese Prime Minister, Fouad Al-Signora, denounces "Israeli war criminals" and cancels talks with U.S. Secretary of State, Condoleezza Rice. The attack is widely condemned internationally. President Bush says the Lebanon war is part of the "war on terror".[93]

31 July
Israeli and Hezbollah forces engage in the battle of Ayta al-Shaʿb. Lebanese President Emile Lahoud declares his full support for Hezbollah.

3 August
Nasrallah warns Israel against hitting Beirut and promises retaliation against Tel Aviv in this case. He also states that Hezbollah would stop its rocket campaign if Israel ceases aerial and artillery strikes of Lebanese towns and villages.

4 August
The Israeli Air Force (IAF) attacks a building in the area of Al-Qaa, killing thirty three farm workers, mostly Syrian and Lebanese Kurds. As Israel targets the southern outskirts of Beirut, Hezbollah launches rockets at the Hader region, which is situated approximately midway in between Haifa and Tel Aviv.

7 August
The IAF attacks the Shiite suburb of Beirut, destroying three apartment buildings, killing at least fifty people.

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[92] http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/International_reactions_to_the_2006_Israel-Lebanon_conflict#United_Nations
[93] *http://www.abc.net.au/news/newsitems/200607/s1700569.htm*

9 August
Nine Israeli soldiers are killed when the building they are taking cover in is struck by a Hezbollah anti-tank missile and collapses.

11 August
The IAF attacks a convoy of approximately seven hundred and fifty vehicles containing Lebanese police, army, civilians, and one Associated Press journalist, killing at least seven people. The UN Security Council unanimously approves Resolution 1701, in an effort to end hostilities.

12 August
The IDF establishes its hold in southern Lebanon. Over the weekend Israeli forces triple in size, and are ordered to advance towards the Litani River. Twenty four Israeli soldiers are killed in the worst Israeli loss in a single day. Five of these are killed when Hezbollah shoots down an Israeli helicopter, a first for the militia. The Lebanese government and Hezbollah accept Resolution 1701.

13 August
The Israeli government accepts Resolution 1701.

14 August
The IAF reports that they have killed the head of Hezbollah's Special Forces, a claim denied by Hezbollah. Eighty minutes prior to cessation of hostilities, the IDF targets a Palestinian faction in the Ain al-Hilweh refugee camp in Sidon, killing a UNRWA staff member. The ceasefire takes effect at 8:00 AM (5:00 AM GMT).

3. ANALYSIS

The examination of the political cartoons on the Lebanon war is divided into nine categories. Each of these encompasses issues or themes that I found that the cartoonists frequently returned to in their work. I will be discussing these themes and issues as well as analyzing some cartoons of each category. Analyzing art in the end comes down to interpretation. However, the pop-cultural satire of political cartoons is usually meant to be easily understood, due to its large readership, and so the messages are quite clear most of the time.

3.1 RIDICULING THE ENEMY, GLORIFYING ONESELF

Enemies are variously depicted as evil monsters or weaklings in the cartoons, depending on if the war is in a state of momentum or adversity. Fellow countrymen likewise are frequently cast as victims or heroes. We have learned that ridiculing the enemy and glorifying oneself in cartoons is nowadays a standard measure in the propaganda war that is part of modern warfare. Even though the majority of the Arab cartoonists are not Lebanese, they clearly regard Arabs as "us" and Israelis and Americans as "them". I will discuss pan-Arabism and Arab solidarity in 3.3.

ISRAELIS

The demonization of the Israelis takes on different forms in the cartoons. Aggressiveness, arrogance and blood thirstiness are qualities often ascribed to the enemy. *Al Sharq Al Awsat* cartoonist Amjad Rasmi draws the Israeli soldiers as voluptuous and frightening, whereas other cartoonists render Israeli politicians as butchers or even vampires. Visual insinuations and links to fascism and Nazism are not uncommon.

Amjad Rasmi, *Al Sharq Al Awsat* (London), 31 July

The menacing Israeli soldier in Rasmi's cartoon holds a sign saying "Intent on crushing the will of the Lebanese people…" His broken arms tell us that neither stubborn intentions nor the abundance of weapons he displays will succeed in quenching the Lebanese.

Jalal Ar-Rifa'y, *Al Dustour* (Jordan), 8 July

Drawn during the Israeli military campaign in Gaza, shortly prior to the outbreak of the Israeli-Hezbollah hostilities, Ar-Rifa'y pictures Ariel Sharon and Ehud Olmert as feasting together on Arab blood. Sharon, the former Prime Minister, has become obese from drinking too much blood, whereas his successor, Olmert, has only acquired a tiny pot belly so far. The artist is apparently suggesting that Olmert is continuing Sharon's work.

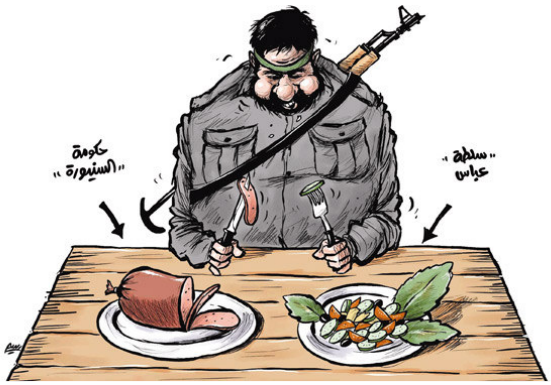
Emad Hajjaj, *Al Quds Al Arabi* (London), 7 August

Hajjaj pictures the Israeli Minister of Defense, Amir Peretz as a child playing with a dangerous rocking-horse that looks like a tank, perhaps being a toy soldier himself. The childish setting makes the scene look silly and is clearly intended to ridicule, but also suggests that Peretz does not understand the consequences of his actions, i.e. he is not in touch with reality. Further, by making him do the hail salute, Hajjaj links Peretz to the Nazis.

HEZBOLLAH

Emad Hajjaj, *Al Quds Al Arabi,* 17 July

Hajjaj generally makes cleaver use of symbols in his cartoons. Here he has turned the cedar tree, the national symbol of Lebanon, into a pile of rubble and dead bodies bleeding downwards into the shape of the tree trunk reaching for the gun at the bottom of the drawing. The gun is of the same type as the one in the Hezbollah logo. Thus, there seems to be two purposes of the cartoon: to lament the tragedy of Lebanon, as well as paying tribute to, and perhaps legitimizing Hezbollah's armed resistance.



Amjad Rasmi, *Al Sharq Al Awsat*, 15 July

A Hezbollah fighter sits at the table eating the government of "Al-Signora" and the "authority" of ʿAbbas. The Signora government has the shape of a sausage, indicating that pork is one of its ingredients, which in turn indicates treason and alignment with the West. The ʿAbbas authority has the shape of vegetables and salad, probably symbolizing powerlessness. I am not sure how to interpret the soldier eating these two. Either he is out-winning both the traitors and the powerless, or he is a hypocrite who poses as hero, but at their expense. Note the quotation marks in "Al-Signora" and "Authority" respectively.

Jalal Ar-Rifa'y, *Al Dustour,* 28 July

Here we see the simultaneous ridiculing of the enemy and glorification of oneself. Ar-Rifa'y has drawn an Israeli tank trying to push a boulder up the mountain of *Bint Jbeil*. He is denied by the mountain which has the shape of an angry and powerful woman. The part of the mountain that stops the boulder could perhaps be interpreted as a symbol for masculinity, if you wanted to put on those glasses, but I prefer not to. Hezbollah experienced both military gains and heavy losses in the rough battles of Bint Jbeil. The name seems to have become synonymous to Lebanese pride and resistance. Word play is being made by writing *Bint Jbail, Ibn al….,* insinuating that the Israeli soldier is *ibn al-kalb* (the son of a dog). The same idea is utilized in a cartoon by Nasser Al-Ja'fari, (*Al Quds,* 27 July) as the mighty Bint Jbeil is juxtaposed to a caricature of Condoleezza Rice, with the text *Bint Jbail, Bint* …… The U.S. Secretary of State is holding a smart bomb in her hands, and the plan for a new middle east under her arm. Thus, the dog of Arab political humor reappears in today's political cartoons, even if he does so implicitly.

Baha Boukhari, *Al Ayyam* (Ramallah), 2 August

"Suddenly… the surprises" by Boukhari, picturing Hasan Nasrallah as the Superman of Lebanon, could be a tribute just as well as an ironic statement. The use of an American superhero as symbol for Lebanese resistance suggests that there is at least some irony intended.

3.2 SELF CRITICISM

Amjad Rasmi, *Al Sharq Al Awsat*, 28 July

To ridicule an individual Arab political leader is rare in Arab political cartoons. Prime Minister Al-Signora willingly unrolls Lebanese lands, in the form of a red carpet, a sign of welcoming for the Israelis. "Israeli destruction" personified as a soldier kicks it back into a roll, probably a metaphor for arrogance. If it should be seen as "self criticism" could be discussed, since *Al Sharq Al Awsat* is a Saudi financed publication. Even so, satire directed at individual Arab leaders is uncommon in large pan-Arabic newspapers as well as in local ones.

Emad Hajjaj, *Al Quds Al Arabi*, 18 July

There are indirect ways of satirizing one's own side, without having to target individual politicians. In Hajjaj's cartoon, a grumpy looking Arab sits in front of the TV and barks in his telephone: "Make me a frame for the picture of His Excellency Hasan Nasrallah!" On the wall behind him we see the pictures of Gamal Abd Al-Nasser and Sadam Hussein, two political leaders who both posed as the champion of the Arab cause, to different degrees of success. Now a third hook has been prepared for the new "hero". This is yet another Nasrallah cartoon that seems to be ironically intended. The Arab is kind of rough looking and he speaks colloquial Arabic, indicating he is poorly educated. Thus, he does not

question the way these leaders are portrayed on television and uncritically adopts them as his heroes.

3.3 THE REGIONAL DIMENSION

There is a discrepancy between pan-Arabism as an idea in the minds of Arabs, and political pan-Arabism exercised by the Arab governments. "The Arab countries have more and more developed into national states, unwilling to let go of their sovereignty. The dream of a united Arab nation is often used for rhetoric purposes, to strengthen the legitimacy of a regime in the eyes of its citizens."[94] Pan-Arabism's most serious setback was the *naksa*, the 1967 Arab-Israeli June War, "unquestionably the most traumatic experience suffered by the Arab world".[95] It might be difficult for a Westerner to grasp the extent of this trauma. Memories of lost wars are still vivid, and the Arab cartoonists frequently return to these to hint at a consistency between past and present:

Emad Hajjaj, *Al Dustour*, 13 April 2003

An Arab, representing "the Arab street" is dismayed by the 1948 *nakbe* (the first Arab-Israeli war, nicknamed the "Catastrophe" by the Arabs), in despair of the 1967 *nakse* (the June War), and devastated by the 2003 *faqse* (the Iraq war). The last term means "hatching" (of an egg), i.e. the invasion of Iraq has given birth to a new beginning; the beginning of what is not known at this point, but judging by the expression of the Arab, it is bound to be worse than one could imagine. The words are vocalized for colloquial pronunciation and rhyming. The "from-bad-to-worse-to-even-worse" theme goes well with Kishtainy's reflection upon the *naksa* and what followed after it:

> *Naksa* is an apt description of the 1967 débâcle and its aftermath, for it means reversion to a worse state. Ever since that fateful 5 June, things have been

[94] Boström, Lars, "Den arabiska drömmen söker ny form", *Dagens Nyheter*, 16 May 1992: A 11
[95] Kishtainy 1985: 157; for more on pan-Arabism and an account of the 1967 war, see Cleveland, William, *A History of the Modern Middle East*, Westview Press 2004: 323-344

> deteriorating for the Arab World all the time and many Arab commentators raised their arms in despair and concluded that things could never be worse. Arab commentators, however, always reach the wrong conclusions, for every time they had said so, things did become worse.[96]

However, in spite of the political failures, pan-Arabism as an ideology should not be discarded or forgotten since "the dream of a united Arab world remains".[97] The cartoonists are proof that pan-Arabism lives on, despite its failure as a political movement. You will often find A) ordinary Arabs as victims and symbols of broken pan-Arabic dreams, and B) politicians depicted as corrupt betrayers of pan-Arabism.

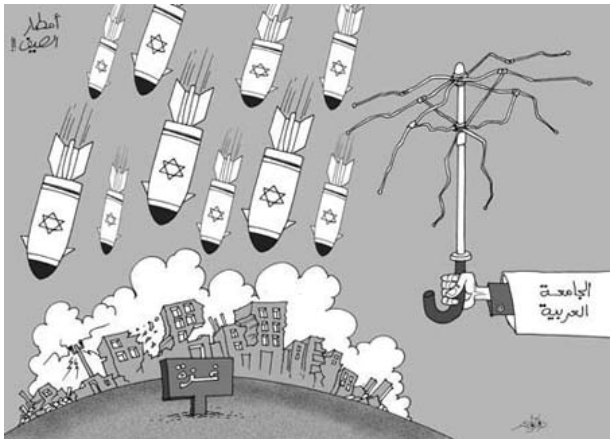
Jalal Ar-Rifaʿy, *Al Dustour*, 20 July

Ar-Rifaʿy's cartoon is a good example of pan-Arabic solidarity. The peace craving man is fleeing the missiles homing in on him. His body is full of scars from former assaults, and the blood gushing out of his three open wounds bear the names of currently war torn Lebanon, Palestine and Iraq. The fact that the wounds of three individual countries are placed on the same body, as well as the scars, suggests that the Lebanon war is regarded as just another blow to the Arabs, seen as one people.

[96] Kishtainy 1985; 165
[97] Ali Desouqi, quoted in Boström, Lars 1992: A 11

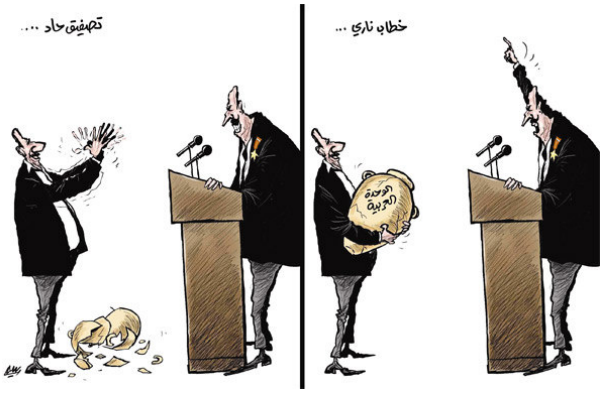
Stavro Jabra, *Al Balad* (Beirut), 16 July

Jabra mocks the Arab foreign ministers. He compares them to a weeping crocodile carrying a sign saying "We disapprove of the aggression". The tears are purportedly for Lebanon, but they are crocodile's tears (emphasized by the text at the bottom), meaning Jabra dismisses the ministers as hypocrites.



Abdallah Darqawy, *Bayt Al-Kartūn* (www.arabcartoon.net), 5 July

Likewise, the Arab League is often a target for ridicule, as the organization is described as passive and powerless. The Israeli military operation in Gaza (nicknamed *Summer Rains*) is visualized as an Israeli bomb shower, against which The Arab League's broken umbrella is useless.



Amjad Rasmi, *Al Sharq Al Awsat*, 16 August

The already frail Arab unity, in the form of an urn with cracks, is shattered into pieces, as a "fiery speech" by an anonymous leader is succeeded by "fierce applause". Rasmi is suggesting that politicians are too busy extolling their leaders to care about their Arab brothers, thereby betraying the dream of Arab unity. Or perhaps that the people are forced to applaud their politicians, or else actions will be taken against them, and therefore they can not uphold Arab unity.

3.4 THE INTERNATIONAL DIMENSION

Sandy Huffaker, *www.caglecartoons.com*, 17 July

There was a constant international blame game going on in the cartoons of the Lebanon war. The American and Western cartoons were always quick to point out the Shiite Hezbollah-Syria-Iran connection, as in the above cartoon by Huffaker. Iran is cast as the big baddie, controlling Syria in the middle, who in turn maneuvers little Hezbollah who is depicted as a beggar. The Arab cartoonists were likewise quick to target the USA as the big baddie behind Israel (and sometimes the Zionist lobby being behind the USA), and the UN as controlled by the two.

Hamed Najeeb, *Al Ittihad* (UAE), 20 July

Najeeb's drawing includes many of the clichés of Arab political cartoons. Earth is trying to submit a paper to the Security Council proposing the international protection of Palestine and Lebanon. The frustrated council, however, is closed/silenced by a "Veto locker". The key to this locker has got the shape of the Star of David, held behind the back by Uncle Sam. In other words, the Security Council is unable to do anything, since it is under US/Israeli power.

Jihad Awartany, *Al Dustour*, 6 August

Many were frustrated at the inability of the UN to reach an agreement about what course of action to take, to put an end to hostilities. Awartany replaces the map of the world in the UN badge with the head of a clown, suggesting that the UN is an organization that should not be taken seriously.

Ala' Al-Luqta, *Al Madina* (Saudi Arabia), 21 July

Al-Luqta compares "the international efforts to stop Israeli aggression against Lebanon" to a turtle. The turtle, or the snail, is the standard metaphor used by the cartoonists to indicate slowness or disguised unwillingness.

Jihad Awartany, *Al Dustour*, 29 July

The U.S. was criticized for providing Israel with "smart bombs", used during the war. This led to a whole array of cartoons of "stupid bombs" and stupid so and so. In Awartany's cartoon, Uncle Sam asks the question many Americans asked after 9/11: "Why do they hate us?" Since he is saying it with a smart bomb in his arms, he is asking a "stupid question" in the cartoonist's view.

Baha Boukhary, *Al Ayyam*, 30 July

The cartoon comments the killing of the four UN observers. These are pictured as a snail or a hermit crab, trying to hide under the UN helmet, on which is written "we are internationals, not citizens/civilians". The pledge for mercy is of no use, however, against "stupid bombs".

Hamed Atta, *Al Khaleej* (UAE), 30 July

Atta apparently thinks that the UN was too soft on Israel after the killing of its four staff. The UN General Secretary, Kofi Annan, is caricatured as a dull dimwit, saying that "we pronounce guilty the members of our UN forces who died as a result of being at the place of the Israeli bombing".

3.5 SYMBOLS

Regarding Turkish political cartoons during the Second World War, Akman describes them as a "retro" genre:

> Stylistically, a significant attribute of these war cartoons is that the figures in them were frequently overwritten with names that identified what or whom they represented… This was a technique borrowed from the cartoons of late 19th and early 20th century. The curious fact is that this technique has already become outdated in 1930s, and yet, in war-related cartoons, this rather redundant symbolic

> form of representation was employed. As Alsac notes, this period witnessed the development of a whole array of war-related symbols such as the Roman soldier (symbolizing war), the olive branch, or the white dove (symbolizing peace), the bear (symbolizing Russia), Uncle Sam (symbolizing the U.S.A.), or the fat cigar-smoking statesman in overcoat (symbolizing Britain). These symbols became the standard narrative tools in war-related cartoons (Alsac, 1994: 27).[98]

Thus, political cartoons seem to become more "old-fashioned" and less sophisticated perhaps, during times of war, and the symbolic language becomes increasingly explicit and stereotyped.

THE CEDAR TREE

One of the most frequently recurring symbols in the cartoons is undoubtedly the cedar tree. As national symbol of Lebanon it is rendered and manipulated in various ways by the cartoonists to effectively convey their messages. A scarred, but still standing cedar tree serves as metaphor for Lebanese resistance and pride. A cut cedar tree symbolizes destruction and human tragedy. A sapling of a cedar tree hints at a brighter future.

Baha Boukhari, *Al Ayyam*, 19 July

In Boukhari's "…and Lebanon remains" the cedar tree has the shape of the light in a kerosene lamp. Surrounded by pitch-black darkness, the cartoon becomes a powerful symbol for pride, resistance and hope.

[98] Akman, in Göçek 1998: 102-103

Amjad Rasmi, *Al Sharq Al Awsat*, 25 August

Rasmi replaces the cedar tree in the Lebanese flag with a piece of luggage, and by doing so touches upon the refugee problem caused by the war. The displacement of 700 000-915 000 people in Lebanon included both Lebanese citizens and those who already were refugees and had to flee once again from their refugee camps.

Emad Hajjaj, *Al Quds Al Arabi*, 25 July

An olive tree (*zaytūn*), a palm tree (*nakhl*) and a cedar tree (*arz*) grow out of the head of an Arab. The trees should be the symbols of Palestine, Iraq and Lebanon. Judging by his clothes, the man is from the Arabian Peninsula somewhere. His headgear is decorated with the Star of David, and he lowers his head in shame. The interpretation then becomes that the oil kingdoms of the peninsula, potential rescuers of their Arab brothers, have sold out to Israel and now have yet another abandoned Arab country on their consciousness.

Fahd Al-Khamisi, *Al Iqtisadiya* (Saudi Arabia), 25 July

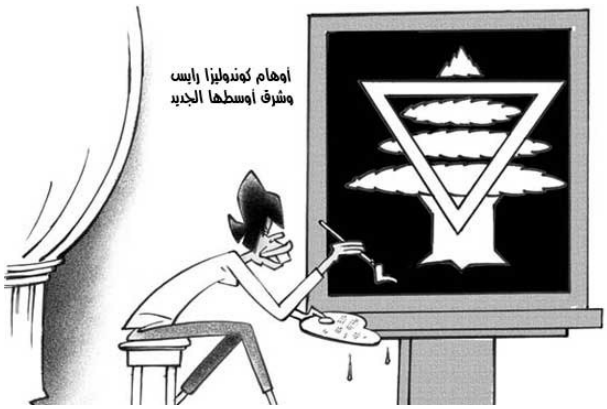
There is both tragedy and hope in Khamisi's reproduction of the Lebanese flag. The tree has been cut, a testimony to the destruction done to Lebanese lands and its people. At the same time, a new sprout has already started to grow, indicating that there might be light at the end of the tunnel.

THE STAR OF DAVID

Next to the cedar tree, the most frequently utilized symbol of the cartoons is the Star of David. Those drawings that have the Star or the Tree as its main theme tend to use a minimum of text. Minor changes, manipulations or combinations of these easily recognizable symbols are usually sufficient to communicate strong messages to the readers.

Emad Hajjaj, *Al Quds Al Arabi*, 31 July

The Star of David becomes the symbol of death. Commenting the *Qana* incident 30 July, Hajjaj transforms the Israeli flag into a pirate flag, smeared by the blood of the victims. An English version of this cartoon has "State Terrorism" written above the skull. In another Hajjaj cartoon from 19 July, the Star is merged with the swastika of the Nazi flag. Comparing Israel to Nazi Germany seems to be a recurring feature of Arab cartooning.



Hamed Atta, *Al Khaleej* (UAE), 6 August

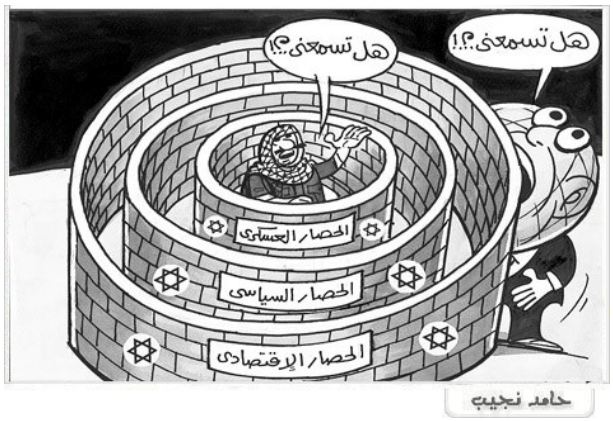
In "The delusive imagination of Condoleezza Rice and her new Middle East", Atta has the American Secretary of State painting an extra triangle onto the Tree, thus turning it into the Star, a metaphor for Israel subjugating Lebanon (with the help of the U.S.).

EARTH

Our globe, personified not as Mother Earth but as a man, is a familiar character in political cartoons. Earth has a tendency to show up when things look bad. Usually he is depressed or in agony over all the trouble he has to put up with. Using the symbol of Earth is perhaps a way of showing solidarity with the victims of war, or just an expression for the hopelessness felt worldwide about the never ending wars and conflicts.

Amjad Rasmi, *Al Sharq Al Awsat*, 2 August

The result of extended Israeli military operations will be an increase in the destruction of Earth. Except for the loss of human lives, Lebanon was seriously damaged environmentally during the war.



Hamid Najeeb, *Al Ittihad*, 2 Agust

In a cartoon by Najeeb, reminiscent of a claustrophobic Kafka novel, Earth and Arab can no longer hear each other because the latter is trapped inside the walls of the Israeli military blockade, political blockade and economic blockade.

Amjad Rasmi, *Al Sharq Al Awsat*, 9 August

For a while it seemed like Israel would not stop its bombardment of Lebanon until there was nothing left, and many were deeply frustrated over the likewise seemingly never ending discussions of the UN about what to do. Meanwhile the chaos in Iraq and Gaza continued. Here, Rasmi voices this frustration by drawing Earth on his knees, tied behind his back, unable to reach out a helping hand to Iraq, Lebanon and Palestine in their distressed situation.

Daryl Cagle, *msnbc.com* (USA), 14 July

Earth is not only used by Arab cartoonists, as he is perhaps the most recognizable symbol internationally. Here we see him in a Daryl Cagle drawing, together with Nasrallah, an anonymous Hamas member and Olmert tormenting poor Earth by doing the old "nails-on-blackboard" trick.

IDIOMATIC EXPRESSIONS

The expression *mā' al-wajh* (water of the face) is a recurrent idiomatic expression in the cartoons. It means *honor, decency, modesty* or *self-respect* according to Hans Wehr.[99] The cartoonists often use it to display the lack of it in their enemies.

Amjad Rasmi, *Al Sharq Al Awsat*, 14 August

Rasmis's use of the expression suggests that the main thing Israeli bullets has achieved is the draining of the water of America's face, i.e. America has lost its honor and credibility as peace maker in the Middle East due to its support of Israeli actions.

[99] Wehr 1980: 932

Jihad Awartany, *Al Dustour*, 16 August

In Awartany's view, the real content of the Security Council's Resolution 1701 is "the water of Israel's face". The water has washed away the ink, the text of the document, and the frail container, the paper, might give way to the mix of ink and water any second, leaving nothing but empty lines. The cartoon, therefore, is supposed to be read ironically, i.e. the UN resolution is based on Israeli promises, and since Israelis have no honor, the resolution is worthless.

3.6 WOMEN AND CHILDREN

> War and international crises incorporate repetitious stereotypes when women appear on television; they are victims, martyrs, mothers, or national symbols, such as the Statue of Liberty for America or Marianne for France.[100]

The same could be said about cartoons. Najil-Ali's cartoons, for instance, frequently feature a veiled woman called Fatima, who matches perfectly the above description. Rarely the active agent, she is cast as a weeping mother, a victim, a symbol of Arab lands in general and Palestinian lands in particular etc.[101] This stereotype utilization of women is found in contemporary cartoons too:

[100] Slyomovics 2001: 87
[101] See *http://najialali.hanaa.net/naji_fatma.html*

Emad Hajjaj, *unpublished*, 8 Mars 2003

This bizarre Hajjaj cartoon was apparently a bit too daring, since it bears the *ghayr manshūr/unpublished* stamp in the upper left corner. It is an allegory on the U.S. invasion of Iraq. A devilish looking American soldier is about to rape a woman lying on a table in public. She is dressed in black and "Baghdad" is written in her hair. The interesting thing about the cartoon is the reactions of the surrounding Arab men. One of them weeps as he is forced to hold her down against his will, thereby assisting the soldier. The others are shocked and dismayed to varying degrees, or indifferent, as they wave to the soldier, record the rape on film, or take notes of it or sing about it. A couple of them even seem to be accusing the helpless woman. The passivity of the Arab men should be seen as a metaphor for the inability or unwillingness of the Arab states to assist Iraq in its misery.


Nasser Al-Ja'fari, *Al Quds* (Jerusalem), 5 August

Al- Ja'fari's cartoon is yet another comment to the Arab countries' failing to intervene in the crisis of sister states. War torn Lebanon is typically visualized as a wounded woman. She is all alone, left to die in the barren desert. The heavy rock on her back pressing her down against the ground has the inscription "silence of the Arabs". Where she desperately scratches in the sand for water, flowers grow, perhaps symbolizing innocence.

Stavro Jabra, *Majallat Al Dabour* (Lebanon), 21 July

As always, women are used to denote loose morals. As the girl in purple underwear asks: "Aren't you afraid of these military operations?", the girl in the front replies: "What should I be afraid of? I'll have more operations to perform…" It seems like Jabra is ridiculing the presumed superficiality and ignorance of the Lebanese upper class. The girls obviously do not feel alarmed about what is going on in their country, or they simply do not care, as the cartoonist insinuates that they are prostitutes who will benefit from the presence of the Israeli forces.

Altogether there are not that many women in the cartoons of the Lebanon war. The drawings above and the Bint Jbeil cartoons are rather exceptions than representative examples (of my limited collection). There is however a frequent presence of children in these cartoons. Children in the media often have similar functions as the women (save the sexual connotations). One of the most disturbing memories from the war, for me at least, was seeing the bodies of children, being dragged out from underneath the rubble of collapsed buildings. The tragedy that got the widest exposure in the media was the *Qana* incident 30 July.

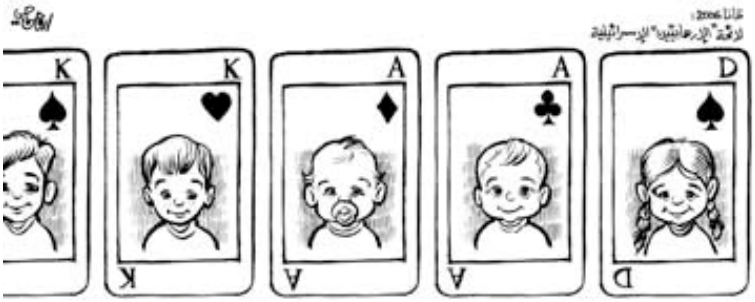
Hamed Atta, *Al Khaleej* (UAE), 31 July

"The Qana Massacre 2 and the American support of Israel", according to Atta. The sarcastic text resembles the title of a sequel to an American action film, the first Qana Massacre being the 1996 IDF bombing of the town, an incident that killed over a hundred civilians. In both cases, the IDF claimed it was acting to stop repeated rocket attacks by Hezbollah. Qana's strategic location at the confluence of five major roadways on the northern edge of Hezbollah-controlled southern Lebanon may have contributed to it repeatedly being caught in the crossfire.[102] In the cartoon, the blood of the children of Qana forms the American flag, with stars of David, instead of the usual ones. Note the brackets in "Israel", suggesting that Atta does not acknowledge the state of Israel.

Muhammad Sebaaneh, *Al Hayat Al Jadidah* (Ramallah), 30 July

Sebaaneh too uses the film metaphor. Superimposed on a blurred still from the recognizable television footage of the incident (a man carrying the body of a child), we find a clapperboard with the text "Qana 2, American directing, Israeli acting, of a very Arabic scene".

[102] *http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2006_Qana_airstrike*



Unknown cartoonist, *Al Nahar* (Lebanon), 31 July

The text in the upper right corner reads *Qana 2006: the Israeli "Terrorist" Program*. This is a cynic comment on the American commercialization of war since the 1991 Gulf War. Merchandise, such as yellow ribbons and racist T-shirts was sold in large quantities in the U.S. back then.[103] Among this merchandise was a deck of playing cards complete with pictures of the most wanted men in Iraq. During the U.S.-led "War on terrorism" there was a revised terrorist edition of the deck of cards with Osama Bin Laden, Saddam Hussein and others wanted by America. According to the cartoonist, Israel's deck of terrorist cards must have had the faces of Lebanese children, since they were the ones targeted and killed in the Lebanon war.

Emad Hajjaj, *Al Quds Al Arabi*, 11 August

The setting of a Roman theatre, representing the UN Security Council, is described as "Israel's Security Council" by Hajjaj. President Bush (cast as Caesar) gives Olmert (cast as gladiator) the thumb down, thus green lighting the Israeli Prime Minister to deliver his final blow to the child who has got "the children of Lebanon" written on her back. Comparing the USA to the Roman Empire is not unusual in Arab as well as Western cartoons.

[103] See Kellner, Douglas, *Media Culture: Cultural Studies, Identity and Politics Between the Modern and the Postmodern*, Routledge 1995/2001: 214-222

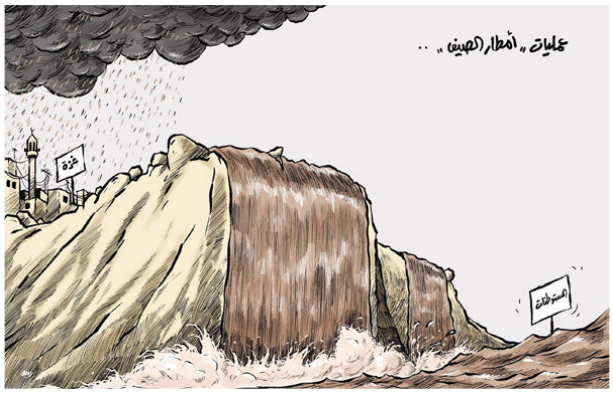
Daryl Cagle, *msnbc.com*, 6 August

We have seen how the Arab cartoonists focused on the carnage and Israeli/American guilt in the case of Qana. An American cartoon by Daryl Cagle shows a different account of the same event, as he supports the view that Hezbollah were the ones to blame for using innocent civilians as shields against Israeli strategic bombing. Cagle has drawn a suicide bomber, perhaps reminiscent of Nasrallah, with babies instead of dynamite tied around his body. Cagle's depiction of Arabs sometimes bears an eerie resemblance to the anti-Semitic cartoons of the 1930s, the major difference being that you do not see anti-Semitic drawings in the West these days.

3.7 OPERATION X

Wars are full of slogans and catchy names for various military operations. Especially the Americans are skilled in this field. *D-day, Operation Rolling Thunder* and *Desert Storm* are but a few U.S. military campaigns that have become famous. During the Hezbollah-Israeli conflict, the U.S. launched their grand vision of the future for the region, the policy called *The New Middle East*, something that cynical cartoonists were quick to pick up on. Prior to the Lebanese war, Israel nicknamed their military operation in Gaza *Operation Summer Rains*. This too was too good for the cartoonists to ignore, and they continued to refer sarcastically to the name during the Lebanon offensive.

SUMMER RAINS
(*Amṭār Aṣ-Ṣayf*)



Amjad Rasmi, *Al Sharq Al Awsat*, 8 July

Rasmi predicts that the "summer rains" in the strip will spill over and flood the settlements (*al-mustawṭanāt*). In other words, Israeli aggression will eventually strike back at them. Perhaps his prediction was right considering Hezbollah's launch of intensive rocket attacks against Israel a few weeks later.

Ala' Al-Luqta, *Al Madina*, 8 July

The response to the Israeli Summer Rains, "The Arab Summer Rains", consisted of so much talk (and implicitly so little action), according to cartoonist al-Luqta, that the Gaza citizen needed an umbrella to cover himself from all the saliva.

Nasser Al-Jaʿfari, *Al Quds*, 29 July

In Al-Jaʿfari's cartoon the summer rains hit hard grounds as tanks and helicopters crash against the Lebanese soil (the flag). In spite of heavy rain and bloodshed, the cedar tree refuses to be erased, a metaphorical tribute to the strength and endurance of the Lebanese people.

ISRAEL HAS THE RIGHT TO DEFEND ITSELF
(*lī-ʿIsrāʾīl al-ḥaqq fī-ddifāʿī ʿan nafsihā*)

Jalal Ar-Rifaʿy, *Al Dustour*, 24 July

The frequent U.S. statement that "Israel has the right to defend itself" was a favorite target of ridicule for the cartoonists. Here, the phrase is being repeated monotonously by a parrot sitting on the shoulder of a politician, probably supposed to be President Bush. The man, silenced by a muzzle, sweeps the remnants of dead Arab children under an Israeli rug. On the camera is written ironically "The (Free) Arab Media".

Jalal Ar-Rifaʿy, *Al Dustour*, 29 July

Reacting to the Israeli bombing of the UN observer post, Rifaʿy drew this cartoon of Bush saying "Yes, by God, even if Israel bombs the White House, I will stand by her!!!!"

THE ARMY THAT WON'T BE DEFEATED
(*Al-jaysh alladhī lā yuqhar*)

"The army that won't be defeated" seems to be a phrase that the Arab cartoonists love to hate, since so many drawings have been made to contradict it.

Hamid Najeeb, *Al Ittihad*, 18 July

Only weapons can challenge this claim, according to Najeeb. A hand holding a gun shoots off the *lā*, changing the phrase into "the Army that *is* defeated".

Nasser Al-Ja'fari, *Al Quds*, 7 August

In Al-Ja'fari's cartoon, the Israeli soldier has not just been defeated, which was supposed to be impossible, but the soldier's blood is made of water, indicating that the army of Israel has also lost its honor.

Muhammad Sebaaneh, *Al Hayat Al Jadidah*, 16 August

Sebaaneh's mockery of the slogan is simultaneously directed at the broadcast media. What we see on the television screen might be only half the truth. Where the camera is filming we see the upper torso of a tough looking Israeli soldier and a squadron of bomb planes in the background. What is not revealed by the camera is that the soldier is actually mutilated, and that there are no more military planes outside the limelight. Maybe the barbed wire around the sun or moon is supposed to symbolize that illumination, as in knowledge, has been hijacked by military propaganda. The symbol accompanies the signature of all Sebaaneh cartoons.

THE NEW MIDDLE EAST
(*Ash-sharq al-awsaṭ al-jadīd*)

The launch of *The New Middle East* policy, i.e. the Bush administration's ambitious plan for the future of the region, caused an avalanche of sarcastic comments.

Jalal Ar-Rifaʿy, *Al Dustour*, 25 July

Condoleezza Rice is generally the ugliest rendered politician of all in Arab political cartoons. I guess this has to do with her being a (black) woman with a lot of power, which is probably seen as something intimidating in patriarchal Arab society. Ar-Rifaʿy is deeming the terms of "The New Middle East" unfair, by having Rice offering the Israeli soldier a large cudgel and the ordinary Arab a tiny carrot, in other words meaningless encouragement to the Arabs and more weapons to Israel. While the U.S. paid lip service to talks about sustainable peace in the Middle East, they were at the same time secretly delivering more weapons to Israel.[104]

Amjad Rasmi, *Al Sharq Al Awsat*, 27 July

[104] See *http://www.nytimes.com/2006/07/22/world/middleeast/22military.html?ex=1311220800&en=e256f1d8872a835d&ei=5088&partner=rssnyt&emc*

The New Middle East will not be any different from the old one, i.e. it will still be dominated by Israel facilitated by the USA. To illustrate this, Rasmi has drawn an Israeli soldier changing his old worn out shoes for new shiny ones of exactly the same model, with "The New Middle East" written inside the lid. On the floor is a shoehorn with the inscription "USA".

Khalil Abu Arafeh, *Al Quds*, 6 August

This is the result of the plan for a new middle east, according to cartoonist Abu Arafeh: Lebanon completely destroyed. On top of the pile of bodies and rubble, at the table, a new plan for a French-American resolution is being discussed.

3.8 LANGUAGE

One of the problems of writing about political cartoons as part of language studies is the cartoonists' tendency to avoid verbal language. This could be a remnant of the modernist approach to cartooning discussed in 2.3.1. In the modernist view, verbal language was regarded as a last means the cartoonists resorted to when their creativity with graphic elements failed:

> A perfect cartoon was the one that was able to express its "idea" purely through graphic representation. Verbal elements could, in the most compelling cases, be used as "crutches" to help convey the "idea", but such help in effect meant that the cartoon failed to conform to the ideal. An additional and perhaps equally crucial reason why verbality was unwelcome in the modernist cartoons was that it was considered to hinder "universality". Since some translation would be needed for a cartoon outside its original linguistic context, this was taken to mean a failure to convey the "idea" in a universal, graphic manner. The need for translation was seen as an imperfection in the art of cartooning.[105]

Traces of this modernist ideal can still be found in the Arab cartoons. Even though most of them include words, it is clear that there is prestige inherent in conveying the idea with as few words as possible. Indeed, some of the cartoons that made the strongest impact on me personally were the ones without words altogether.

[105] Akman, in Göcek 1998: 119-120

Generally speaking, however, there is more verbal language in the contemporary Arab cartoons than what the modernist ideal stipulates. Most likely this is not due to lack of graphic talent, but rather to a change of attitude. No doubt the cartoonists are still serious about their art and politically ambitious, but universality does not seem to be the main thing opted for today. Perhaps what we find instead is an instance of Harrison's "inflation in satire", i.e. the cartoons are meant for a particularly Arab readership. Or we could say that we see "regionality" instead of universality.

In any case, the language used in most cartoons is Standard Arabic (*fuṣḥā*). This is probably due to the fact that the majority of these cartoons were published in pan-Arabic newspapers with readers of various dialects. Most cartoonists opting for recognition in more than their own country of origin would avoid using colloquial Arabic (*ʾāmmīya*).

> To choose dialect … is to sacrifice a broader pan-Arab distribution for a potentially greater local popularity. Only one dialect is sufficiently well known in the region to have any pretensions to wider accessibility, and that is the dialect of Cairo, Egypt.[106]

The choice of *fuṣḥā* or *ʾāmmīya* might also depend on the type of cartoon. Emad Hajjaj, for instance, draws two basic types of cartoons, political cartoons and societal satirical cartoons. His political cartoons are all in *fuṣḥā* and are universalistic in the way that they keep to a minimum of text and often use graphic symbols easily recognizable to any reader. His societal satirical cartoons, the locally popular Abu Mahjoob series, are much more detailed, culture specific and uses much more text, all in Jordanian colloquial Arabic. Abu Mahjoob then is clearly targeted at a Jordanian readership, whereas Hajjaj's political cartoons are intended for Arab readers from various countries.[107]

A linguistic situation in which there is a large distance between the standard language and the vernacular has been referred to as *diglossia*.[108] The Arabic society could be said to represent such a linguistic situation. *ʾĀmmīya* is every Arab's mother tongue while *fuṣḥā* has to be learned in school. The two varieties exist at opposite sides of a continuum; most people do not use exclusively one variant or the other, but a mix between the two according to factors such as the occasion and the educational background of the speakers. *Fuṣḥā* is generally the prestigious language, indicating a certain status but also social distance, whereas *ʾāmmīya* generally equals low status but also intimacy. By alternating the two varieties of the language, it becomes possible for the cartoonist to create funny situations. For instance if a character in a cartoon is expected to use Standard Arabic but instead speaks colloquial Arabic, and vice versa.

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[106] Douglas and Malti-Douglas 1994: 4

[107] See *http://www.mahjoob.com* for a comparison of Hajjaj's styles of cartooning.

[108] See Versteegh, Kees, *The Arabic Language*, Edinburgh 1997/2001: 189-208, for a discussion on the meaning of this term.

Mustafa Hasin, *Akhbar Al Yawm* (Egypt), 18 July

The Standard Arabic narrative reads: "Blame to America for not intervening in the Lebanon crisis". What George W. Bush is saying, however, is undoubtedly Egyptian colloquial Arabic: "And why should I interfere as long as it's our gang destroying the world?!" The colloquial markers are several: the possessive marker *bitā'/bitaw'*[109], the interrogative *leh* instead of *limādha*, word order (the interrogative comes after the verb) and so on. What is interesting is that it is the President of America who uses this language. Normally in cartoons, official persons tend to use *fuṣḥā*, whereas ordinary people and sometimes soldiers use *'ammīya*. Maybe Bush's use of the colloquial could be seen as some kind of mockery of his Texas descent (insinuating he is a hillbilly or redneck), or his general laidback style of rhetoric. In any case, to ascribe *'ammīya* speech to a president must be seen as a derogatory or at least ridiculing measure on part of the cartoonist.

Hamid Najeeb, *Al Ittihad*, 29 August

[109] Ibid: 107, for possessive markers in Arabic dialects.

Najeeb's cartoon is yet another example of the narrative in standard language and colloquial language in the balloon. Uncle Sam investigates the Israeli use of cluster bombs during the war, and asks Olmert: "Could you let me know who the enemies of peace were who gave you this dangerous weapon?!" Once again, to have Uncle Sam speak *ʿāmmīya*, in contrast to the *fuṣḥā,* increases the silliness of the scene.

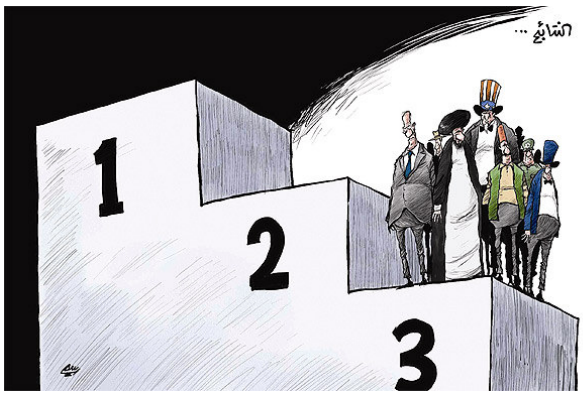
Salman Al-Malik, *Al Watan* (Qatar), 16 July

Al-Malik's cartoon contains many of the stereotypical components of Arab political cartooning: the Israeli soldier pictured as grotesque butcher (Gaza is on the hook, Lebanon is next), and the disgusted but passive on-looking Arab representing the Arab World. The language of the cartoon is an interesting mix of Standard Arabic and colloquial Arabic. This type of mix that is trying to sound classical but contains grammatical mistakes is sometimes referred to as Middle Arabic.[110]

3.9 THE OUTCOME OF THE WAR

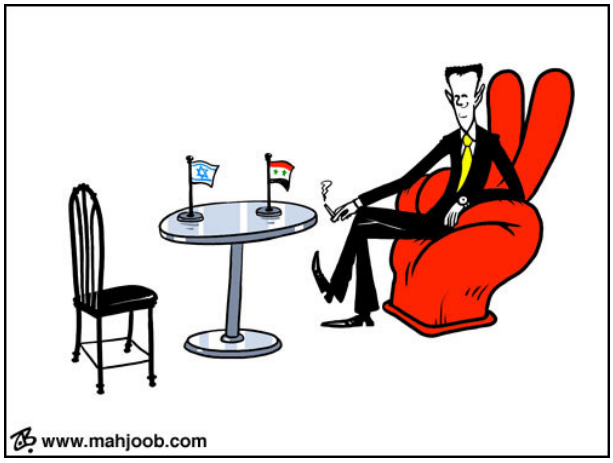
There seems to be a general consensus among cartoonists that the 2006 Lebanon war had no real winner, at least not among the main combatants, Hezbollah and Israel. Both sides posed as winner, but in the end none of them seemed to have gained much from the conflict. Hezbollah refused to be wiped out and Israel was never seriously threatened. After ceasefire, the Arab cartoonists did not seem to nurture any illusions that things would be different from there on. Ominous predictions were made that the conflicts of the region would continue and that there would be new wars. The Arab states were again blamed for abandoning their brothers, whereas the people exposed to the war were honored for their courage and endurance.

[110] Ibid: 114-129, for a discussion on "Middle Arabic".



Amjad Rasmi, *Al Sharq Al Awsat*, 15 August

In Rasmi's cartoon we see the crestfallen gathering of Olmert, Nasrallah, Uncle Sam, the Lebanese, the British and others sharing third place. The winner's stand was a common symbol used in the comments of the outcome of the war.



Emad Hajjaj, *Al Quds Al Arabi*, 24 August

Another example of the unusual measure of targeting an individual Arab leader: Hajjaj proclaims ironically the President of Syria, Bashar Al-Asad the real winner of the war. Here we see him sitting in his blood-red victory chair, waiting for Israel to join him at the table.

Muhammad Sebaaneh, *Al Hayat Al Jadidah*, 16 August

Sebaaneh summarizes the Arab support offered to Lebanon during the war. A man carries the scarred (but not destroyed) cedar tree looking for a good spot to replant it, a metaphor for a new start for the country. Arab support equaled no more than a tiny glass of water (not even half full), according to the artist.

Emad Hajjaj, *Al Quds Al Arabi*, 27 August

In "Warrior's rest", Hajjaj tells us that the peace achieved is an uneasy one. As the doves of peace fly by with the customary olive branches in their beaks, the soldier uses his branch to rinse his gun, preparing for the next battle.

Omayya Juha, *Al Hayat Al Jadidah*, 29 August

Omayya's cartoon is a tribute, not only to Palestinian and Lebanese resistance, as is written in the image, but also to Najil-Ali, whose character, Handala has remained a symbol of Arab endurance and resistance. In an earlier image from 31 July, found in the *aljazeerah* archive, an anonymous graffiti artist is seen spraying Handalas on a concrete wall, a symbolic assertion that resistance is still alive.

4. CONCLUSIONS

Out of Neuman's three requirements for satire, i.e. it should be A) mean, B) to the point and C) funny, it is clear that Arab political cartoons try to be the first two, whereas being funny, however, does not seem to be top priority. The mood of the Arab cartoons is often dark and fatalistic. The enemy is not ridiculed by being depicted as silly or incompetent, but rather as monstrous and evil. Is this perhaps a natural consequence of being in a war? Why being funny when Lebanon is being bombed to pieces and Arab brothers and sisters are killed at a daily basis? On the other hand, the USA ridiculed Germans and Japanese during World War II in films such as Charlie Chaplin's *The Dictator* and animated propaganda shorts by Warner Bros. and Disney. That type of political mockery was largely built on being funny. Indeed, American cartoons of the Lebanon war generally had a more humorous tone than the Arab drawings.[111] How then are we to explain the morose mood of the Arab cartoons?

In a conflict, maybe it is those with the upper hand who feel they can afford being funny, whereas those at the other end focus on the viciousness of their enemy and the tragic fate of their own people. Further, the U.S. was only indirectly involved in the Lebanon war, and it should be easier to joke about something when watching from a distance. Perhaps it is possible to trace the tone of satire to the frequency and extent of military setbacks? The American cartoons published in direct proximity to the 9/11 attacks, for instance, were drastically toned down compared to the usual jesting and ridiculing.[112] The Arabs have grown accustomed to such catastrophes, especially when it comes to armed conflicts with Israel, and so they seem to have adopted this permanent pessimistic approach in their satire. The conclusion then is that Arab cartoons do not attempt to be funny; instead they opt for being mean and to the point. If they succeed is up to the reader to decide.

What is the link between Arab political cartoons and Arab political humor, or is there any at all? The jokes and anecdotes of Kishtainy's collection generally have a jollier and lighter tone than the "seriousness" of Arab political cartoons and the humor of the two do not appear at first to be related. We need to remember that 1) political cartooning is an imported art form from Europe; and 2) the modernist cartoonists in their political ambitiousness sought universal truths rather than to produce escapist humor. In other words, the reasons why Arab political cartoons look the way they do should probably be sought in Europe and modernist cartooning rather than anywhere else. Middle Eastern cartoonists borrowed the art form from Europe, infused it with their own culture and political issues, and then developed it to something else. Even so, we might discern a few similarities between the contemporary Arab political cartoonists and the *ẓurafā', udabā'* and *shu'arā'* of the classical period. The *shu'arā'* used their art in tribal verbal warfare, just like the political cartoonists use their art in the propagandistic part of international warfare. The *ẓurafā'* loved to ridicule hypocrisy and the *udabā'* wanted to illuminate their readers by entertaining them:

[111] See *www.politicalcartoons.com* for a comparison.
[112] Ibid.

> To bring to light, to see through, to reveal, to expose, to unmask, to uncover; these are the keywords for the committed satirist. Let me illuminate you, he pleads, as some kind of preacher or prophet, so that you too will see what it is really like, who the real "villain" is.[113]

If we remember the recurring themes of Arab political humor, indeed, we see a lot of "stupidity of leaders" cartoons, but as have been said the focus is on the evil and viciousness of the enemy, rather than his foolishness and incompetence, and individual Arab leaders are rarely targeted. We saw dogs reappearing in the cartoons, even if done implicitly. I would have expected to see more donkeys, the other stereotypical animal of Arab humor, as well as classical characters such as Juha and Ashʿab, but these are distinguished by their absence. I did not discover a lot of play with the Arabic script in the cartoons, if any at all. There is some wordplay, and there might be more that I have not noticed due to my lack of fluency in Arabic.

We certainly do not see any sex or below-the-waist jokes in the cartoons, perhaps with the exception of a few insinuations. That kind of humor is probably impossible due to the graphic explicitness of the cartoon media. We saw the unpublished Hajjaj cartoon of an imminent public rape as an example of this. It is one thing to tell a sexual joke, it is another to draw one and publish it in a newspaper with a million readers. The absence of obscenity in Arab cartoons could perhaps be ascribed to tight press regulations, or it is just a matter of common decency. Sex and excrementalism is uncommon in western cartoons too. Finally, we do not see a lot of satire directly concerning censorship and the suppression of opinion, but perhaps we see them indirectly through for instance the usual absence of individual Arab political leaders. In accordance with Fandy's "anywhere but here" phenomenon, it is permissible to accuse anonymous Arab neighbors, the UN and the international community and as always the USA for passivity or various misdeeds, but not one's own President or King. The Rasmi cartoon of Prime Minister Al-Signora and the Hajjaj cartoon of President Asad are unusual in this respect. There are also a few gibes here and there directed at the broadcast media, reminiscent of Slyomovics's account of the cartoons of the 1991 Gulf War, suggesting that all media is biased one way or the other.

There is a remarkable Arab solidarity displayed in the cartoons, considering the hibernating state of pan-Arabism at the political level. It seems almost that there is a secret agreement among cartoonists that the Arabs are one people and that their governments are made up of corrupt fools and cowards. When Lebanon is attacked it is depicted as a blow to all Arabs, and references are immediately being made to Iraq, Palestine, previous wars etc. Lebanese resistance, Palestinian resistance and Hezbollah resistance are often fused into Arab resistance, as expressed by the cartoons. Scorn is directed at Arab neighbors for their inability or unwillingness to intervene. These neighbors are usually anonymous, but they are often cast in Gulf-style dress and head gear, indicating that they might be oil

[113] Neuman 2004: 12-13

sheikhs and men of power. However, we never see cartoons explicitly depicting the Saudi royal family, or any other influential family of the Gulf.

It seems like the regionalization of Arab broadcast media has its parallel in Arab political cartoons. Mockery is directed exclusively in one direction and appraisal exclusively in another. Arab readers are not likely to be upset as cartoonists blame the USA and Israel, or scorn the passivity and weakness of the UN and the Arab league, since they mirror generally accepted views in the region. Criticizing Hezbollah, Syria or Iran during the war, however, would have been more controversial. There were a few insinuations, but on the whole not much outspoken critique. The satire mostly stays at the general regional and international level, and rarely digs deeper into the interior. Therefore, Mellor's thesis on the news media could be applied to political cartoons, i.e. the factor that makes them popular, their ability to attract a regional audience, is the same that diminishes their political impact. Göçek's view of the political cartoon as an important social force with the potential to generate change is therefore questionable in the case of Arab cartoons. As long as they keep saying things their readers agree with, and remain at the regional and international level, they are at least not likely to generate change domestically.

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