

LITERATURE REVIEW: COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS
ON POLITICAL SATIRE BETWEEN EGYPT AND
PALESTINE

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Introduction

Political satire refers to satire that focuses on deriving entertainment from political situations. In many cases, it is used with disruptive intent in areas where the political authorities highly censor disapproval and political speech. Therefore, besides being a source of entertainment, political satire is used as a tool to advance political debates where such debates are expressly disallowed (Piet 2016, 303). This review focuses on analyzing the evolution and growth of political satire between Egypt and Palestine, the impact of political satire on both nations and their censorship of political satire in both nations. Such review will highlight the role of satire in advancing political courses, and how satire has grown to become an important tool in advancing political debates. It will also help evaluate how satire is likely to continue influencing political discourses in the future. Political satire takes the form of poetry, cartoons, caricatures, and shows. Over the years, satire has been used to criticize political decisions as well as gain political change (Hasan, p. 1). The power of political satire was witnessed across Arab nations when revolutions rocked the region, from Egypt to Libya and Palestine. This review evaluates academic journals, scholarly articles and books that explain the history and growth of political satire on both Egypt and Palestine.

The Evolution of Political Satire in Palestine and Egypt

According to Hijjawi (1968, 4), Palestinian literature and use of political satire existed long before 1948. Hijjawi highlights that Palestinian literature flourished before the fall of Palestine to Zionists in 1948. Its literature and use of political satire had been influenced by writers from Egypt, Lebanon, and Syria. However, after the occupation of Palestine by Zionists, the Zionists tried to erase every trace of Palestinian culture and literature by imposing their oppressive

measures to prevent Palestinians from understanding their culture and literature (Taa 2013, 11).

After the invasion by Zionists, exiled Palestinians established a movement known as Literature of Exile, whose primary tool was poetry, and used it to advocate for political change. Due to the suppression of remnants in Palestine, poetry became the most appropriate tool to call for

resistance against the occupying Zionists since poetry is easy to spread through word of mouth and does not need publication. Among the popular Palestinian poems then were *The Impossible*

by Tawfiq Zayyad, *A Lover from Palestine* by Mahmoud Darwish, *The Exile* by Salem Jubran, and *A letter from a Bankrupt and a Letter from Prison* by Sameeh Al Qassem. The article by

Hijawi (1968, 3) is essential in learning the evolution of political satire in Palestine since it

highlights how political satire, especially the use of poetry, became a key component of the

country's literature and political tool. However, the article fails to highlight whether the literature

achieved its objectives then. Did the poetry succeed in rooting out the Zionists? *well,...*

~~The journal by Ibrahim and Eltantawy (2017, 2808) on Egypt's Jon Stewart: Humorous Political~~

~~Satire and Serious Culture Jamming,~~ highlights the evolution of political satire in Egypt and how

it grew to trigger a revolution in 2011. Criticizing the political government has been part of the

Egyptian culture since the era of pharaohs. Despite the existence of oppressive rulers over the

years, Egyptians have always used political satire to point out weaknesses among its ruling class

since the 19th century. For instance, during ancient times, Egyptians relied on satirical

newspapers to pass political whisper, and these newspapers were read out loud in public places

and cafes. At the beginning of the 1920s, political satire was communicated through poetry,

magazines, and theatres. The origin of the use of political satire was the struggle for

independence as the Egyptians fought the British. For instance, the magazine *Rose-Al-Youssef*

was instrumental in the fight against British colonialism.

needs a bit of explanation.

oral tradition?

The Egyptian media has evolved during the 1990s and early 2000s with satellite television, opposition newspapers and the advancement on the internet being the channels of spreading political satire. Besides, Egypt has always had the tools and linguistic prowess to create humor and satire that is understandable to all regardless of their age or education (Fahmy 2011, 7). Despite the censorship under Hosni Mubarak's leadership, Egyptians' use of political satire continued to grow, and, in 2011, it urged a revolution. Currently, the use of political satire has been quickened due to the advancement of technology and social media tools such as Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube. I like this journal since it sequentially explains the evolution of political satire in Egypt, from pre-independence to the current period. Unlike the journal about the evolution of political satire in Palestine, this journal not only narrates its origin but also narrates its evolution to the present.

The Impact of Political Satire in Egypt and Palestine.

In Palestine, political satire has had profound effects on the political class, resulting in regime changes and in some cases, threatening to cause uprisings. A review of Sienkiewicz (2012, 108) journal brings out a clear picture of the impact that political satire has brought into the country.

Political satire is dreaded among the political class and always viewed with suspicion. The journal narrates a political satire program known as *Watan Ala Watar*, which began airing in 2009. The televised political satire did not last long, the government supported it at initial stages but later killed it for fear of triggering a political crisis. The government tried to hijack the program by purporting to support it, despite it being critical of the government. The government cold-heartedly supported the program to boost its image as a liberal democracy. It awarded recognition to the program organizers and also publicly acknowledged its significance in an

Ibrahim ...
article
Ibrahim & ... (2011)?

describes the impact

article

important point

attempt to show it was government-engineered. Besides, it tried to gain control of the program through these endorsements.

However, in the wake of the Arab revolutions in 2011, the Palestinian government feared that the program had a potential to fuel a political uprising and therefore banned it from airing on the national television. That was after the program made fun of embattled Muhammad Gaddafi. The rush by the government to control such a program, although it did not succeed, implies the political influence that satire has in the country (Khamis and Anagondahalli 2014). This journal brings out a clear understanding of the role of political satire in the Arabian region but does not explain what became of political satire in the country after the ban of *Watan Ala Watar*. *article*

In Egypt, political satire fueled an uprising in January 2011 despite the country's media suffering strict censorship by the government. According to Ibrahim and Eltantawy (2017, 2809), social media played a primary role in the 2011 uprising that toppled Hosni Mubarak from his thirty-year rule. Heart surgeon, Bassen^M Youssef, created satirical programs that criticize the government and uploaded them to YouTube channels. The sharing of these satirical programs fueled anger among people, motivating them to stage an eighteen-day revolution that toppled Mubarak from power. Therefore, it is clear that political satire has the power to cause immense change. Youssef's continuation of political satire continued to cause problems to subsequent presidents after Mubarak's ouster. Youssef continued to satirically criticize Morsi, and even the interim president Adii Mansour. Morsi was also toppled in a June 2013 uprising. In Egypt, political satire has been a driving force toward regime change (Khalidi, 2012). This journal is insightful and informative about the role of political satire in Egypt's regular regime changes. *which one?*

However, it erred in focusing too much on Youssef's show. The journal could have been better if it was well balanced by highlighting other political satires in the country. It is more of a

one-sided journal, which does not clearly explain the role of satire in the Egyptian political processes.

Censorship of Political Satire in Egypt and Palestine

According to ~~the International Journal of Communication~~ by Ibrahim and Eltantawi (2017, 2817), the political leadership in Egypt has always suppressed press freedom through harsh laws. That has always prevented the media and the public from openly discussing the shortcomings of the government. Censorship of the media and limitation of free speech means that political satire cannot be tolerated. The Egyptian media, like many others in the Arab region, has suffered censorship by the government by use of libel laws where journalists are easily charged and convicted for criticizing the government (Shakespeare, p 3). Egypt's state-owned media had always worked to legitimize Mubarak's autocratic leadership and those who rebelled in the media were either kidnapped, beaten, or disappeared. *Albernameg* show, which focused on political satire, was suspended on CBC and also MBC's signal was jammed while airing the show. Throughout history, Egyptian authorities have always censored political satire, and it is only in 2013 that Youssef managed to revive it. However, ^{Ibrahim & ...} the ~~above article~~ fails to give a clear picture of what political satire looks like in current Egypt after several instances of regime changes.

In Palestine, the situation is slightly different. According to ~~a communication journal~~ by Sienkiewicz (2012, 108), the Palestinian government has been publicly purporting free speech yet working behind the scenes to control the media. Its censorship of political satire and media freedom is illustrated by its efforts to control the popular and independent political satire program *Watan Ala Watar*, which premiered in 2009. Initially, the government approved the show and even supported it financially. However, despite the show being critical of the

government, the government supported it only to appear liberal. In February 2011, the government ended its support of the show after a string of revolutions in the Arab region. The show made a cartoon of Libyan dictator Muammar Gaddafi and the Palestinian government feared that the show would damage its foreign relations and also incite the Palestinian people. In 2011, the government ordered Palestinians to stop airing the program. ^{clearly indicating that} Therefore, the Palestinian government has control of the media and limits the free flow of political satire (Baym and Jeffrey 2013, 106). Through the *Watan Ala Watar* program, this journal paints a clear picture of how the Palestinian government censors the media and political satire. ^{how? (briefly)}

According to Jayasekera (2016), both Egypt and Palestine have heightened their censorship of the media and political satire after the 2010 Arab Spring revolutions. The reason for increased censorship of media and political satire is due to the significant role that these two elements played in igniting the Arab revolutions. According to ~~the International Journal of Press/Politics~~ by Wolfsfeld et al., (2013, 118), social media provided the connectivity among protesters and helped mobilize protests across the Arab region. Twitter and Facebook were the leading tools through which messages of discontent were shared to invite people to revolt. Since then, the governments in Palestine, Egypt and the Arab region generally, have increased their censorship of the media and political satire to prevent recurrence of similar events.

For instance, in the run-up to July's anniversary of the Egyptian revolution in 2016, the government aggressively suppressed all advocates of discontent in the country. That was informed by the fact that such events trigger protests as residents demand freedom of speech and respect for human rights. After the 2010 uprisings, both nations have used different justifications to reintroduce censorship to the press and political satire. Counter-terrorism and national security

laws have been used to justify the continued muzzling of the media and political satire (Freedman 2012, 87).

How Political Satire Became a Global Issue

The use of political satire to convey political messages and disagreement has been a common feature since time immemorial, from France to Britain and the Arab world. According to an academic paper by El Saied (2019, 2), the use of political satire in Egypt and the larger Middle East originated from France. The study highlights that cartoon drawings were sneaked into the Egyptian press in mimicry of the French occupation newspaper. ^{which one?} The first Egyptian newspaper, Al Waka'ie Al Misreya, adopted the use of satirical drawings from the French papers (Najjar 2007, 265). ^{El Saied} The academic journal highlights that many cartoons were copied from the European papers and reproduced in Egypt's satirical paper, Al Lata'ef Al Mosawara during World War I. Besides the 20th century, the use of political satire became global during the 2010 Arab uprising that brought regime changes in nations like Egypt and Morocco. Currently, the use of political satire has spread to nations globally, especially with the advancement of social media tools such as Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, among others. ???
Definitely needs to be reformulated

▶ The Evolution of Political Satire from Poetry to Cartoons and Shows

In both countries, political satire gradually evolved from the use of poetry, to cartoons and then television shows. In Palestine, poetry was the earliest form of political satire and its use became common in 1948, after the invasion of Palestine by the Zionists. Its poetry was regarded as literature of exile or resistance literature since it was used by the exiles to air their plight (Hijjawi 1968, 3). Among the popular poems ~~then were~~, *A Lover from Palestine* by Mahmoud Darwish, *The Impossible* by Tawfiq Zayyad, along with others (Hijjawi 1968, 9). In the 1960's, cartoons overtook poetry as the main tool of expressing political dissent. Cartoonist Naji al-Ali became

This chapter should be moved at the beginning

popular for his political cartoons that highlighted the plight of Palestinian refugees. The main character in his cartoons was known as Handala, and the cartoons highlighted how Palestinians evolved from refugees to revolutionaries. Al-Ali was shot on July 22, 1987 and passed on August 29, the same year, bringing an end to his cartoons (Najjar 2007, 258). Cartoons in Palestine continued to be a tool to express political dissent despite censorship by the government. Shows did not emerge in Palestine until 2009, when the famous *Watan Ala Watar* show premiered (Sienkiewicz 2012, 111). The show, though short-lived, opened the door for more satirical shows focusing on the political class. The show highlighted Israeli occupation and also excesses of the Palestine government. Despite the government supporting it initially, it ended up banning its broadcast under the fear that it would cause political revolutions.

In Egypt, the evolution is similar to Palestine. However, poetry was not a popular tool to express political satire like it was in Palestine. The earliest form of political satire in Egypt was the use of cartoons. According to El Saied (2019, 2), the use of cartoons in Egypt originated from the French, where cartoons were sneaked into Egyptian papers after they were copied from French papers. The use of cartoons to express political dissent in Egypt has continued even past the 2011 revolution. According to Guyer (2015, 164), he used cartoons to express the pain of citizens whose relatives die every year as they commemorate the 2011 revolution. Due to political censorship of the media in Egypt, satirical shows did not exist until 2011 when Bassem Youssef started a satirical show known as Al-Bernameg (The Show) on his YouTube channel. In a few months, the show became famous globally and opened the doors for more satirical shows (Ibrahim and Eltantawy 2017, 2807). Globalization influenced the emergence of shows in Egypt, earning Youssef the nickname "Egypt's Jon Stewart." An indication that globalization promoted emergence of shows in Egypt. Besides, the spread of the show globally, through his YouTube

channel, made it more popular. Hence globalization as well played a role in popularizing political shows in Egypt.

Conclusion

Political satire has been a major force in driving change among Arab nations, especially Palestine and Egypt. The impact of political satire in both nations has been similar though its impacts have been more severe in Egypt than Palestine. In Egypt, political satire by people like surgeon Bassem Youssef fueled the privileges of the January 2011 uprising that toppled president Mubarak from his thirty-year rule. In Palestine, satirical programs such as *Watan Ala Watar* were a major force through which citizens expressed their displeasure on the government. In Palestine, political satire was in use as early as the 20th century after its invasion by the Zionists. People used poems to express their displeasure. In Egypt and the larger Arab region, political satire originated from France since Egypt used to copy satirical drawings from the French newspapers. Governments in both countries have always censored political satire and media freedom since they fear their impact. The two nations have continued to tighten their media control since the 2010 uprisings in the region. Political satire among the two nations is similar to that of George Orwell in *Animal Farm* (1945) since they all highlight the excesses of the political class.

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