

The image of Donald Trump on the covers of two historic publications: *Time magazine* and *The New Yorker* (2015-2021)

La imagen de Donald Trump a través de las portadas de dos publicaciones históricas: Time y The New Yorker (2015-2021)



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Abstract:

A magazine cover is an essential component of any publication, serving as an attractive showcase that reflects the identity, content and character of the journal. The article at hand presents the results of an exhaustive investigation into the covers dedicated to Donald Trump by two iconic publications, *Time magazine* and *The New Yorker*, spanning the period from his first candidacy through his first term as President of the United States (June 2015 to January 2021). The relevance of the study lies in its objectives and in the methodology designed *ad hoc* in order to analyse the design and content of the 71 selected covers. The objectives are as follows: identify the style (design analysis) and the substance (content/discourse analysis); define the informative and persuasive role of these covers; and lastly, determine the construction of the figure of Donald Trump, identifying the main characteristics of the discourse in the photographs and illustrations, as well as the type of message they convey. The findings reveal an evolution of dominant themes, along with their connection to current affairs, the type of discourse reflected, and the ideological positioning of the leading covers in the research.

Keywords:

Time magazine; *The New Yorker*; Donald Trump; cover; graphic design.

Resumen:

La portada de una revista es un componente esencial en cualquier publicación, funcionando como un escaparate atractivo que refleja su identidad, contenido y carácter. Este artículo presenta los resultados de una exhaustiva investigación sobre las portadas dedicadas a Donald Trump por las icónicas publicaciones Time Magazine y The New Yorker, abarcando desde su precandidatura hasta su mandato como presidente de los Estados Unidos (junio de 2015 a enero de 2021). La relevancia del estudio radica en sus objetivos y en la metodología ad hoc diseñada para analizar el diseño y el contenido de las 71 portadas seleccionadas. Los objetivos son: identificar el estilo (análisis del diseño) y el fondo (análisis de contenido/discurso); establecer el papel informativo y persuasivo de estas portadas; y determinar la construcción de la figura de Trump, identificando las principales características del discurso en las fotografías e ilustraciones, así como el tipo de mensaje que transmiten. Los hallazgos revelan una evolución de los temas dominantes, su conexión con la actualidad, el discurso reflejado y el posicionamiento ideológico de las cabeceras protagonistas de la investigación.

Palabras clave:

Time magazine; *The New Yorker*; Donald Trump; portada; diseño gráfico.

1. Introduction

The cover of a magazine is an essential feature of any periodical, both from the point of view of its design, as well as the content selected to be displayed therein as a way of attracting attention, which is further developed on the inside pages. Thus, the cover is seen as an attractive showcase for the audience, which should display not only the main content, but the identity

and personality of the magazine as well, which encourages the reader to buy the periodical by selecting it from a wide range of offerings on the newsstand. Martín Aguado stated it clearly when he pointed out that the cover page is “the business card, shop window, and showcase from which it tries to attract the attention of the reader, offering them the best of its content” (Martín Aguado, 1992, p. 70). As Evans points out, the cover must express the potential, character, and inner content of the magazine, and it also has to encourage readers to buy it, open it and read it (Evans, 1985). Along these lines, Zappaterra states that the cover is “the first and most important part of any publication in which the brand image and values associated with it must be expressed” (Zappaterra, 2008, p. 29). White further points out that “this is a powerful lure that excites the curiosity and attention of the reader” (White, 2017, p. 186).

In both newspapers and magazines, the front page or cover is an important feature. Moreover, its design offers information, just like the text and images, yet it can also express an opinion, as it allows the reader to convey the medium’s attitude and position on the news. Therefore, the cover is a “first-level informative feature that joins together a set of independent and unrelated journalistic messages” (González Díez, 2014, p. 82).

Given the scenario, this article presents the results of an exhaustive investigation that explores the layout and content of the covers dedicated to Donald Trump by the long-standing American magazines *Time* and *The New Yorker*, starting from his pre-candidacy and continuing throughout his subsequent mandate as president of the United States; in other words, the time period under study runs from June 2015, at which time the Republican Party launched his presidential pre-candidacy, until January 2021, which marked the end of his term in office. In the opinion of the authors, the relevance of this research lies both in the objectives posed as well as the methodology that was designed *ad hoc* in order to carry out the content analysis of the selected sample, which is composed of a 71 units of analysis (34 covers of *Time* magazine and 37 from *The New Yorker*), in which Trump is the protagonist, either explicitly or implicitly.

As a starting point, the following research questions are posed:

- Q1. What moments in President Trump’s political career have been reflected? What are the dominant issues?
- Q2. What image of President Trump is conveyed by the magazine covers of the sample? Is the spotlight shared? In what terms do other personalities appear?
- Q3. What is the discourse that lies behind each cover selected? Do they have an informative, intentional/persuasive, or satirical purpose?

To answer these questions, the first objective was to identify the background (content/discourse analysis) of the selected covers in order to unravel the message they intended to convey. The second was to establish the informative and persuasive role of these covers from this analysis. Finally, the last aim was to determine the construction of the Trump figure through the covers of these magazines, identifying the key features of the discourse through the photographs and illustrations used.

1.1. A brief look at *Time*, *The New Yorker*, and the image of Trump

Time magazine is considered the most influential magazine worldwide (Angeletti & Oliva, 2011), as well as an icon of American journalism. Nowadays, this magazine is seen as a benchmark of traditional publications, which has managed to maintain its prestige in a world defined by immediacy and digitisation (Campos, 2023). Evidence of this is shown by the fact that in March of 2023, the magazine celebrated its centenary year with more than one million subscribers. The anniversary issue offered readers an editorial letter signed by the magazine's CEO, Jessica Sibley, and editor in chief, Edward Felsenthal, who noted that in addition to being the largest print news publication in the United States, the simple fact of celebrating 100 years with more than one million subscribers is a sign of perseverance and adaptation to change (Sibley & Felsenthal, 2023).

D. W. Pine, who is *Time* magazine's creative director, has played a key role in this new way of telling stories. Over the past 25 years, he has designed more than 800 covers for the magazine, 34 of which have featured Donald Trump, although the latter has never been chosen "Person of the Year", nor is Trump the US president who has been featured most often on the cover of *Time*. Nixon holds the record with a total of 55 appearances.

The New Yorker is a leading US weekly magazine that includes reporting, reviews, poetry, and fiction, and is famous for its illustrated covers, created by numerous authors, where humour merges with satire and irony to produce displays that can be considered true works of art. Since its founding in 1925, it has remained at the forefront of public interest, with great influence not only in journalism but in literature as well. For many observers, much of its charm lies in a shrewd combination of graphic and written materials (Barrera-Agarwal, 2008).

Along with other media outlets, these magazines have used visuals in various ways, including sketches and cartoons, in order to depict Donald Trump's career since he announced his presidential nomination. Several covers of *Time* magazine and *The New Yorker*, which have featured either the president or issues regarding his presidency, have drawn national and international media scrutiny and debate (Amara, 2018; Cillizza, 2018; Ellis-Petersen, 2018; Kludt, 2018; May, 2018; Sampathkumar, 2018). In addition, these covers have been widely shared on the magazines' own social networks, where they have potentially been seen by millions of people, even those who are not subscribers to these two magazines.

It is precisely in the area of political satire where several of *The New Yorker's* historic illustrations are considered some of the most brilliant in visual communication. In recent years, its political context is clear: the magazine has never hidden its ideology related to war, nor its stance on civil liberties. As a result of such opposition, several exceptional covers have emerged along with the publication of brilliant research articles, (Barrera-Agarwal, 2008).

Photographs and illustrations are tools for visually representing issues of social significance. Moreover, in some ways photographs function in a broad sense as illustrations, since photo images create meaning through the use of filters, framing, lighting, colour, and strategic juxtaposition of images using computer programmes. Nevertheless, photographs and illustrations are stylistically different. Photographs reflect the physical reality in front of the camera lens, whereas illustrations are not subject to physical limitations of the world. Instead, they reflect a reality created by the illustrators themselves (Paul & Perreault, 2020).

One could say that illustration is a great way to communicate a concept, something that photography cannot always do. Many artists have been inspired by the Trump administration, as his personality offers the opportunity to engage in caricature on

a daily basis and create material that draws on sarcasm and irony. Regarding this point, the aim of the professional artist is to find a connection between the various components upon which they draw, so that by combining them in a certain way they make the cover visually attractive and exaggerate the issue that is intended to be criticised, ridiculed, or presented in the image. In the words of illustrator André Carrilho, when satire writes itself, it is not difficult to understand why it becomes a tool to fight against abuse. In this regard, images that are quickly understood and convey an opinion that can be easily adopted and shared are a valuable commodity (Nevins, 2017).

Returning to the figure of Donald Trump, it is undeniable that his first election victory has been addressed by international analysts and narrated by various types of media companies. These news outlets have shaped opinion to the point of transforming his unexpected success (according to the predictions made during the election period) into an important historical event that must be reported and interpreted, due to the fact that “any social fact that is discursive due to its relevance gains visibility in the media, thus becoming part of the social memory, and can be considered an historical event” (Tfouni & Grigoletto, 2020).

Trump presents himself as an outsider capable of solving America’s problems, insisting on the idea that he is not an ordinary politician, but someone who acts independently of all established economic and political powers, as he financed his own electoral campaign. As such, he displays himself as an anti-establishment personality who has nothing to do with the bureaucrats in Washington, nor with the rest of the establishment (Mena, 2018, p. 48). This is why his main enemy has always been the press, apart from his political opponents, as the former has been in charge of reporting his controversial statements.

It is likely that drawings related to the figure of this conservative candidate and the significance of his election for politics, economics and world relations have swollen the bank accounts of many illustrators. One of these artists is Edel Rodriguez, who had the honour of signing two of *Time* magazine’s most unforgettable covers, each featuring the candidate’s melting face at two key moments, before and after the 2016 election. At this point, Trump’s hair should be mentioned, as it has become a fundamental and iconic feature of cover designs. Rodriguez himself states that he does not use a specific tool to illustrate the hair. Instead, he simply draws a portrait that looks like the ex-president in a situation that reflects his character. He also considers that his hair is always a challenge because it has a twist, along with a strange shape and colour, which makes it unique (Hilton, 2018).

With a conceptual and formal approach taken by the authors of this study toward the illustrated covers regarding the former US president, the aim is to probe, interpret, and understand the projected image of the businessman-turned-politician who represents the new right, as well as his values, ideology, and intentions. Thus, once the positions and arguments have been clarified, it is possible to denounce or use irony through the covers of the two publications, which in most cases are brought to life through a filter of disapproval of the facts presented in each periodical. In this process of image construction and identification, the magazines produce a discourse that seeks to challenge the hearts and minds of readers, placing them in a specific position, which is that of identifying with the position they defend. By defining themselves as taking the moral high ground, the covers offer the reader a positive image of the magazines themselves, and a negative view of Trump. Thus, the expectation is for readers to position themselves on the side of the magazines and against Trump (Tfouni & Grigoletto, 2020).

1.2. A brief note on political communication and the media

As an initial approach, political communication can be defined as a field that encompasses the interaction between political actors, the media, and the public. This field of study is concerned with the transmission and reception of political messages and how they influence public opinion and voter behaviour. According to Salomé Berrocal, political communication is the process by which political actors use the media to influence public opinion and electoral behaviour in order to achieve their political objectives (Berrocal, 2001). María José Canel uses similar terms when she describes it as a set of techniques and strategies used by political actors to influence public opinion and electoral behaviour through media outlets (Canel, 2006), which are becoming increasingly important in the field of politics. In fact, as Fernández Obregón points out, “the media are replacing political parties and becoming the creators of messages” (2015, p. 284). According to this author, it is the media themselves who “set the agenda, and the political parties are forced to follow in their wake. Consequently, traditional party activity is being devoured by the media for the latter’s own benefit. Rallies, propaganda, and conventional proselytising are now only part of a rapidly declining liturgy” (Fernández Obregón, 2015, p. 284).

Donofrío and Rubio-Moragas go one step further, stating that the media are the ones who influence the vote, and are “also the ones in charge of distracting citizens and constructing a fictitious reality, in which democracy ends up being identified with *televoting*” (Donofrío & Rubio-Moragas, 2019, p. 115). Krugman goes even further when he asserts that these media represent “weapons of mass distraction” (Krugman, 2007, p. 193).

More specifically, Donofrío and Rubio-Moragas are the scholars who have highlighted an issue that is clearly related to the present article: along with the mediatisation of politics that is currently prevalent, an additional phenomenon is also occurring, which is the growing prominence of the image in the media. For these authors, “image prevails over content: it is not so important what is said, but how it is said” (Donofrío & Rubio-Moragas, 2019, p. 115). Furthermore, this is where magazine covers play an essential role in constructing the image of politicians, because as Castells points out, “power and politics are decided in the process of constructing the human mind through communication”. In today’s society, the mass media are decisive in shaping public opinion which, in turn, influences political decisions (Castells, 2008, p. 1). For this reason, media outlets play a key role in the process by acting as intermediaries between politicians and the public. Through the media, political messages are disseminated and magnified, thereby reaching a massive audience.

In this context, magazine covers are a powerful tool for constructing any politician’s image, as they not only capture the reader’s attention, but they also convey visual and symbolic messages that can influence the public’s perception of a politician. They also increase politicians’ visibility, making their image easily recognizable to the audience. By repeatedly placing a politician’s image on magazine covers, their presence is reinforced in the minds of voters. The covers can reflect the figure’s ideological position and highlight their values and proposals. This helps voters identify and associate the candidate with certain ideas and principles.

In addition, the images on the covers can evoke emotions and feelings in readers, which can influence their perception of the person depicted. The covers tell a visual story about the individual by using elements such as photography, graphic design, and headlines. This visual narrative can either reinforce the image of the politician as a strong, charismatic, and trustworthy leader, or detract from it by portraying them as weak, incompetent, and manipulative.

2. Methodology and sample

The study at hand involves longitudinal research with a predominantly qualitative approach, complemented by basic numerical data that serve to contextualise and support certain observations. This paper analyses the covers of the US magazines *Time* and *The New Yorker*, which featured Donald Trump between June 2015, when the Republican Party launched his presidential candidacy, and January 2021, which marked the end of his term in office. The methodology focuses on analysing the visual and textual components of the covers, in order to identify the features that influence the construction of the discourse and the message conveyed.

Firstly, the sample was selected. It consisted of covers featuring the US politician in the aforementioned period, both in the centenary magazine *Time* and in the weekly magazine *The New Yorker*, which also celebrated its 100-year anniversary in 2025. To locate the covers, the digital archive of each publication was consulted. Moreover, the search was based on an observational analysis of all the issues published between June 2015 and January 2021. As a total of 34 covers were found in *Time* magazine and 37 in *The New Yorker*, the final sample consisted of 71 units. Excluded from the selection were covers in which Trump's name appears in some way, an example of which is a headline, yet the underlying theme is far different from Trump himself.

Secondly, once the covers had been compiled, a content analysis was carried out for each of them. For this purpose, an ad hoc coding sheet was designed, composed of 20 variables. The first block includes information related to the identification of each issue analysed: case number (V1), name of the journal (V2), date of publication (V3), and the cover illustrator (V4).

With the next two variables, the image was addressed. V5 classifies the image by type, in which the categories considered are as follows: illustration, photography, photomontage, and the infographics or typography used with iconic value.

V6 identifies the typology of the cover using three categories: realistic, abstract, or typographic. The covers are considered realistic if they feature a face or figure with human characteristics. This is one of the most common categories, and it is possible to increase interest by changing the facial expression, an example of which is changing a smile to anger, fear, or excitement. The degree of expression of these feelings depends on the level of collaboration with the reader. Wit and humour are strong enticements, and if a moving figure is also depicted, it invites the reader to join in the fun (Caldwell & Zapatero, 2014). Abstract covers are conceptual, using illustrations, photographs and photomontages that try to communicate complex concepts quickly and directly. Their success is difficult to achieve, and there is a danger that they might not convey their intended message. These are mostly found in the specialised press or newspaper inserts that can afford the luxury of having hardly any headlines. This approach can result in a cover that is more original (Caldwell & Zapatero, 2014). Abstract covers are less common and depend on their sales in small shops. Designers have more freedom to decide how these are created. They can be found in thematic magazines, inserts, and subscription publications. Sometimes it is possible to find abstract covers in photography magazines or publications that specialise in design. The final category is typographic covers, which are based on text, yet they are rare in contemporary periodicals.

Variable V7 involves a thematic classification of the covers based on the period to which they belong, including the first electoral campaign, election as president, term in office, second electoral campaign, and the end of his term in office. The variable V8 registers the most recurring themes during Donald Trump's mandate, including social rights, impeachment, war,

health, international affairs, and whether Trump is mentioned simply because of his position as an important figure, or for another more specific reason.

The next set of variables, V9 through V13, collects information regarding the main figure on the cover and other possible concomitant personalities. The aim is to determine whether Trump appears alone or is accompanied by other figures, either political or otherwise. Variable V9 registers the number of individuals present on the cover. V10 identifies the main figure, with sub-variables detailing information about the individual, such as gender, type of character (real, fictional, or irrelevant), profession, and other pertinent data for identification. V11 is an open-ended variable in which the name of the secondary character, if applicable, is provided. V12 determines whether other relevant characters are present, and V13 analyses whether it is possible to identify any object or figure that assumes a prominent role.

The next group, from V14 through V19, analyses the portrayal of Trump through the implicit message conveyed by the image on the cover. The aim is to determine the depiction of the character and the relationship between the narrative context and current events. The goal is to identify whether the figure of Trump is presented explicitly or implicitly, and to examine the features that emerge from his portrayal and those that accompany him. In short, it is a question of assessing whether the construction of the protagonist is positive, negative, or neutral.

To this end, the purpose of the cover is identified in V14, defining the following categories: opinionated, which implies an editorial approach with possible satirical components, or a space for the expression of ideas; informative, which relates an event in an objective manner and offers social vigilance; and interpretative, which narrates a current event, yet offers an interpretation or fulfils a clarifying role. This classification follows the methodology proposed by Melo & Assis (2016).

V15 analyses the approach taken in dealing with the main issue on the cover, classifying it as a literal or conceptual tactic, where appropriate.

Variable 16 seeks to identify, insofar as the data allow, the way in which readers receive the content from the front cover, in an attempt to approach the construction of its social discourse. By using the categories established by Gómez-García, et al. (2019), the aim is to determine whether the cover caters to certain interests, such as the following: informative (provides information about Trump's activities in his political career); intentional/persuasive (seeks to offer an assessment of the political leader); testimonial/escapist (includes speeches not linked to reality that propose an unreal or merely viral construction; and satirical (highlights emotional features with the aim of introducing irony)¹.

V17 assesses the rating that the cover as a whole gives to Trump, offering the category options of positive, negative, or neutral. Along the same lines, V18 analyses the terms in which other figures are presented, but in relation to Trump, in this case; in other words, whether they are presented as allies, adversaries, or in a neutral way.

1 In the taxonomy proposed by the aforementioned article, the present paper includes a fifth category known as "circumstantial". However, it has not been included in this research due to the fact that it was not represented in the sample.

While providing data of only slight relevance to the sample, V19 records whether other topics are displayed on the cover. Moreover, this variable determines whether these themes are related to the main topic and Trump, are independent, or if there are other topics that are not addressed.

Finally, V20 is devoted to observation. This is a free-text variable that allows for the gathering of any details of interest that are not addressed by the variables previously mentioned and defined.

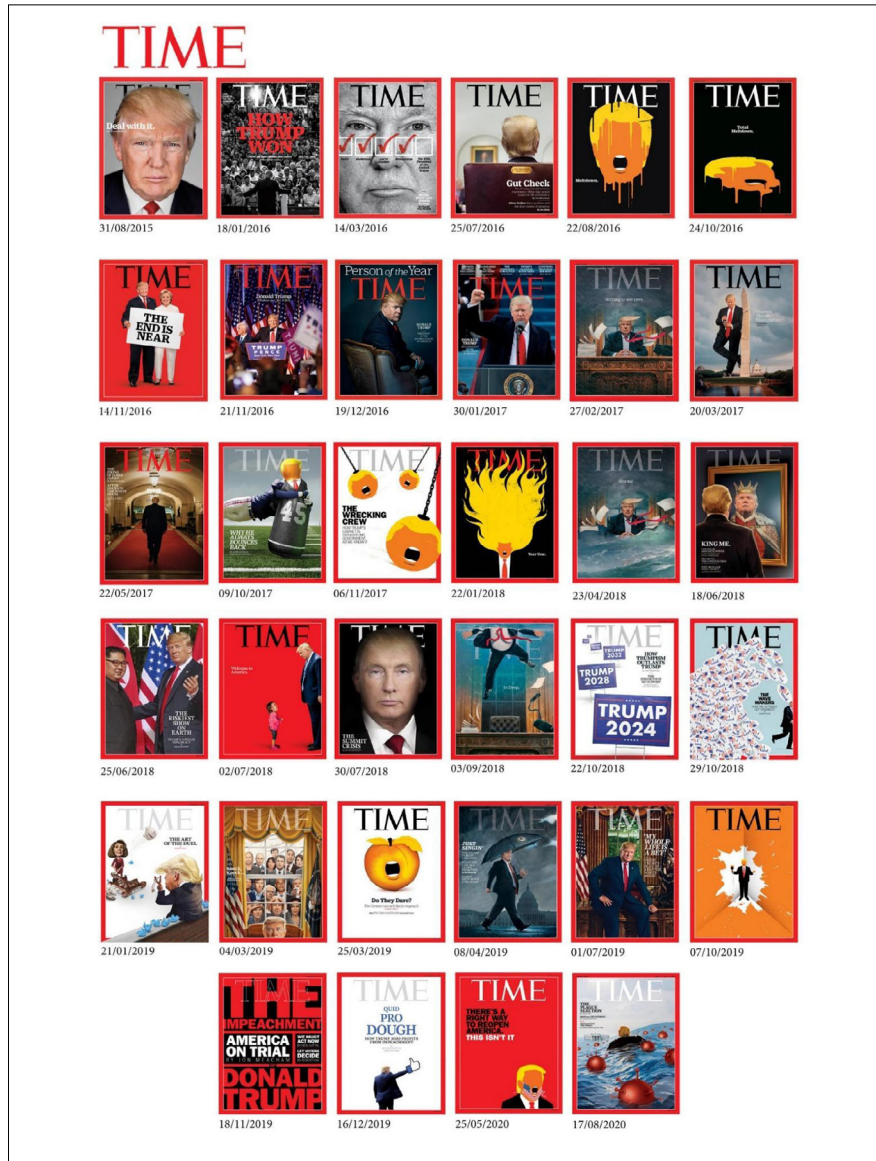
Each cover was analysed independently by three coders between January and February of 2023. In order to achieve inter-coder reliability and ensure criterion reliability, a random sub-sample of 50% of the main sample was chosen, achieving a 95% level of agreement.

Figure 1. Covers of *The New Yorker* featuring Trump between 2015 and 2021



Source: *The New Yorker*


Figure 2. Covers of *Time* magazine that feature Trump between 2015 and 2021



Source: *Time* magazine

Figure 3. Data sheet with variables and categories designed *ad hoc* for the research

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Cover Art

A. IDENTIFICATION

V1. Case number:

V2. Magazine name:

V3. Date of publication:

V4. Cover author:

B. ASPECTS RELATED TO THE IMAGE

V5. Type of image

- Illustration
- Photography
- Infographic
- Typography used as a symbol

V6. Type of cover

- Realistic
- Abstract
- Typographic

C. ASPECTS RELATED TO THE SUBJECT MATTER

V7. Period to which the cover belongs

- First electoral campaign
- President-elect
- First term in office and second electoral campaign
- End of first term in office

V8. The most recurring issues

- Social rights
- Impeachment
- War
- Health care
- International affairs
- Trump as a relevant figure

D. ASPECTS RELATED TO THE FIGURE OR FIGURES PRESENT ON THE COVER

V9. No. of individuals:

V10. Name of the main figure:

V10.1. Gender

- Male
- Female
- Other:

V10.2. Type of figure

- Real
- Fictional
- N/A

V10.3. Profession:

V10.4 Other relevant data:

V11. Presence of a secondary figure:

- N/A
- Yes (indicate name):

V12. Presence of other relevant figures:

- N/A
- Yes (indicate name):

V13. Presence of an object or figure that plays a prominent role:

- N/A
- Yes (indicate name):

E. ASPECTS RELATED TO THE DEPICTION OF TRUMP

V14. Purpose of the cover

- Opinionated
- Informative
- Interpretive

V15. Focus of the topic

- Literal
- Conceptual

V16. Type of discourse

- Informative
- Intentional/persuasive
- Testimonial/escapist
- Satirical

V17. Assessment of Trump

- Positive
- Negative
- Neutral

V18. How other figures are portrayed

- N/A
- As allies
- As adversaries
- In a neutral way

V19. Presence of other topics on the cover

- Yes (indicate which):
- No

V20. Observations:

Source: prepared by the authors

3. Results

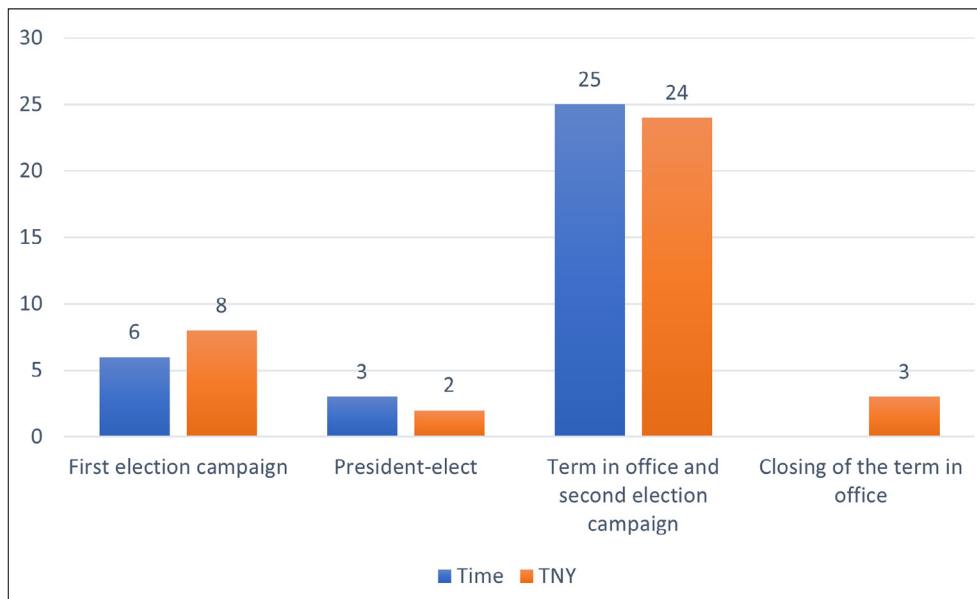
The results obtained from this study have been grouped into three levels, which include one for each of the research questions initially posed. The first is based on the time period and the thematic issues featured on the cover; the second involves the personalities that appear on the covers and their prominence; and the third addresses the focus of the discourse, or why Trump appears, and what intention lies behind each cover.

3.1. *Time period and thematic issues*

Identification of the issues and events that are featured on the covers in the selected period show a wide variety of issues. However, in order to analyse and understand them, it was necessary to first place their publication at a specific time in relation to the chronology of Trump's career. To do so, the period covered by the analysis sample (27 July 2015 to 15 January 2021) has been segmented into four time periods:

- A) The first election campaign, from the nomination by his party to his election as president on 8 November 2016, covering a period of one year and three months. A total of fourteen covers were analysed from 27 July 2015 until 16 October 2016.
- B) The period as president-elect, from his victory in the elections to his official swearing-in. This stage consisted of two months, yielding five covers.
- C) His term in office and the second election campaign are spread over three years and eleven months, from 21 January 2017 to 3 November 2020. The largest number of covers analysed were found during this period, with a total of 49.
- D) The final stage of his term in office, which is the period following Trump's election defeat. It covers two months from 4 November 2020 until the appearance of the final magazine cover on 15 January 2021, although his term of office closed on 20 January. The last three covers analysed were from this period.

Graph 1. Time period classification of the covers of each magazine



Source: prepared by the authors

A comparison of each magazine shows an even distribution, with the exception of the closing of the term in office, when *Time* does not have a single cover.

The New Yorker was the first of the two magazines to devote a cover story to Trump, which was published in July of 2015, just over a month after he was nominated as the Republican presidential candidate. On that cover, Trump dives into a swimming pool while several Republican presidential candidates flee in different directions. *Time* did the same a month later, at which time its cover was already indicating that Trump would be an issue to confront (“Deal with it”).

This first period is characterised by a series of covers in which Trump is presented through the eyes of others and through his own actions: people on the run; former US presidents terrified by his image on television; Trump dividing the party by carving an elephant in half; a description of the candidate as a bully, showman, party crasher and demagogue, or prophesying his victory by sitting in the Oval Office and placing a plaque announcing that he is already president. The most objective cover belongs to *Time*, which argues that Trump has won the election within his party, and “now he just needs votes” to become President of the United States. At this stage, both magazines devote some covers to the crisis during Trump’s first campaign, showing him standing in the rain or with a melting face.

This period is followed by two months when Trump still has not been sworn-in as president, yet he holds the title of president-elect after winning the election. During this period, the magazine covers announce that Trump will be the President of the

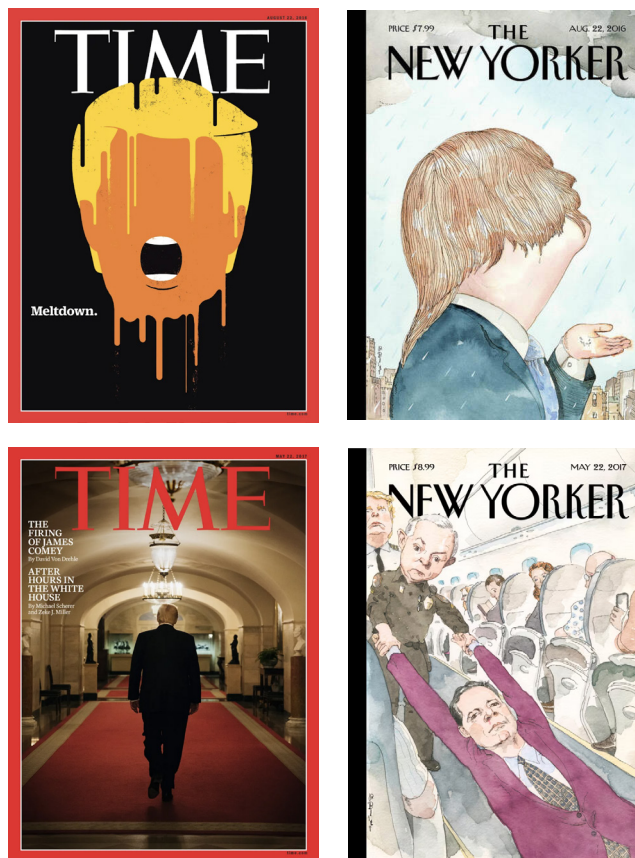
United States. *Time* does so objectively, featuring photographs of Trump, including one in which he appears on the front cover as Person of the Year, while *The New Yorker* uses a more ironic tone, depicting a wall hiding the entire cover, or showing the president-elect at the wheel of a coin-operated car for a child audience escorted by his bodyguards, both of which are symbols of what Trump represents for the United States.

As might be expected, the main block of the sample is distributed over the four years of his term in office, although it is true that for much of this period, from October 2018 onward, Trump was already in the initial stages of his second election campaign. During this period, both magazines are nearly on par with regard to covers that address the figure of Trump, along with the actions he takes in the face of certain events, such as the second election campaign. Any differences between the two magazines during this period can only be seen in one issue.

Finally, *The New Yorker* devotes three covers to the closing days of Trump's presidency, at which time Joe Biden has already been elected as the next president. The purposes of these covers are very clear: the first is about COVID-19, the second addresses the assault on the Capitol building, and the third is about Trump's heralded departure from the presidency. On the other hand, although *Time* does not dedicate any cover to him whatsoever during this period, the magazine had certainly foretold Trump's ousting from the White House on its last cover, which had appeared nearly three months before he lost the election in November of 2020.

Although the publication dates of the two magazines coincided on nine occasions, they did not always address the same topic. Nevertheless, two of the covers address the same issue. On the covers from August 22, 2016, both magazines show the crisis of the first election campaign with similar metaphors. By contrast, the second cover on 22 May 2017 tells the story of James Comey's dismissal. In this case, *The New Yorker* takes a critical tone, portraying Trump as the captain of an airplane who orders the removal of an annoying passenger, while the rest of the occupants watch from their seats without giving it much thought. This direct and ironic portrayal contrasts with the cover of *Time*, which opts for a more distant portrayal, showing Trump from behind, as if he had no direct link with the dismissal. In fact, we would not even know what the cover was referring to without the additional information provided by the text, which is located to the left of the image, as there is almost no indication of a connection between the text and the image.

Figure 4. Covers that coincide regarding time frames and subject matter



Source: *Time* and *The New Yorker*

The fact is, the two magazines also share topics, although at different time periods, such as the relationship between Trump's victory and Putin's Russian interference in the presidential elections, for which both publications use the figure of the Russian president, but with more than a year's difference.

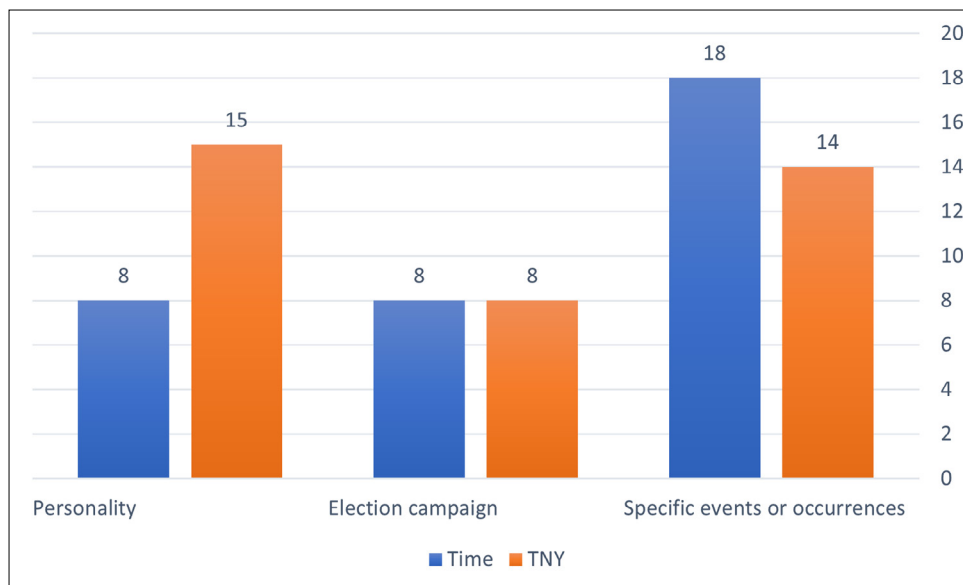
Moreover, although the two periodicals do not always cover the same news stories related to his time in office, nor to his campaign events, three main categories can be established that address the topics that appear on their covers, although some of them could be classified in more than one category:

a) Covers that feature Trump due to his popularity and relevance as a figure, and that portray him according to his selection as the party's candidate, his nomination as president, his election as "Person of the Year", and the anniversary of his term in office; or they simply portray him at different moments of his term in office, which are not directly related to any specific event, but which testify to his histrionic personality and seek to highlight his striking and prominent personage in the political and media sphere.

b) Covers that make direct reference to election campaigns. These are more common during the second election campaign, although there are covers from the beginning as well, in which the question of whether or not Trump will be elected in the fight for the presidency against his opponent is discussed.

c) Covers that deal with issues that are especially relevant, which generally appeared during his mandate, such as social rights with a strong emphasis on immigration and COVID-19, the internal crisis of his party, the impeachment process, and other issues associated with specific moments of his presidency.

Graph 2. Thematic distribution of the covers analysed



Source: prepared by the authors

The number of magazine covers that are dedicated to Trump simply because of who he is noteworthy (n23). It bears mentioning that these covers deal with Trump without associating him with a specific event or topic beyond his figure as a future or current president.

In terms of thematic distribution, there are no major differences between the two magazines, although *The New Yorker* devotes more covers to Trump simply for holding the highest office in the country. These covers portray an inexperienced president, his bad relationship with the press, and the widespread fear he arouses among a certain percentage of the population. On the other hand, *Time* magazine distributes its covers between this category and those that are directly related to specific events, especially the crisis within the government.

Nevertheless, there are three topics that have been of great interest to both magazines yet approached from different perspectives:

The first is Trump's impeachment, which resulted from a political crisis due to his constant display of disobedience both within and outside his party. This issue is one of the main topics in both magazines, with covers ranging from the first rifts within the government in February of 2017 to the end of Trump's term in office.

In fact, we find a collection of four covers that begin with Trump sitting in the Oval Office with a storm brewing, while the headline reads, "Nothing to See Here", referring to the overturn of an executive order banning certain immigrants from entering the country, which occurred at the same time as the first information leak regarding the Russian intervention in the elections (Phillip, 16/02/2017).

This sequence concludes with the final cover of this research sample, in which we see a storm-ravaged Trump outside the White House, surrounded by a multitude of live COVID-19 viruses, alluding to how the pandemic changed not only how people vote, but also why they vote, and how his policy decisions and the crisis within his own administration led to his failure to be re-elected (Molly, 06/08/2020).

The other two recurring themes are the COVID-19 pandemic and the loss of social rights resulting from Trump's policies. Although to a lesser extent, immigration and the *Black Lives Matter* movement are addressed as well, despite the fact that all of these topics are somehow integrated into the covers that allude to the crisis within Trump's government.

Nevertheless, as noted above, although both publications deal with the same issues repeatedly, they do so in different ways, each with its own distinctive style, and sometimes with different objectives, as will be detailed in the following sections.

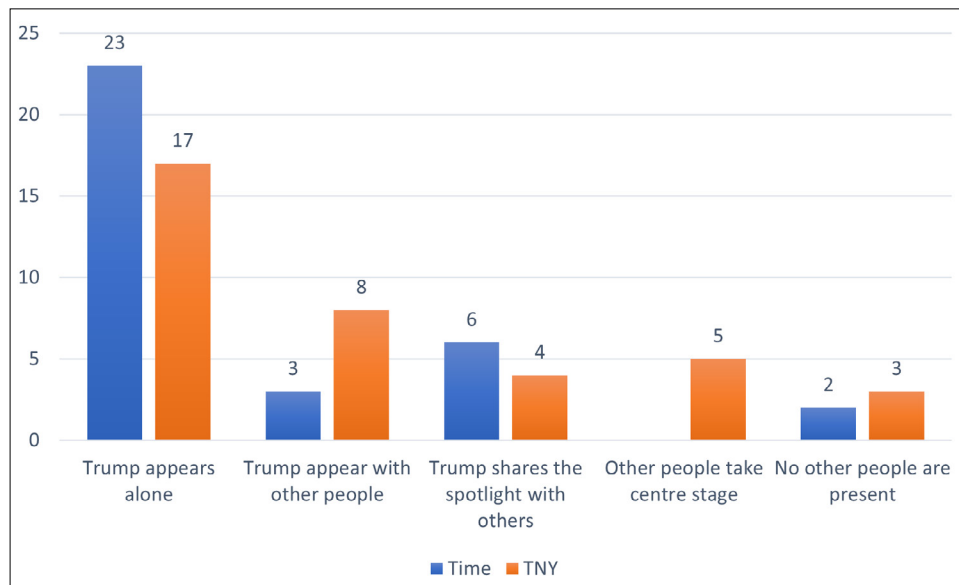
3.2. Personalities

3.2.1. Trump as sole protagonist, or accompanied

In terms of personalities, an analysis of the covers has been carried out to determine who shares the spotlight with Donald Trump. The question initially posed was not whether or not Trump is the protagonist of the magazine covers, but with whom he shares the limelight and in what terms.

Clearly, as Donald Trump is the central figure in the sample, he is positioned as the only protagonist. However, the difference between the number of covers on which he appears alone, and those on which he is accompanied by other figures, varies according to each magazine, as seen in Graph 3.

Graph 3. The protagonists on the magazine covers



Source: prepared by the authors

Both *The New Yorker* and *Time* prefer depicting Trump as the sole figure, which is the case in 40 of the 71 covers analysed.

At times, Trump's depiction is obvious, even when he is not portrayed in a realistic or figurative manner. However, there are covers in which his presence cannot be discerned until reading the explanation provided by the magazine itself on the inside pages, due to only part of the character being shown, which is often not significant or recognisable (*The New Yorker*, 28/03/2016; *The New Yorker*, 12/10/2020).

Undoubtedly, Trump is the protagonist or co-protagonist in most of the remaining covers, even those in which his figure is not directly portrayed, but in which his name appears on the cover or objects are displayed that refer to his personage. For example, on the three covers of *The New Yorker* that do not feature any figure, the emphasis is on objects that symbolise something related to the personality or actions of this politician: a brick wall that nearly hides the masthead, the hand of the Statue of Liberty holding a smoking torch after the flame has been extinguished, and the American flag at half-mast.

With all this data, it can be affirmed that Trump is clearly the main character in 66 of the 71 magazine covers analysed. The question is, who accompanies him on these covers, and who steals the spotlight from him on the others.

3.2.2. Who accompanies Trump?

There are no specific figures who consistently accompany Trump on the covers. The only ones who appear on more than one occasion are Hillary Clinton, to whom a cover is dedicated exclusively to her, and one of the few in which Trump appears indirectly as a political opponent in the fight for the country's presidency, almost as if the reader were Trump. The other is Vladimir Putin, in reference to the Russian intervention in the elections. Each of these two figures has appeared on the cover of *Time*, and twice on the cover of *The New Yorker*, and on one of these occasions they co-star with Trump (31/10/2016). On this particular cover, Hillary is accompanied by her husband, former president Bill Clinton, who is a supportive figure in her swearing-in, while Putin represents a supportive figure for Trump in the same situation.

In fact, these two personalities manage to steal the spotlight from Trump, which happens only on five occasions, all in *The New Yorker* magazine. The covers in question are dedicated to Kanye West, Hillary Clinton, Vladimir Putin, James Comey with Jeff Sessions, and Robert Mueller. The last three are directly related to each other, as they address the Russian plot in the US elections, with Trump as an essential ancillary figure.

Figure 5. Covers in which the spotlight is stolen from Trump



Source: *The New Yorker*

Other recognisable characters on the covers of *The New Yorker* include the aforementioned Bill Clinton (alongside Hillary and Putin), Michael Flynn, Lindsey Graham, William Barr, Mitch McConnell, Rudy Giuliani, a depiction of Uncle Sam, five former US presidents (George Washington, Abraham Lincoln, Theodore Roosevelt, Franklin D. Roosevelt, and John F. Kennedy), other presidential candidates, and even some of Trump's relatives. All these characters are part of the discourse, either as co-protagonists or as secondary figures. Their personages on the cover are necessary in order to explain the message to be conveyed.

In *Time* magazine, this occurs on only six occasions, featuring the following figures: Hillary Clinton; Kim Jong-un; Vladimir Putin (this one in a different way, as he is not a character in his own right, but merged with Trump in a type of morphing); Yana, the Honduran girl who was photographed at the US border (a photograph that won the World Press Photo in 2019, which *Time*

used to create a satirical montage by showing Trump looking at little Yana with no emotion); and Nancy Pelosi, together with the group of congressmen who watch Trump from the window of the Oval Office, anxiously awaiting his next move.

There are other companions present, and although they are well-known personalities, they are not given any importance. For example, Mike Pence appears on one of *Time's* covers, yet his presence is rather anecdotal, as he is only at the president's side during the presidential speech on election night (his presence does not alter the message: Donald Trump is already the president-elect). This photograph was taken by Chelsea Matiash for *Time* magazine. In this case, the importance of Pence is less than that of other faceless characters accompanying the president, due to the fact that on these occasions the inclusion of other characters provides a necessary context for the message, such as the NFL player who knocks Trump down (as if he is a roly-poly toy), or the citizens in Halloween costumes who are frightened by the sight of Trump's arrival.

It also bears mentioning the presence of other characters on the covers whose faces are not recognisable, such as bodyguards, policemen, and passengers on a plane commandeered by Trump. Even in *The New Yorker*, dogs, vermin and the bald eagle of the United States can be seen, although they are not considered characters who share the limelight with Trump, although their presence is relevant to the message being sent.

The key to each portrayal lies in whether they appear as Trump's allies or enemies on the covers, regardless of their stance in real life. Not surprisingly, his allies include those who support the president, members of the Republican Party, and the politicians mentioned above. They also include figures such as Putin, Kim Jong-un, and even Hillary Clinton on one of *Time's* covers, where she joins Trump in announcing the end of the election. These "allies" are often well-known personalities with first and last names who portray themselves.

On the other hand, the president's "enemies" also appear, who often are well-known figures representing themselves, such as Hillary Clinton (now in the opposition), or Nancy Pelosi. However, they also include people like Yana, who symbolise those who oppose Trump's immigration policies, or the NFL player protesting the president's stance on the Black Lives Matter movement. This group includes the portrayal of the American people or specific sectors, such as former presidents who are horrified in front of a television screen showing Trump operating on a stranger while a group of doctors and nurses look on, or Uncle Sam with his feet in cement being thrown into the sea by Trump and Rudy Giuliani, or the bald eagle carrying off Trump while he is still the president. There are surprises as well, such as when other candidates flee Trump's arrival at the swimming pool, frightened congressmen watching the president through a window, or fellow party members who do not generally agree with Trump's policies in their entirety, as depicted by the elephant being sawed in half by Trump dressed as a magician, and even specific, recognisable characters (*The New Yorker*, 18/12/2017; *The New Yorker*, 03/06/2019).

Finally, the absence of Joe Biden from the covers dedicated to Trump is worth noting. Although some covers feature the current leader, President Joe Biden, especially since 15 April 2019, just days before the official announcement of his candidacy for the Democratic Party primaries, these images are disassociated from the ex-president with no reference to Trump whatsoever. In fact, the former president is not even mentioned in passing.

3.3. Focus of the discourse: How is Trump portrayed as the protagonist?

3.3.1. Similar topics but with a style and purpose of their own

The distinctive features of each magazine determine certain unique aspects on the cover. In this regard, on several occasions the style in which the figures are represented, and the objects chosen for each type of message play a fundamental role. Specifically, *The New Yorker* distinguishes itself by using illustrations on all its covers, which are defined by their realistic style. Even in cases where the portrayal diverges slightly from realism, the object depicted is clearly identifiable, which brings them closer to the figurative rather than abstract category.

Along the same lines, it can be observed that *Time* magazine also shows a clear preference for covers with a realistic style. However, it does so in a different way. Among the *Time* covers, fifteen are based on illustrations, nine on photographs, and nine on photomontages that combine not only photographs, but photography and illustration as well, or photography and text. It is beneficial to examine the relationship between the different styles and the subject matter of each cover.

In the case of the covers dedicated to Trump as a political figure, seven of the nine are photographic. This indicates that in order to address this issue, which requires presenting information in an objective manner while trying to avoid subjective assessments, photography is a more effective medium, as evidenced by the diffusion of his victory in both the primaries and the presidential elections.

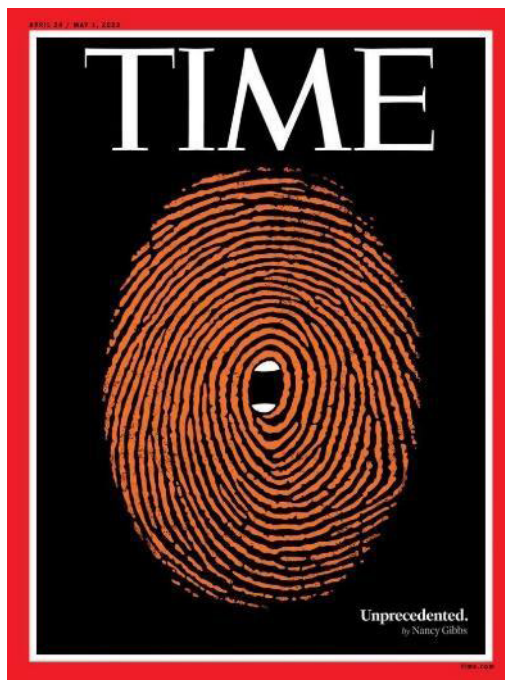
Satire and expression of opinion are reserved for illustrations and photographic collages. However, *Time* magazine occasionally presents a less figurative style, even approaching an abstract or metaphorical depiction of the subjects addressed on some of its covers.

3.3.2. The non-figurative portrayal of Trump

As some of the covers have already been mentioned, reference should be made to another identified category, which mainly concerns figurative covers in which Trump is identified, but not his personage as such. This occurs exclusively in *Time* magazine. The president is turned into a roly-poly toy (mentioned above), a flat melting face (in two separate covers that continue with the same idea), a torso whose hair is ablaze with fire, a wrecking ball, and a peach. With the exception of the first, which has a realistic tone as a photomontage with the NFL player mentioned above, the rest are figurative covers in which the protagonist is clearly Trump, in spite of how far removed the portrayal is from the human figure. All these covers are the work of Edel Rodriguez, and in all of them Trump is screaming. In fact, the illustrator, who was the magazine's art director from 1994 to 2008 (Ro, 4/4/2021), has eight covers among the sample analysed (seven of them in *Time*), and in all of them Trump shouts at the reader, whether or not he is de-anthropomorphised.

Although it was not part of the editorial units analysed, in April of 2023 Rodriguez dedicated another cover to Trump, this time depicted by a fingerprint (referring to the police record after his arrest), with the same orange tone the artist had used for him on previous occasions with his usual open mouth, showing his teeth, and shouting.

Figure 6. Cover of *Time* magazine



Source: *Time* magazine (24 April 2023)

A similar style is used on the covers of *The New Yorker* that feature the figure of Trump decontextualized, even when he is not the main character. For example, in one he appears as a butterfly who is being watched by Putin, and in another he becomes a tobacco pipe which Robert Mueller smokes in imitation of the Sherlock Holmes character. Moreover, although it is a more realistic figurative portrayal, we also see Trump as a magician sawing an elephant in half (a reference to his own party), a beauty queen with a Miss Congeniality sash and holding a bouquet of flowers, the pilot of the plane from which James Comey is pulled out, and a clown hiding in a forest, among others. However, Trump is easily recognisable in all of these cases. On just two occasions do we see only one arm. One time he is feeding a dog, and the other time the palm of his hand is full of phrases, as if someone had been reading his future, yet later we see that Donald Trump has been reading the magazine itself.

All of this reinforces the idea that certain styles are more suited to conveying a specific type of message. Thus, any informative communication takes on an opinionated or interpretative nature and, in the worst case, this is accomplished through satire by means of illustrations in *The New Yorker*. For example, the first cover of Trump after he becomes president-elect of the United States shows a brick wall shrouding the entire front page of the magazine, and the last cover depicts an American bald eagle

angrily carrying Trump away, making it clear that he is no longer the president of the United States. However, it cannot be affirmed that this relationship between the type of cover and the message to be conveyed is consistent.

In some cases, aspects such as the colours employed, typography used, and whether or not the image extends to the edges of the page, are the artist's own decision. Even if the magazine chooses a specific illustrator or photographer, considerable freedom is allowed, even in the choice of the topic to be addressed. Therefore, in many cases the decision depends mostly on the artist and the style of their work.

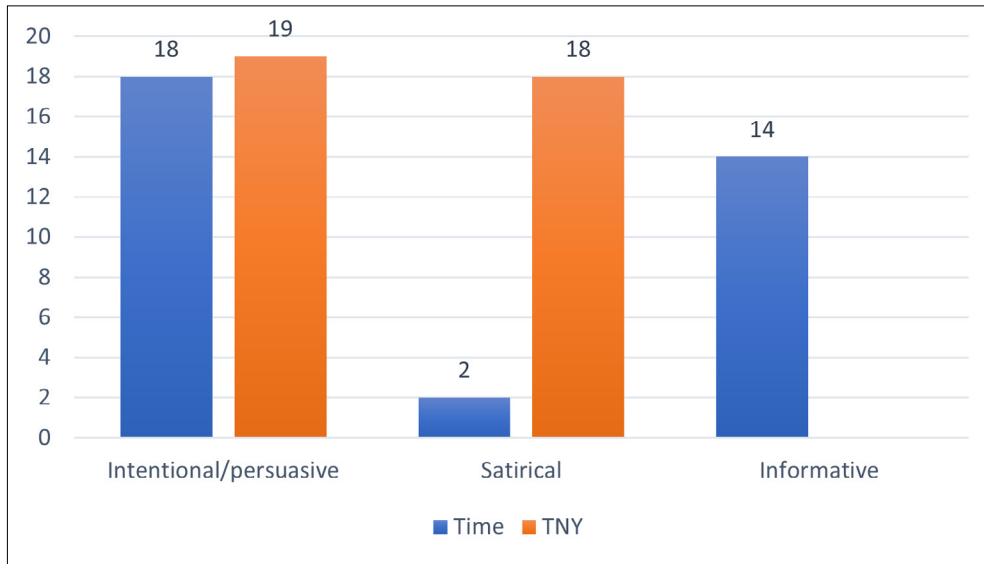
3.3.3. *Tone and purpose of the covers*

A comparison between the two magazines, especially when they deal with the same topic, shows that *The New Yorker* generally uses a more realistic style in its illustrations, yet adopts a more conceptual tone in its messages. For example, covers such as the one showing a wall that shrouds nearly the entire magazine cover suggests that Trump has been elected president of the United States, and the one depicting the torch of the Statue of Liberty extinguished at the beginning of his mandate symbolises the end of the open arm welcome to immigrants arriving in New York by ship. These are joined by another cover showing a flag at half-mast after the storming of the Capitol by Trump supporters following his call for insurrection. These covers require reading the explanatory text inside the magazine to fully understand their meaning. For the most part, they convey satirical messages that try to ridicule Trump.

Although *Time* uses satire on some of its covers as well, especially those with abstract depictions such as illustrations by Edel Rodriguez, or Nancy Burson's work that merges Putin and Trump into one person, these are self-explanatory due to the simplicity and conciseness of their message, the timing of their publication, and the headlines that accompany the images. *Time* offers not only informative magazine covers that convey literal messages through photographs, but also covers that seek to persuade the reader through interpretation of the subject matter. These include photomontages containing double meanings, such as the image of Hillary and Trump holding a sign saying, "The End is Near", which announces both the closeness of the election and the end of the election campaign, insinuating that no matter who wins, the end is near.

Considering all the foregoing, by conducting a more detailed analysis of the messages, a classification of the covers based on their purpose can be established. Based on the taxonomy proposed by Melo and Assis (2016), three of the five categories defined by these authors have been identified among the covers analysed: opinionated, which corresponds to satire; interpretative, which includes intentional and persuasive covers; and informative.

Graph 4. Purpose of the covers



Source: prepared by the authors

It is important to note that the informative category is not present in *The New Yorker*, due to the fact that through its covers it tries to persuade the viewer to form an opinion based on the interpretation that the magazine has given to a specific piece of information (n19). The magazine goes even further by offering its own opinions, which are categorised as satirical (n18), leaving objectivity aside; it should be recalled that these magazines have a high percentage of editorial content.

In *Time*, there is also a higher number of interpretative covers (n18). However, in the second position are those of an informative nature with a more neutral tone, in which objective information is provided, with little or no interpretation (n14). This approach is applied to several of the covers featuring photographs, as described in the following section.

3.3.4. Messages communicated through the figure of Trump

From this perspective, following the classification proposed by Gómez-García et al. (2019), it is possible to observe the approach that both publications take toward the figure of Trump on their covers. These data differ slightly depending on the purpose of each cover, as they focus exclusively on the graphic depiction of Trump as opposed to the message itself.

It is true that a satirical purpose of the cover usually entails a negative portrayal of the personality in question, which is also frequent in intentional or persuasive covers, making the position of both magazines clear with regard to Donald Trump. However, informative covers tend to offer a more neutral depiction of him.

A prominent example of a negative tone is the cover of *The New Yorker* on 23 May 2016, which shows Trump as a magician sawing the Republican elephant in half, symbolising the divisions within his party. Conversely, on the cover of *Time* on 12 December 2016, in which he appears as “Person of the Year”, the magazine takes a positive tone by highlighting his influence on the political landscape without making specific judgements. By contrast, a neutral cover from *Time* can be seen on 30 January 2017, which uses a photograph of Trump during his inauguration without adding graphic elements that could alter the way it is perceived.

The presence of polarisation in the way Trump is portrayed cannot be confirmed, as the clear preference is for a negative view in which the former president borders on the absurd, or is displayed as someone lacking any sign of emotion, in which his actions or the comments made about him on the magazine cover do not put him in a good light.

Certainly, a positive portrayal has no place on the covers of *The New Yorker*, where the figure of Trump is shown from a negative perspective in nearly all the samples presented. In cases in which a negative view cannot be stated, it is more of a neutral depiction in which the president is neither good nor bad. For example, the cover with Trump standing in the rain with hair covering his face bears mentioning, which refers to a crisis during the first election campaign, yet the image of the president cannot be considered negative.

Contrary to the above, *Time* magazine’s visual representation exhibits greater diversity in this regard, which can be attributed to the inclusion of photographic covers. Covers that feature illustrations and photomontages often convey a negative perception of Trump. Two examples can be seen in the collages from July and October of 2018. In one, Trump displays an impassive gaze toward Yana, and in the other, he turns his back on part of his electorate. Another case is an illustration from January 2019. In the drawing, faced with Nancy Pelosi’s request for Trump to appear in court based on a judicial order, he responds with Twitter messages launched from a slingshot, evoking the image of a small child.

In this magazine, neutral portrayals of the president are identified by the three types of covers mentioned above, in which Trump appears with a neutral gesture, or with his back turned to the viewer.

Nevertheless, in contrast to *The New Yorker*, there are several *Time* covers in which Trump’s image is portrayed in a positive light, again through photographs. Examples include the cover portraying him as his party’s chosen candidate; as the winner of the presidential election; the cover in which he is named Person of the Year; and the July 2019 cover showing him leaning on the Oval Office table, and right next to him is a text quoting the president as saying, “My whole life is a bet”, which could be interpreted as implying a risky type of governance, yet it does not convey a negative image of the president, nor even neutral, but rather one that is pleasant.

The prevalence of a negative tone on the covers of both magazines reflects a critical narrative that could influence the public perception of Trump, thereby reinforcing his image as a controversial and polarising figure. By contrast, the few covers with a positive tone seem to be linked to moments of political success, including winning the presidential election, for example, which suggests a tendency to highlight exceptional rather than mundane events.

4. Discussion and Conclusions

In this study, we have carried out a content analysis of all the covers featuring Donald Trump in *Time* magazine and *The New Yorker* during his first candidacy, and throughout his first term in office. The findings allow us to clearly affirm that the media portrayal of his personality offers a rich variety of approaches and messages, ranging from depictions that are fairly neutral, to overwhelmingly visual criticism.

The construction of Donald Trump's figure on the covers analysed often relies on apocalyptic, visual rhetoric, which serves to criticise his presidency and portray the dominant political climate during his time in office. This focus implies a disastrous political, economic, and social context, which evokes an emotional response from the reader. The illustrations featured on these covers usually describe Trump by using various symbolic depictions, such as an insurgent or demagogue, thereby reflecting the collective anxiety, social fear, and political tension during the 2016 campaign and his subsequent term in office. Moreover, he is also frequently depicted as a traitor, a bully, and even a clown, which emphasises his eccentricity and populism. The covers convey these messages by using visual and metaphorical portrayals that match viewers' perceptions of his political actions. The illustrations on the covers frequently use humour and satire, exaggerating some of the politician's features, or showing absurd or ridiculous scenarios, and they do so to criticise both Trump as a person and his policies as well, thereby influencing public opinion.

At times, Trump is portrayed as a cultural icon, often compared to historical figures associated with extremism. The discourse used by both magazines frequently positions Trump as a far-right figure, even drawing parallels with historical tyrants, which reinforces negative perceptions of his leadership style and reflects the ideological stance of these publications. In this discourse, we also find visual metaphors and symbols that portray him as a puppet, an enraged rebel, or the embodiment of extreme ideologies, which can evoke strong emotional responses in the audience. On several covers, Trump is even depicted wearing masks or costumes, symbolising deception or two-faced leadership. On others, we see storms and natural disasters as metaphors representing the turbulence and impact of his policies, suggesting instability and conflict. On still others we see fire, which is used as a symbol of chaos and crisis to reflect moments of high tension during his presidency.

The covers frequently show the US politician in ridiculous or exaggerated situations, such as displaying him as a clown or a capricious child, in order to highlight his behaviour and political decisions. On several occasions, Trump has also been portrayed as an animal, such as a bull in a china shop, symbolising his disruptive and destructive nature.

Some covers create dystopian scenarios to criticise the consequences of his policies, using sombre, futuristic images to convey a message of alert and warning. Visual elements such as colour and typeface are used strategically to emphasise key issues, thereby enhancing the emotional impact of both the illustrations and photographs. These visual metaphors not only capture the essence of specific events and the politician's behaviour, but also allow readers to interpret and reflect on Trump's impact from different points of view.

On the other hand, the visual rhetoric on the covers of *Time* and *The New Yorker* not only capture events and political figures, but also reflect and respond to the political and social climate of each period by using powerful and symbolic images to transmit complex and boisterous messages. For example, during the election campaign of 2015-2016, the covers of *Time* often

reflected the controversy and polarisation fomented by Trump. Images of the politician in situations of tension or conflict depicted political uncertainty. The magazine's visual strategy involved the use of more direct and symbolic images. For its part, *The New Yorker* used caricature and satire to ridicule Trump, criticising his promises and his behaviour, and emphasising the disbelief and scepticism toward his candidacy.

During the first years of his presidency (2017-2018), the covers of *Time* focused on the initial challenges faced by his administration, such as immigration policy and investigations into Russian interference. *The New Yorker* continued with its satirical approach, depicting Trump in absurd situations in order to criticise his decisions and policies, conveying resistance and political opposition. In the final years of his presidency (2019-2021), the images of Trump offered by *Time* portrayed him as being isolated and under pressure, visually depicting him as politically eroded. During this time, *The New Yorker* intensified its criticism by using dystopian scenarios and darker caricatures to reflect concerns about the future of the country under his leadership.

In terms of social context, the covers reflect the impact of movements such as Black Lives Matter and the protests against police brutality. For example, *The New Yorker* uses illustrations to highlight Trump's detachment from social demands, portraying him as indifferent and antagonistic toward progressive movements. Regarding the COVID-19 pandemic, the covers of *Time* showed Trump in scenarios of the health crisis, using metaphors of illness and chaos to criticise his handling of the pandemic. *The New Yorker* depicted Trump in absurd situations, emphasising the perception of incompetence and lack of leadership.

In any case, both publications underwent similar changes during the period analysed, as they adjusted their visual strategies to reflect current events and public concerns. The tone of the covers became more critical and sombre over time, reflecting growing polarisation and political tension.

Regarding the ideological positioning of *Time* and *The New Yorker* on their covers, their stance is quite clear and is reflected in their visual and thematic approaches. Both magazines take an ideologically critical stand toward Trump, yet they do so in different ways: As previously noted, *Time* tends to use a more symbolic and metaphorical approach, with a tone that ranges from critical to informative, yet it generally emphasises the negative and controversial aspects of Trump's presidency. By contrast, *The New Yorker* takes a more openly critical and satirical approach, using humour and exaggeration to highlight its criticism and reflect an ideological stance that is more clearly opposed to Trump.

As for the time frame and subject matter addressed on these covers, they offer a journey through the key moments of Trump's political career, ranging from the milestones that led to his nomination, to the magazine covers regarding his first presidency, and to the controversies within his own party. The evolution from initial doubts to the harshest criticism highlights his entire political career. Overall, the covers of both publications provide a well-defined picture of the public perception and interpretation of Trump's presidency by a significant part of the electorate in the United States. Moreover, the two front pages show an evolution from initial doubt to extremely sharp criticism.

Clearly, the figure of Donald Trump was the undisputed leader in taking the spotlight on the magazine covers of the sample analysed, yet an examination of the individuals who accompanied him offers an additional perspective on the political and social dynamics surrounding his presidency. Personalities such as Hillary Clinton, Vladimir Putin, and other political leaders

played prominent roles on several magazine covers, sometimes even stealing the spotlight from Trump. This dynamic of accompaniment reflects the complex political interactions and international relations that defined his term in office.

Graphic and stylistic portrayals are other key aspects that distinguish the covers of *Time* and *The New Yorker*. While the former uses a variety of approaches including photography, illustration and photomontages, the latter is characterised by a realistic and illustrative style, yet is more metaphorical in its message, leaving aside the informative covers, thereby providing a significant contrast between the editorial approaches of the two magazines.

In short, the illustrations and photographs used on these covers present a discourse of criticism toward the politician, highlighting his controversial actions and statements, and reinforcing the negative perception and social tension surrounding his presidency. However, it should be noted that although these images are highly critical and satirical of Trump, they also run the risk of reinforcing polarised opinions, potentially alienating segments of the audience who may interpret the images differently. This, in turn, could result in a dual perception, which highlights the complex role of visual rhetoric in political discourse.

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6. Specific contributions of each author

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| Data collection and analysis | Laura González-Díez, María Tabuenca Bengoa and Nuria Navarro Sierra |
| Discussion and conclusions | Laura González-Díez, María Tabuenca Bengoa and Nuria Navarro Sierra |
| Drafting, formatting, version review and approval | Laura González-Díez, María Tabuenca Bengoa and Nuria Navarro Sierra |

7. Conflict of interest

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest contained in this article.

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