

TRANSNATIONAL MEDIA EVENTS

*The MOHAMMED CARTOONS and the
IMAGINED CLASH of CIVILIZATIONS*

Elisabeth Eide, Risto Kunelius & Angela Phillips (eds.)

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NORDICOM

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Preface

The researchers behind this effort are a mixture of academics from 15 countries, but actually from more, as several of us do not live and do research in our country of origin. Initially, we were drawn together by the global reactions ignited by 12 cartoons published in *Jyllands-Posten*, and our work has been in progress since May 2006. What began as a quickly gathered group of researchers has since become a global network of people with many transnational experiences, and we look forward to working on other issues.

We would like to thank the supporting institutions that made this work possible. The Helsingin Sanomat Foundation in Finland and its president Heleena Savela were key players in setting the project into motion in 2006; Culcom Strategic Research Programme at The University of Oslo and Freedom of Expression Foundation in Norway helped us to sustain our efforts during 2007. Together these institutions have all helped us come together to present and discuss our findings and analyses. Without this opportunity, any meaningful research on transnational media events would be doomed.

During the past two years, our collective has been considerably larger than the list of authors in this volume. We extend our heartfelt thanks to the researchers who contributed to the first country reports published by projekt verlag and the University of Dortmund in Germany (cf. Kunelius, Eide et al. 2007). Invaluable reports, from which this book draws freely, were authored or co-authored by Oleg Bakoulin from Russia, Zhengrong Hu and Liang Zheng from China, Katarina Wallentin from Sweden, Solveig Steien from Norway, Jerome Berthaut, Choukri Hmed, Solenne Jouanneau and Sylvain Laurens from France, Mari Maasilta and Jari Väliverronen from Finland, Clarissa Berg from Denmark, Tayo Oyedeji from the United States, David Lee from Great Britain, and Roland Schroeder and Désirée Gloede from Germany. Also a great thanks to Dr. Ade Armando, who joined us at a later stage and provided us with important material from the Indonesian press, as well research assistants Beenish Cheema and Vibeke Hoem who have done important work with the enormous material from Pakistan. Collectively, we also want to thank all the other participants who have joined us at our seminars and workshops in

Finland and Norway and who have enthusiastically provided us with their advice and input.

Richard Daly has meticulously worked through our different versions of English and edited the chapters to our great satisfaction. From an early stage, Ulla Carlsson at Nordicom has shown a keen and steady interest in the project. She has encouraged us during our past year of work; great thanks to a professional editor. We have also fortunate to work with Karin Poulsen and Per Nilsson who have patiently dealt with our endless corrections. We wish to warmly thank artist Lars Mjøen for the permission to print his Magritte/Mohammed painting (Chapter 7).

We hope the book will inspire other media researchers to initiate similar collective endeavours. Other media events and processes will certainly raise global attention, and as media researchers, we should be prepared to deal with them by developing sharper and more diverse analytical tools. This was also the hope of Jan Ekecrantz, one key member of our group, who made a significant contribution to the project, but who sadly died before he could see this book completed. We would like to dedicate this book to the memory of Jan, a truly transnational intellectual.

Oslo, Tampere & London, October 2008

Elisabeth Eide Risto Kunelius Angela Phillips

I. Introduction

Chapter 1

Contrapuntal Readings

Transnational Media Research and the Cartoon Controversy as a Global News Event

Elisabeth Eide, Risto Kunelius & Angela Phillips

Media research sometimes resembles the very objects of research, the media themselves. A spectacle in the media attracts research projects, just as a war or a spectacular conflict sparks a flow of articles, books and commentary. In this sense, the people who have contributed chapters to this book are surely guilty as charged. The publication of the now famous twelve cartoons of Prophet Mohammed in Denmark in 2005 was followed by a heated controversy in the spring of 2006 that became a dramatic high point in (recent mediated) tensions between what has often been defined as the “Islamic world” versus the “West”. Although the actual news events provoked by the conflict during the spring of 2006 have now largely died down, it has become clear that the event has left an enduring residue in the form of a repertoire of images and assumptions. To a considerable extent, and from both “sides”, this residue has to do with modes of portraying each other as well reinforcing existing clichés that have been used to make sense of later news. At least in the short term the controversy seems to have become a defining moment, a landmark event.

In this volume we offer a selection of readings that exhibit many of the ways in which the controversy has illuminated important trends and developments in the current transnationally-mediated world of politics and social values. These interpretations are based on a two-year long transnational media research cooperation which began by examining the coverage or reception of the controversy over the Mohammed cartoons, as it played out in fourteen countries; then, in this second phase, this collaboration has tried to take stock of wider, transnational issues and questions.

The cartoon controversy is an obvious challenge and opportunity for the field of transnational media research. It opens up a space for examining a number of key debates in the field. Whether one is interested in global versus local perspectives, the West versus the East, the secular versus the religious, the traditional versus the modern or the modern versus the late modern – or a number of other key distinctions – the coverage of the issues arising from the publication of the cartoons, and the continuing aftermath of these events, are a rich resource for reflections and insights. Initially the publishers of the

cartoons claimed the event served to stress what they maintained was a much needed debate in Danish society. In the end, however, reactions spilled out far beyond the frontiers of Danish society and became global, with coverage occurring in countries as far apart as Argentina, Egypt and China. The conflict retains its vehemence today even as we write; it has not only demonstrated the reach of the media but also the impact of transnational relations between people of the diaspora and their countries of origin, as well as powerful and complex links holding people of religion and religious communities together across the world.

The debate generated from the issue of the cartoons is all too easily reduced to binary oppositions. Not surprisingly, the notion of “clash of civilizations” originally coined by Bernard Lewis (1990) and since then adopted by Samuel Huntington (1993, 1996), was frequently referred to in media coverage of the events that followed the publication of the Mohammed caricatures, first in Denmark, and then in several other countries around the world. However, a closer look at what really happened indicates that, on one hand, there were some governments, media and institutions as well as some organised political movements that certainly lived up to Huntington’s thesis, on the other hand, there were also governments and businesses trying to do damage repair (for business reasons as well as in attempts to maintain what might be called the “cross-civilization” dialogue) not to mention political and religious leaders forging alliances to prevent serious and aggravated conflicts from breaking out.

The role played by the media in such events is very complex. Various media and various genres were playing ambiguous roles, at times trying to calm conflicts and stress the need to talk reason, yet, often simultaneously, especially in visual reporting from Middle Eastern and other Muslim majority countries, also exaggerating and enlarging one particular strand of violent reactions to the publications. Even a rather superficial investigation of the ways in which such an event is mediated shows that we know much too little about how the media today function in such transnational contexts.

What has motivated our work has been the urgent need to understand these partly new realities of transnational media flows; we have not been motivated to become part of the spectacular controversy itself. Thus before launching into the lessons of the controversy, we want here to sketch some of more general challenges and gratifications of transnational media research.

Restricted Prisms and Contested Meanings

Most media in this world are still national, especially news media. As James Curran suggests, “[...] much of the international news featured on national television is selected only because it has a national dimension. Second, international news tend to be interpreted through national frameworks” and “restricted prisms” (Curran 2005: 180) or what Nosssek calls through a “domestic filter” (2007). Even in obviously “transnational” contexts, such as EU-news, both the news

coverage itself, as well the professional identities of the journalists, strongly favour national frames of interpretation (see, for instance AIM 2007, Heikkilä and Kunelius 2008). Curran nicely exemplifies such frames by showing how the transfer of Hong Kong to China in 1997 was interpreted in the Chinese media; that is, as a defeat for western imperialism and a joyful response to reunification. The British media by contrast, with a touch of imperial nostalgia, viewed the event as the end of a benign era. Meanwhile the American media asked, will human rights and a fragile Hong Kong democracy survive? (Lee et. al. in Curran 2005: 180). News reporting is structured both by the geo-political interests, political cultures and collective memories of the different nations.

This, however, is only one aspect of contemporary media flows. A “global” media event clearly implies more than merely acts of domestication in respective national or local media systems. There is a substantial difference between the way a train accident in Tanzania is transformed, with traditional domestic filters, to news in the rest of the world: were there any Germans or Egyptians on board? – *and* a media event addressing phenomena which by nature are (more) transnational, as in the case of these caricatures which impinged upon a world religion. There is also a substantial difference, for example, between reporting about a major war event, such as the March 2003 U.S attack on Iraq, which had been foreseen for weeks and months; and a publication in a national newspaper of a series of cartoons depicting images of the Prophet, who, next to Allah, is the most revered figure across the whole Muslim world.

Jyllands-Posten may claim to have been addressing only a purportedly local-national media situation, but once the event started to unfold, complex transnational ties (whether they are described as religious or as religious-political) were gradually mobilized. This was exemplified both by the diplomats who asked to meet the Danish prime minister in order to lodge complaints about the treatment of Muslims in Denmark – and by the imams residing in Denmark who travelled to the Middle East to voice their frustrations with the Danish society in general and with the caricatures in particular. Similarly, networks of transnational commentators appeared with syndicated columns and opinion pieces. *Jyllands-Posten*’s publication was a press event playing into a (perhaps somewhat dormant) discursive situation, where – as in other European countries with immigrant populations – the loyalty of minorities to the nation state in which they lived, and of the Muslim minorities in particular, was questioned, not least in the aftermath of 9-11.

Social theory, political science and cultural studies have for some time now taught us that all representations are objects of struggle. The power to define and determine the meaning of events – possessing the power to open up one set of meanings as legitimate and at the same time to declare others as being out of bounds – is a crucial resource in a mediated society. In the case of transnational media events, the national frames of domestication – perhaps the most important frames in which unruly interpretations are normally tamed and brought under control – are challenged in new and sometimes shocking ways. This is what makes studying transnational media events so important and fascinating.

Take for instance Ignacio Ramonet's view of Lady Diana's death (in 1997) as a global media event that he labels a kind of "emotional globalization"¹ and which constitutes the first event of some substance in the new era of global information (Ramonet 1999: 18). This interpretation of globalization can easily imply an overtly simplified model of communication. Ramonet, of course, does not exclude the idea that below the surface the interpretation of such an event may vary to a great degree, since the journalists have not changed their spots. They are still immersed in national interpretative communities. However, in transnational media research – and in increasingly transnational media practices – this has to be taken into consideration with a new sense of urgency. By virtue of being contextualized in different circumstances, transnational media events and their Western "packaging" or "preferred readings" (such as the emotional aspect of Diana) become objects of over-determination. Thus, they can actually turn out to be much more unstable than we in the West often tend to think. Let us extend the example a bit further as an example of a counter-discursive approach. On the day of the anniversary of Lady Di's tragic end, and in a month where the world press seemed preoccupied mainly with what had been going on between President Clinton and a certain Ms Lewinsky in the Oval Office of the White House, a media scholar from Bangladesh, issued the following statement to a transnational network of people preoccupied with South Asia:²

Monica and Diana – the glamour of their scandal and glory (?) of death has become the object of our desire. Media are creating them as commodity and we are consuming them as ice cream in the summer of a rich country. Both the media and we, the consumers, are responsible for letting this roll at the cost of our being blind to people killed in flood or from starvation. Funny world we are living in – so vulnerable we are to the ugly seduction of media and so weak in the comfort we suck out from living in the ivory tower of our post-modern (!) cave.

So it is no wonder that the calamity of Bangladesh will be swept away with the juicy talk one pours around Monica and Diana.

Our whole country is waiting for Prophet Noah's deluge.

Aniz Pervez, Associate Professor, Dhaka

This rather cynical sigh from Dhaka clearly demonstrates how perspectives on these presumed global events can be very different; and the writer's final notes may be attributed to the way in which he feels certain catastrophic climatic variations have been under-communicated, pushed aside by celebrity coverage. These changes, certainly global, may indeed deserve more attention and concern from the media – and not only in his home country. Ten years later, it has become increasingly clear – also to us who were impressed by the flood of flowers that swirled around the gates of Buckingham Palace – that such a sea change in popular sentiment and perception represent a special challenge to journalism. Ten years ago, this frame of domestic emotionalization made much less sense, although it was clearly there.

11 versions of 9-11

A more recent experience of the same – seeing the world (events) from different places – was demonstrated in a collection of short films put together by the French producer Alain Brigand. Eleven well-known filmmakers in the same number of countries were all asked – post-9-11 – to make a film each, as a comment on the tragic event. They had no guidelines or restrictions, other than that they were to deliver a film lasting 11 minutes and 9 seconds.³

Their perspectives were very different. Kenneth Loach (U.K.) used the opportunity to remind the viewers of the Chilean 9-11 experience from 1973, by letting one of the victims write a letter of condolence to the new 9-11 victims' families while reminiscing his own past. Amos Gitai, the Israeli director, shows a reporter trying to get on air on her own TV channel to report a bomb event in Tel Aviv, and her anger and lack of understanding that something even more important could be happening elsewhere. From Ouagadougou Idrissa Ouedraogo showed how the young boy Adama has to quit school to earn money for his mother's medical treatment. He sees a bright future dawning when he thinks he spots Osama bin Laden in the capital of Burkina Faso – and of course feels very sorry when the look-alike character catches a plane for elsewhere, and the chance for the ransom sum (an incomprehensible amount in the West African CFA currency) disappears along with him. In the film from Iran, a teacher of small Afghan refugee children tries to explain the event to her class, but the students remain more preoccupied with two men who dug a well and fell into it.

Brigand's bringing together of these and still other perspectives opens a door to what Edward Said (1994) labelled "contrapuntal reading", recognising the multiplicity of positions from which a reading may start – across a world of differing horizons. Simultaneously, the film as a whole presents a world where the particular influence of media globalization makes for media representation, consumption and interpretation that are more transnational. When introducing "contrapuntal reading", Said is concerned with the imperial West and its "cultural archive". He is also concerned with the fact that the history of "such fields as comparative literature, English studies, cultural analysis, anthropology can be seen as affiliated with the empire". He refers to Gramsci's point of how "the national British, French, American cultures maintained hegemony over the peripheries" (ibid: 59).

What makes the idea of counterpoint so potentially useful in the context of transnational media events is that as a musical metaphor it combines the idea of unity and diversity. The idea of counterpoint – as Roger Silverstone (2006: 85-86) suggests – helps us to think of a "a presence in a single discourse of more than one voice". Thus, if we view transnational media events as defined by power and hegemonic structures, then what they do is the following. They collect the attention of a potentially global audience on a particular dominant theme. But at the same time, they open up a multitude of universes, in terms of discourses and practices, from which other voices and experiences can be

added. Moreover, voices *parallel* to the theme can be introduced, voices that change its meaning, and recontextualize it, and express the idea in a whole new key, sometimes offering consonant, sometimes more dissonant colour to the main theme – and sometimes even taking over the dominant theme itself.

Just as Said himself (cf. *ibid*: 86-89) described this metaphor, so too does it apply to transnational media research. Here the idea of contrapuntal readings is not merely useful as metaphor of how “global” media work but also functions well as an image of research itself. This is one thing we have learned in the project; namely, a theoretical argument (of empire and hegemony) and methodology (contrapuntal reading) seems particularly relevant in the new millennium. In these conditions, the group of researchers represented here, from fifteen countries⁴ has taken on a series of caricatures presented through the print medium in Denmark and which subsequently provoked vehement reactions internationally, and examined the various ways these events were covered across the world. In these analyses we see that global hegemony, domination and resistance are still very much part of the world, even if the relations today take other forms of expression. From our experience it may be added that the memories of colonialism seem to be more culturally alive in the former colonies than in the old colonial powers. This seems to be due to the present and continuing experiences in former colonies of global inequalities and double standards.

One incident provoked by the Mohammed controversy revealed the continuing presence of both colonial history and the transnational character of the cartoon crisis. This incident has to do with the Italian Minister of Reform, Roberto Calderoni, displaying a T-shirt on Italian TV in February 2006. The T-shirt carried an imprint of the caricature where the Prophet Mohammed was armed with a bomb in his turban. The day after, a protest demonstration against the caricatures occurred in the town of Benghazi, Libya. Benghazi is the city from which one ventures out to find El Ageila. El Ageila was a notorious concentration camp where several hundred thousands of Libyans and other Arabs were held prisoner by the Italian fascists during World War II. More than 100,000 prisoners are said to have been killed or starved to death in this concentration camp (Guillou 1989). During the demonstration, in which the Italian consulate was set on fire, eleven people were killed. That this tragedy happened precisely in Benghazi, and that it was soon revealed to be related to the stunt performed by the Italian minister, may be more than sheer coincidence. Indeed, it seems to demonstrate how history asserts its presence in contemporary realities of conflict. What might have been read by some as a government minister displaying his support for the caricaturists’ right to freedom of expression, was, on the other hand, seen by many Libyans as an act of humiliation aimed both at Muslims in general, and at Italy’s former colonial subjects in particular – and thus, from an analytical stance, the incident may be seen as an example of a contrapuntal reading of a media event.

Transnational Media Commons?

The above example demonstrates how different readings come into being. But can these different readings share the same space in terms of dialogue and interpretation? Ulf Hannerz defines and develops the idea of “transnational commons” to describe any set of resources that are somehow shared by humanity, that are not directly under the control of any government. His examples range from such collective resources as the (polluted) sea to the shared potential of biodiversity, even to such collectively threatening realities as global warming. He also writes about public spaces of larger cities as “transnational *cultural* commons”. In such spaces there is no risk of “resource depletion” since various collective meanings find a place to float, a place where they do not get lost (Hannerz 1996). These public spaces are by no means easy waters for all to navigate (and thus do not give all the same freedom to engage in their varying and differing readings). They have their restrictions and these cause flaws in the old ideal of a commons – censorship is a good example of one such flaw⁵. But on the other hand, even as flawed resources (such as the polluted sea) they offer a potential space in which dominant themes and their challenging interpretations can be heard at the same time, in other words where contrapuntal positions and their dissonances can be heard.

Despite the obvious possibility that Hannerz is here projecting an idealized world, it is clear that, combined with other aspects of globalization, such as Diaspora cultures⁶ or the internet (with the caveat that government censorship develops steadily more sophisticated forms of control, and that there remains a persistent gross global inequality when it comes to access), media may be seen as an important element in our current transnational media commons, much like the sea, polluted yet available on which to float thoughts, ideas and values.

The idea of transnational media commons also has a relevance to journalism and to the ways in which it is becoming increasingly transnational (Löffelholz and Weaver 2008). Recently Stephen Reese has found it meaningful to speak of a “global news arena” and a “new social geography” not least due to the development of the internet:

When I refer to global journalism I do not mean to suggest that it has replaced the local and national. In a broad sense, no media practice has escaped the transformations of globalization. Even the smallest Third World news agency with access to the Internet has changed the way it works [...] So we can see aspects of the global embedded in many settings, which makes theorizing more challenging (Reese 2008: 241).

Reese emphasises global media ownership as one important factor and suggests three related propositions in this social geography, (1) an evolving media system that he calls the “global news arena”, (2) a journalism adapting to this arena, in need of navigating “between its traditional ‘vertical’ orientation within whatever nation-state it is carried out and a ‘horizontal’ perspective that

transcends national frameworks” and (3) a cultural as well as a professional identification among those involved in this global dimension, not least within journalism, which “increasingly shares common norms and values adapted to the needs of a more globalized system” (ibid.).

We should not reduce media to journalism. Thus, the notion of a transnational media commons must refer to a much broader landscape than merely mainstream professional journalism. However, Reese’s horizontal perspective may correspond to one important thread in a modified version of a global media commons. In this media commons, journalists and increasingly other news-seeking persons and groups are able to enlarge their perspectives, helped by access to the internet versions of national newspapers (with domesticated news) around the world and their coverage of events, as in the case of the cartoon crisis.

It is not an easy task to imagine a transnational media commons that might encourage contrapuntal readings. On the one hand, openness is required in order for critical and marginal voices to have their say. On the other hand, turning the potential of the commons into an actual discourse often means what Gayatri Spivak calls “foreclosure” – a fixed interpretation that does not easily yield to alternative readings (Spivak 2006: 99). Here, journalism becomes a focal point. What are the limits of foreclosure that the horizontal aspects of global journalism (imagined by Reese) impose on our discussions about global media events?

In this sense, the caricature issue is a particularly fruitful one to study. Since the event was initiated by the media and the media were drawn in as key actors, the event also provided evidence of the way in which horizontal professional identification and ideologies of journalism actually function. The dominance of the “freedom of expression” frame in the Western media (see Hervik, Chapter 4 and Kunelius and Alhassan, Chapter 5, in this volume) is at the same time an indication of the fact that such horizontal elements exist – and evidence of foreclosure. This foreclosure clearly prevented the Western media from fully grasping what the conflict looked like from the other side (see Eide, Chapter 9 and Saleh, Chapter 10, in this volume).

Even where attempts were made to open up debate (for instance in Norway, see Phillips, Chapter 6, in this volume), a certain degree of foreclosure was evident. In most of the Western democratic countries studied in this project, the debate revolved around “preferred readings” (Hall). These preferred readings dealt mainly with questions of free speech: whether it should be upheld under all circumstances or whether a certain protection should be offered to minority groups. The fact that freedom of speech was threatened seemed to be taken for granted and the possibility that the publication was a purely political gesture by a Danish anti-immigration newspaper (backed by a right wing government) was rarely aired. In some countries the preferred readings varied in interpretation between publications, the debate seemed to echo internal political debates of domestic journalistic fields (Kunelius, Eide et al 2007), filtered by local debates about immigration, ethnicity and citizenship (see Phillips and Nossek, Chapter 13, in this volume).

Reptilian News: Lowest Common Denominator of Professionalism?

Despite the patterns of foreclosure and frames of domestic interpretation, the caricature crisis also shows that at some level(s) journalists share values and norms. The most obvious indication of this "horizontal doxa" is the visual material distributed in the international news system. We can see the focus placed on extreme reactions to the caricatures – especially in the visual press coverage – as precisely an exercise of such common norms and values: the same pictures were used in several countries and similar stories told. What we do not know, however, is whether the newspaper readers would view the images in the same way. Or more to the point, we do not even know whether or to what extent professional journalists would interpret the images in a similar way. It seems plausible to assume that at some level (say, violent demonstrations, which are always newsworthy,) a shared journalistic doxa finds some existence, even though the interpretation may still be more localized. Indeed, one might even suspect that contradicting interpretations may actually provide justification for publishing the very same image under different regimes (see Becker, Chapter 7, in this volume). Regardless of these differences, these common features may also point in the direction of what is becoming a more standardized news agenda (Reese 2008: 249).

Such a standardized news agenda may partly be viewed within a discursive frame tied to the notion of "reptilian news" – a kind of news that makes the reader or spectator shudder and think: *Thank God I was not there* (Boak 1997)⁷. The reptilian news, triggering some of the most ancient patterns of human reaction (instinctive fear and relief) may be contrasted with a kind of news concentrating on the causes and background of the news, and where simplification has to yield to a more nuanced representation. The former seem to be the more commercially valuable news items, and they are also less costly. Thus, the struggle inside the field of journalism (Bourdieu 1999, Benson and Neveu 2005), often said to be between commercially driven celebrity news and serious investigative journalism – could also be seen as a struggle between reptilian news and more "thinking news".

Bourdieu and his colleagues, represent journalism as a field of its own, albeit with a weak autonomy:

The history of journalism could well be in large part the story of an impossible autonomy – or, to put it in the least pessimistic way, the unending story of an autonomy that must always be re-won because it is always threatened. Journalistic production is always strongly dictated by the social, especially political and economic conditions in which it is organized. [...] [N]o major general news organization can heed only purely intellectual considerations (Champagne 2005).

While it is true that the autonomy is weak, the reasons for this may differ substantially; in some countries governments interfere frequently and at times brutally; in other countries, commercialization may be the main obstacle to the (relative) journalistic autonomy. Bourdieu and his colleagues recognise the battle in the journalistic field of a particular country, but how to extend this recognition to a more global media scene, or transnational commons?

From the point of view of journalism research, then, the challenging tasks that lie ahead have to do with “the unending story of an autonomy” as it is transferred into increasingly globalized contexts”. The crucial question then becomes, what is – or could be – the capital on which the autonomy of the journalistic field could be based *transnationally*, without making the field an exclusive one. In this sense, the “reptilian” instincts of journalism represent an interesting starting point – shared imagery with contradicting interpretations might be a weak sign of a contrapuntal space emerging, even if discourses and explanations travel much less than concrete images (see Hahn, Chapter 11, in this volume).

Another weak sign of optimism might be the sheer diversity of journalistic coverage around the world in relation to a “single” event such as the caricature issue. In a transnationally more interconnected world it might be more difficult to exercise control over the contrapuntal potentials of the transnational cultural commons. Thus, although the local fields of rationalization are always fields partly constituted by power, it might be more difficult in the future to determine the meanings also in the local fields. Certainly for media research all this suggests is that researchers should avoid the easy temptation of merely reducing journalism to its local conditions of power. Put in another way, the task of transnational media research would be precisely to point out *how*, *where* and *under what conditions* the media (or journalism) are capable of articulating the potentials of the transnational commons – and simultaneously exercising a degree of autonomy.

Diaspora and Double Standards

Studying the media coverage of the Mohammed cartoons controversy suggests that finding a common terrain for global media or journalism that allows for a more diverse and mutually reflective dialogue is a very difficult. However, it also suggests that potential for such dialogue exists – both in terms of the *realities* of current global, *lived experiences* and in terms of at least embryonic *transnational discourses* that might serve as first ingredients of common standards of discussion.

An aspect of the increasingly transnational media situation – and one particularly articulated in the Mohammed caricature case – has to do with the existence of Diaspora. Throughout the period of the most intense cartoon coverage, media in several countries have placed emphasis on the existence, plight and performance of Diasporic communities in Europe and North America.

Although by no means a new phenomenon, Diasporic communities are a testimony of globalization. Given the intensity and diversity of transnational media and communication flows, they are situated in a new way. They have become an increasingly important element in global politics, and multiple meanings are imposed on them. This was also the case in the caricature crisis.

In a country of emigration, for instance Pakistan, the national press might be viewed as regarding the Pakistani Diaspora in Europe as people who were in need of protection from the consequences of bad images from the home country. From this point of view, Pakistani press coverage warned against excesses in the caricature protests. For this reason one might think that they would give less emphasis to images of senseless riots at home. But the journalistic conventions – favouring conflict and confrontation – demonstrated the ambiguity of the media, since riots, albeit involving small numbers, were highlighted.

The Diaspora would also be referred to as part of the Muslim Ummah. Hence, some commentators would view “Europe” as not taking the existence of a growing, particularly Islamic Diaspora into consideration when defending the right to publish what in Islam were considered blasphemous and insulting caricatures. Still another role was played by commentators residing in Europe or North America, writing for the press in their respective countries of origin.

In the western media the Diaspora would be represented in the press as groups preserving their conservatism due to external pressure and due to the logic of migration in itself – and thereby being viewed as a cultural threat to their host communities. On the other hand, some commentators have viewed the Diasporic communities as being more liberal, influenced by western standards, and thereby representing more of a threat to the perceived values in their countries of origin (Kramer 2007).

These sometimes contradicting definitions and ways of addressing the Diasporic communities reflect their growing importance. The cartoon case suggests that when combined with the new fast, intense and potentially less controllable media realities, the Diasporic communities will become an ever more crucial site for symbolic struggle. In terms of understanding the dynamics of transnational media they provide a key element both as figures in the media flows as well as one of its key target audiences. From the point of view of media research, Diasporic communities also open a huge potential for understanding the limits and possibilities of transnational communication.

Given the diversity of accents and interpretations, it is indeed difficult to talk about one global discursive situation. In the Mohammed cartoon case, at least, there have been some vague signs of transnational discourse. Perhaps the most obvious of these of these may be linked to hegemonic double standards. In more recent times, the western oppositional response to the electoral victory of FIS (Islamic Salvation Front) in Algeria has been challenged as a violation of the western credo of the importance of supporting democratic process, arguing that the west considers this to be acceptable whenever it does not approve of those who have been duly elected by the west’s own democratic process. The election victory of Hamas in 2006 met with some of the same reactions; a boycott from

western countries – and accusations of double standards from commentators in other parts of the world. In the aftermath of the invasions in Afghanistan and Iraq the fate of prisoners and their lack of human rights in Guantanamo and Abu Ghraib has met with much criticism in the press of most countries, and in some more than others. This has added up to a discursive situation where “the West” is looked upon with distrust for preaching democracy and human rights while practicing neither of these laudable aims in its War on Terror.

In the cartoon controversy various strands of the “double standard discourse” were seen in the press (Kunelius and Eide 2007, see also Kunelius and Nossek, Chapter 14, in this volume). After the sentencing of historian David Irving, famous for having denied the Holocaust, to three years of prison in Austria (March 2006), editorials in Pakistan would challenge Europeans for not taking the caricaturists to court, while the Europeans were at it, since they had imprisoned Irving for what the Pakistan editorials considered equally hate-filled utterances. Several critics in various countries, including Denmark, found there was a lack of consistency when *Jyllands-Posten* failed to print caricatures of Jesus submitted to it two years prior to the publication of the Mohammed cartoons. An editorial in Pakistan would refer to the ban of the *hijab* in French schools, contrasting the French tolerance for mocking the Prophet as an example of their lopsided intolerance and yet another instance of double standards.

On the other hand, some columnists inside the “East” – i.e. in the Muslim world – would challenge their leaders for their discriminatory practices towards religious minorities and also at times take on the political leaders for using the caricature issue to boost their political influence and aligning themselves uncritically with the most conservative elements within their respective societies. And in the western press, some would raise their voices about the way in which newspapers in Muslim countries portrayed Jews, an issue that became headline news after Iran’s President Ahmadinejad announced his competition of Holocaust cartoons.

The Need for Transnational Networks

Does the cartoon controversy demonstrate the need for a more globally based media ethics? This topic was raised at a forum called Global Inter Media Dialogue⁸ in the late summer of 2006, and it was suggested that such a code of ethics could evolve with the assistance of the UN. However, the proposition provoked resistance from many journalists, who did not feel the need for such codes, or who felt that it might be used to limit freedom of expression. On the other hand, can we not speak of the need for more media and journalism research that cuts right across imagined and real global divides?

In a volume discussing global journalism research, Thomas Hanitzsch writes that “journalism researchers should always ask themselves whether a cross-cultural comparison will *extend the scope* of their interpretations sufficiently to make the venture worth while” (Hanitzsch 2008: 101). The cartoon issue by its

sheer nature required cross-cultural comparisons. When meeting as a group, we found that our members themselves did not necessarily perform their research on press coverage in their countries of origin. We were already a transnational lot with some experience in seeing the world and its media from different places. We also found that working with a group of researchers from very different locations and research traditions represented many challenges. On the other hand we experienced these challenges also as a process of learning – not least to see the world from vantage points other than one's own.

The future is sure to bring similar challenges in a world where people are increasingly interdependent, as has been most clearly demonstrated by the climate crisis. But other, more temporary crises may occur, as demonstrated by the impact of the Mohammed cartoons, and if as a researcher one feels the need to understand a variety of perspectives in a globalized world, it makes more sense than ever before to build networks across countries as well as across “civilizations”.

Such networks could work towards a deeper understanding of the role of media in globalization. The interpretation of such events as the caricature issue may require a degree of what Gayatri Spivak calls “transnational literacy”:

[...] the ability to read the world in its differences even when required categories such as ‘literature’ or ‘decolonization’ impose a uniformity [...] It allows us to sense that the other is not just a ‘voice’ but that others produce articulate texts, even as they, like us, are written in and by a text not of our own making. It is through transnational literacy that we can invent grounds for an interruptive praxis from within our disavowed hope in justice under capitalism (Spivak/Sanders 2006: 2).

Spivak – a literature scholar – is primarily concerned with the interpretation of fiction, but her words may inspire a suggestion of transnational media literacy as a future perspective in media research.

Among the properties of such literacy we suggest at least the following:

- An increasing awareness of the ways in which media events may obtain a global character, but simultaneously maintain a plurality of readings and interpretations.
- An ability to see the world with the eyes of the (also) distant other, helped by an exchange of lenses – between both media researchers and practitioners.
- A recognition that transnational media literacy also operates within a country, such as when the caricature crisis was interpreted by some Danes as a deliberate provocation by a conservative media house; while by other Danes it was seen as a necessary provocation to defend the freedom of expression – and yet by still others, as a blasphemous insult to Muslims across the world.

- An increasingly shared knowledge of the various media systems of this world and how the struggle for media freedom and human dignity takes various shapes due to a variety of national and local circumstances.

This Book

Making sense is always an act of articulation. We make sense of new things by connecting them to old ones. In this sense, any inquiry is not merely an attempt to find but also to control meanings, to keep the polysemy within reasonable (i.e. understandable) limits. In this book we make sense of the caricature affair with a diverse set of contextual questions.

Broadly taken, this book aims at a critical analysis of the role of the media in relation to the Mohammed caricature events. Some of the main arguments of the authors have to do with pointing out how the controversy was situated in and shaped by the dominant, hegemonic ideological landscape of the West. The most obvious layer of this landscape is the question about free speech. Here, our analysis is not so much a question of whether or not the event was fundamentally about “free speech”, but a remark and analysis of what it was made to be by various actors – not least by the media themselves.

At a slightly less transparent level, many chapters in this book can be said to situate the controversy also into a broader debate about the concept of politics and the place of media and journalism within the political field. Given the recent strong theoretical tendencies towards relativizing the epistemology of social sciences and cultural studies it comes as no grand surprise that such global conflicts evoke fundamental questions in this respect. For instance, it is clear that such a discourse as “the clash of civilizations”, and its corresponding visions of politics as the art of identifying your enemies, are part of the same terrain as discourses that emphasize the importance of recognizing, understanding and appreciating identities of “Others”. What unites the chapters of this volume is an urge to look for ways in which questions of identity could be connected to both politics and communication while at the same time having the aim of learning to live and act together. However *passé* in theoretical fields, in the midst of global realities such a utopian dimension of thinking remains crucial. The normative idea about *rights to communication* – the right and the power to be heard and not merely to be able to speak one’s mind – thus frames all the contributions in this book, despite the diverse set of conceptualizations and theories evoked in different chapters.

In this book we do not concentrate on the ways in which journalism and media in different contexts *domesticated* the controversy, since that was taken up as the first stage of our joint endeavour. Our project has produced a separate report on this (Kunelius, Eide et al. 2007). Some chapters (see Craft and Waisbord, Chapter 8 and Phillips and Nossek, Chapter 13) do look at the general mechanisms of domestication of international news but are not built of particular national

perspectives. In this book we try to sketch out some of the more transnational lessons of the event, obviously without claiming to be exhaustive.

The book that follows is divided into three sections. The first section consists of a short introduction to the events as they unfolded from Denmark and extended to the global scene (Chapter 2). Thereafter, Amin Alhassan offers analytic reading of the infamous twelve cartoons, showing some of their differences and highlighting ambiguities in their message (Chapter 3).

The second section of the book looks at this mediated event from a series of conceptual perspectives that lie at the core of professional journalism. This section addresses debates and questions that for the most part have emerged from the tradition of (western) modernity and journalistic professionalism. Peter Hervik (Chapter 4) builds an argument according to which the “free speech” frame, which largely dominated the debate in the Western press, was the result of a successful (international) *media spin* by the Danish government. Risto Kunelius and Amin Alhassan (Chapter 5) examine the diversity of the liberal tradition in the debate and suggest an analytic framework for a *self analysis* with which to differentiate some of the logical positions in the conflict. Angela Phillips (Chapter 6) looks into the degree to which the press in different countries lived up to its standard of open debate and the concomitant demand for *communication rights* that this also implies (the right to be heard). Karin Becker (Chapter 7) situates the key visual images of the controversy – both the cartoons themselves as well the news images of the controversy – into debates concerning the role of pictures on the *borderline between art and journalism*. This section closes with Stephanie Craft and Silvio Waisbord (Chapter 8) looking at (the relative lack of) coverage in Argentina and the US as an indication of how the *dynamics of global/local* work in professional journalism.

The third section of the book broadens the frame of interpretation into questions concerning (intercultural) and global communication, thus addressing more directly debates that are broader than those confined merely to research into the media and journalism. These contributions address such questions as social integration, multiculturalism and intercultural dialogue. Elisabeth Eide (Chapter 9) analyses the varieties of coverage in several Muslim countries and discusses them in the light of *Orientalism critique* and the more recent, yet related concept of *Occidentalism*. Ibrahim Saleh (Chapter 10) provides a further insight into the *dynamics of religion, power and journalism* in the Muslim world, particularly drawing on the Egyptian experience. Oliver Hahn (Chapter 11) opens up *the role of images in the context of intercultural communication*. Carolina Boe and Peter Hervik (Chapter 12) expose (through an analysis of the French and Danish coverage) one particular trajectory of logic in the case, namely the idea of *integration by ridicule*, a common enough theme elsewhere as well. Angela Phillips and Hillel Nosssek (Chapter 13) provide an analysis of the relationship of journalism to different policy articulations of multiculturalism in Britain, Israel and France. Finally, the book closes with an attempt by Risto Kunelius and Hillel Nosssek (Chapter 14) to think through what sort of lessons

the Mohammed caricature issue suggests in terms of a discussion concerning global media events and the possibility of global public spheres. The afterword by John Durham Peters is a contribution from outside our initial project network. In it, Peters discusses dynamics and tensions between freedom of speech and religious theorizing.

Notes

1. Ramonet characterizes this event as “psychodrama planétaire”, “choc médiatique total”, “globalisation émotionnelle”.
2. Citation from NOFSA, a network originating in Norway, but its subscribers (e-mail) may be everywhere. It is a news service edited by scholars at the University of Oslo. In the above text, both the question mark and exclamation point were in the writer’s original text.
3. Directors from Bosnia, Burkina Faso, the UK, Egypt, France, India, Iran, Israel, Japan, Mexico and the USA took part in the sequence. (Brigand 2003)
4. All in all, researchers from the following countries have been involved in this research in one way or another: Argentina, Bangladesh, Canada, China, Denmark, Egypt, Finland, France, Germany, Indonesia, Israel, Norway, Pakistan, Russia, Sweden, the UK and the USA.
5. One flaw the cartoon controversy was the great danger to any individual who even tried to search for the cartoons on the internet in certain countries (for example Afghanistan, Pakistan or Saudi-Arabia). Here printing them would be unthinkable.
6. While the Diaspora originally denoted the international dispersal of the Jews, the term today has been expanded to refer to the global situation in which encapsulated cultures find existence in many places far from their respective homelands.
7. Boak applies the concept *maybem* to news about war, terrorism, catastrophe and crime and refers to a study of TV news in the US, which concludes that *maybem* represents 42% of the total news and that crime news comprised approximately 75% of these.
8. Global Inter Media Dialogue (GIMD) was initiated by the governments of Indonesia and Norway (and triggered by the cartoon issue), as a meeting point for journalists from all over the world. There is an organising committee of journalists and journalism educators which plans the agenda for the meetings. The first one took place in Bali in 2006, the second one in Oslo 2007, and the third one in Indonesia in 2008.

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Chapter 2

A Long and Messy Event

Peter Hervik, Elisabeth Eide & Risto Kunelius

To call something an “event” is to suggest that it has a relatively clear beginning and end. Despite its often dramatic representations in the media, the controversy over the cartoons depicting Prophet Mohammed is anything but clearcut. At the very least it is a messy event. When we type these last words for this book in early June 2008 – almost three years after the controversy began to emerge – the messiness of this affair becomes ever more painfully clear. On June 2nd (2008) one of the leading international news items of the day read as follows:

Car bomb kills 6 at Danish embassy in Pakistan

(Reuters, June 2, 2008, 3:24 pm EDT)

By Kamran Haider

ISLAMABAD (Reuters) – A suspected suicide bomber blew up a car outside the Danish embassy in the Pakistani capital on Monday, killing six people and wounding 25, government officials said.

The blast will raise fresh questions about the safety of foreigners in Pakistan, even though militant attacks have dropped off since a new government came to power after a February general election vowing to negotiate to end violence.

Danish newspapers infuriated Muslims around the world when they published cartoons of the Prophet Mohammad in late 2005. The cartoons, considered blasphemous by Muslims, sparked deadly protests and attacks on Danish missions.

The embassy in Islamabad was temporarily shut in 2006 after violent protests over the sketches.

There was no claim of responsibility and while it would be premature to link the attack to the cartoons, one of which was recently reprinted in Danish newspapers, that possibility was being investigated, said Interior Ministry secretary Kamal Shah.

The news story is a good example of how the dispute over the caricatures has been encoded into the language of global media. By now, it stands for a quick shorthand reference and a frame of explanation to various kinds of incidents and acts, and thus connects them into a broader narrative about an ongoing “event” that does not seem to want come to and end.

But the Reuters news points to the messy nature of the mediated cartoon conflict also in another way. In its third paragraph it recapitulates a quick background version of the conflict, in professional, dense and effective news prose.

Danish newspapers infuriated Muslims around the world when they published cartoons of the Prophet Mohammad in late 2005. The cartoons, considered blasphemous by Muslims, sparked deadly protests and attacks on Danish missions. (ibid)

As always, however, this effectiveness comes with a price tag. The paragraph includes several rather problematic assumptions about what happened. It refers to “Danish newspapers” (plural), implying that the whole national press stood behind the initial provocation in September 2005. This, of course, is not true. It suggests that the initial publication “infuriated Muslims around the world”. At the very least, this brackets out all the contextual factors necessary to even begin to understand the conflict, and thus is somewhat misleading. The paragraph also makes the usual sweeping claim that the cartoons were considered blasphemous by all Muslims, and that it was the cartoons which “sparked deadly protests” against Danish missions. These facts – like facts everywhere – are, as always, partial and perhaps true. What they bypass completely however, are the non-violent demonstrations, the diplomatic blunders and initiatives as well as the the economic boycott activity that the publication also sparked, in addition to the fact that most people stayed at home when protests and violent actions took place.

Our point here is not to criticize this particular news story. The language it uses and the facts it has chosen make certain professional sense. To be exact, there were indeed at least two newspapers in Denmark which published some drawings of Mohammed during 2005 (The original cartoons in *Jyllands-Posten* and some different ones in *Weekendavisen* in November 2005); eventually, many Muslims became extremely angry, and indeed, there were utterly unacceptable acts of violence in which lives were lost in vain – just as they were lost again in the incident this particular story depicts. And to be fair, since this story is about a violent attack against a diplomatic mission, it is understandable (or at least professionally reasonable) that the background paragraph particularly emphasizes earlier violence.

While these reservations might help us to understand and partly accept the limitations of this piece of international news feed, the implications and simplifications that the text mediates and reproduces also point to the very complex nature of the whole cartoon affair, its construction and its afterlife in the discourses of global media flows. Despite professional attempts like the

one in our example story, the boundaries of the event are not just temporally but also discursively unclear.

The Problem of a Beginning

One way of starting the story about the Mohammed cartoons would be this. On September 30, 2005, a Danish newspaper *Morgenavisen Jyllands-Posten* with a circulation of around 150,000 – the largest one in Denmark – published images of the Prophet Mohammed drawn by twelve cartoonists’ as “they saw him”. Three of them were already working for the newspaper. A fourth one had retired from *Jyllands-Posten*. The pictures were published accompanied by the following text:

The modern, secular society is rejected by some Muslims. They demand a special position, insisting on special consideration of their own religious feelings. It is incompatible with contemporary democracy and freedom of speech that you must be ready to put up with insults, mockery and ridicule. It is certainly not always attractive and nice to look at, and it does not mean that religious feelings should be made fun of at any price, but that is of minor importance in the present context. [...] we are approaching a slippery slope where no-one can tell where self-censorship will end. That is why *Morgenavisen Jyllands-Posten* has invited members of the Danish editorial cartoonists union to draw Mohammed as they see him. [...]

A first version of the beginning, then, might be the act of publication. A couple of weeks before this, however, a journalist in the Danish news agency, Ritzau’s Bureau, had reported author Kåre Bluitgen’s difficulties in finding an illustrator for his children’s book on the Quran and the life of the Prophet Mohammed. In a news agency story from September 17 (with Bluitgen as its sole source) newspapers reported that several illustrators had declined Bluitgen’s invitation due to fear of Muslim reactions. A second way of dating the beginning, then, would be to say that it was the problem of the book illustration that triggered *Jyllands-Posten*’s decision to approach some 42 cartoonists asking them for submissions, and thereby creating its own story.

Since the day of publication, 30th of September 2005, there have been various interpretations of the events on different levels, and of the ways in which these events have been linked to the act of publication. At least three initial positions in the debate are pretty clear. First, there is the version represented by the editors of *Jyllands-Posten* themselves and later endorsed by a number of political leaders. They claim that the publication was an attempt to stem the growing self-censorship in the Danish public sphere. This self-imposed censorship, they say, is due to the fear of hurting some minorities’ feelings. Thus, the metaphor of a “slippery slope” refers to “us” being too politically correct and too considerate when voluntarily surrendering to self-censorship.

Second, and in contrast to the first one, there is a popular view of events among some Muslim leaders in Europe – and especially in many Muslim countries – that the caricatures represented a well thought out strategy to provoke Muslims and further contribute to Samuel Huntington’s (1993) prophecy about the “clash of civilizations” – an attempt to turn its questionable assumptions into a truism. According to a third version, found in Scandinavia, *Jyllands-Posten*’s right wing anti-Islamic history provided the fertile ground for a potential escalation into violent reactions. As a Swedish journalist pointed out, from this perspective the act of publishing the twelve cartoons was seen as a “token of friendship” with the Danish government which relied on the support from a radical right wing nationalist party, the Danish People’s Party, which is highly critical of immigration. This third critical position in fact suggests yet another “beginning” for the event: namely, the internal political dispute over immigration in Denmark. Such a view would place the starting point of the event much further back, and would for instance point to several earlier cartoons in *Jyllands-Posten* which cumulatively have been developing the genre from which the controversial pictures emerged.

Under the Global Radar

After the publication of the cartoons, things started to develop and positions began to be taken. On October 14, 2005 about 3,000 people in Copenhagen took to the streets and protested over the publication of the cartoons. The very same day two of the cartoonists were advised to go into hiding after receiving death threats.

One of the first newspapers to re-publish one or more of the cartoons, was the Egyptian newspaper *Al-Fagr* on its front page on October 17 (see Saleh, Chapter 10, this volume). Almost all sources dealing with the *Al-Fagr* publications emphasize that nothing happened in terms of reactions by offended Muslims¹. This lack of reaction is often used to support an argument that the Muslim world here applied a double standard, that they were in fact not necessarily provoked by the pictures, but chose to be so only when a Western newspaper published the pictures. Such readings, however, neglect the immediate context and explicit motivation of the publication. The caption under the (one) picture that *Al-Fagr* published, read: “Ridiculing the Prophet and his wives with caricature”. They also neglect ramifications of the crucial next episode in Denmark.

In a letter dated October 12, 2005, eleven ambassadors from Muslim countries in Denmark, asked to meet the Danish prime minister to discuss the general situation of Muslims in Denmark, using the *Jyllands-Posten* cartoons as one of four examples of the problematic atmosphere.² Other examples of a “smearing campaign in Danish public circles and media against Islam and Muslims” included for instance public statements by a cabinet minister. The ambassadors also urged the government “to take all those responsible to task under the law of the land in the interest of inter-faith harmony, better integration and

Denmark's overall relations with the Muslim world. We rest assured that you will take all steps necessary."

They also expressed concern about possible reactions in the Muslim world and among Muslims of Europe. The prime minister also received a similar letter sent by the Organisation of Islamic Conference (OIC), dated 15 October indicating international interest in the Danish situation. Taking issue only with the *Jyllands-Posten* example, and the media angle, Prime Minister Anders Fogh Rasmussen turned down the request for a meeting.

The prime minister interpreted the ambassadors' wording as an issue of freedom of speech, and stated that he had no legal means available for intervening with *Jyllands-Posten's* editorial decisions. In his response, he did not even refer to the ambassadorial request for a meeting.³ At this point the issue started taking on a much more global character. The ambassadors represented countries with approximately half a billion Muslims. On October 19, the same day the prime minister turned down the negotiation, the cartoons were again mentioned by *Al-Jazeera* that had covered the emergent tension in Denmark several times in early October.

At the end of October, several Muslim organizations in Denmark filed a complaint with the Danish police claiming that *Jyllands-Posten* had violated two paragraphs in the Danish Criminal Code. The claim was later turned down in March 2006. However, the public prosecutor did point out that freedom of speech does not, contrary to what was claimed by cultural editor of *Jyllands-Posten*, Flemming Rose, provide a right to "insult, mock, and ridicule", since "insult and ridicule" of religions can be punished, depending on the specific circumstances.⁴

Following the prime minister's rejection of the ambassadors' call to talk, there was intense Danish media coverage, also strongly critical of the government's actions. The prime minister responded to this debate through an interview with *Jyllands-Posten* on October 30, in which he indirectly endorsed *Jyllands-Posten's* position and repeated his interpretation that this was an issue of free speech (see Hervik, Chapter 4, in this volume).

In any case, at this point – a month after the initial publication – it had become clear, that it was the combination of the publications of the cartoons and the government's rejection of the meeting that provided the grounds from which the controversy grew. This unfortunate combination and the context of the Danish situation also helps to explain why Al-Fagr in Egypt did not receive similar reactions as did *Jyllands-Posten* and the Danish government. Instead of criticizing others for double standards it could have been wiser to look at the contexts.

A Global Crisis

In December 2005 two delegations of Danish Muslims travelled to Egypt and several countries in the Middle East. The issue was raised at the OIC summit by the Egyptian Foreign Secretary. Generally speaking, and certainly concerning the

international news flows, the event was largely still bubbling under the surface. A continuous debate, however, was going on in Denmark where additional cartoons were published by *Weekendavisen* and in Germany where *Die Welt* published one of the *Jyllands-Posten* cartoons in November and in newspapers in Holland, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Romania, Norway and the USA.

On December 22 retired Danish diplomats published a letter of criticism of the prime minister. They argued that his not having met the eleven ambassadors was a grave mistake and an unheard of diplomatic act. Also, a Danish Christian Missionary group denounced *Jyllands-Posten's* publication of the cartoons revealing that there was no single, unified, "Danish" version of the course of events, but rather, several.⁵

In his New Year speech Anders Fogh Rasmussen said that he would "condemn any expression, action or indication that attempts to demonize groups of people", but did not specify further. The pressure from Muslim countries had begun with hints of a boycott which would hurt the Danish economy substantially.⁶

On January 10 2006, a small Norwegian Christian journal *Magazinet* published the cartoons. After this, in early February, the controversy, now more fully blown, entered the global media sphere, and a series of European and other newspapers followed the earlier examples and published either some or all of the cartoons. Others said they would consider doing so if the violent protests in Middle East continued. By this time the "event" had been framed first and foremost in the Western media as a "free speech" issue; sides were being taken. From then on the protest demonstrations became more widespread, some displayed elements of violence. All in all, more than 130 people have been killed in events somehow related to this violence.⁷ However convincingly one may argue that many of these deaths also had deeper roots in history or in the local political conditions, this death toll may also be considered a brutal consequence of collective misunderstanding, a lack of communication and a sad example of transnational illiteracy. In addition, several editors and journalists lost their jobs due to the attitude they adopted towards the cartoons, or toward their being republished, while others were put in prison, as for instance in Yemen.

In addition to the global grand event, the cartoon affair caused multiple local narratives and events. In Sweden, the Minister of Foreign Affairs was pressured to resign after being charged with attempting to censor a website maintained by a radical right wing party (she resigned not so much because of the attempt but for her alleged denial of having attempted such action) (Walentin and Ekecrantz, 2007). In Russia, two local newspapers were closed for some time after having published a cartoon depicting Jesus, Buddha, Moses and Mohammed watching riots on television. The caption said, "We did not teach them to do that" (Bakoulin, 2007). In Finland, an editor of a small, local magazine was sacked for publishing a cartoon commenting on the cartoonists' fear of drawing Mohammed (Kunelius et al, 2007). In Canada, Muslim organisations evoked the nation's hate-speech laws and managed to persuade a right wing prime minister into publicly regretting the re-publications in the local media (Alhassan, 2007). In France, the satirical magazine *Charlie Hebdo*

published the cartoon and some of its own, and was later taken to court for doing so (Berthault et al., 2007), but all charges were dropped. In Norway, the editor of *Magazinet*, Vebjørn Selbekk received threats, and in the fall of 2006 published a book called “Threatened by Islamists”. In June 2008, a cartoonist from a regional newspaper published a cartoon as a comment to the bombing of the Danish embassy in Islamabad, a man with a suicide belt, and the inscription “I am Mohammad, but nobody dares to print me”. The cartoonist later explained that this drawing was not of the Prophet, but he was criticised by leading Muslims in Norway – and news of the cartoon spread to a large number of media abroad. Simultaneously the debate in Norway has since the very beginning had strong elements of dialogue between various religious groups and leaders – and the government (social-democrat-led coalition) has supported this.

These are just a few examples of a variety of local episodes or consequences of the cartoon controversy. They illustrate the many and diverse contexts into which – again – the boundaries of the actual event begin to disappear.

Re-runs and Sequels

By late March 2006, the most intensive period of the controversy had passed. As is usually the case, the global media attention shifted to other events and conflicts. But attention to the cartoon affair had certainly been strong enough to have led to a series of re-appearances. In the true spirit of our commodified age and its culture of sequels, several episodes have followed. We will only pick up some examples here.

One re-occurring theme has led to smaller controversies around art or artistic performances. Already in September 2006, a heated debate was sparked by the decision of the German Opera of Berlin to temporarily cancel the production of Mozart’s *Idomeneo* (which had been premiered already in 2003) because of the fact the opera ends with a scene depicting decapitated heads of holy figures, including Mohammed. (cf. Hahn et al, 2007). A year later in 2007, a Swedish artist Lars Wilks published a cartoon depicting the prophet as a dog in the local newspaper *Nerikes Allehanda*. Parallels to the cartoon case were again raised, and governments and diplomats raised their voices. However, reactions were more subdued than some people expected, no doubt partly because the dialogue attempts by Swedish government. One of the latest related events is the release of the Dutch film maker Geert Wilders’ film *Fitna*. Some demonstrations have taken place, but none of the same violent nature witnessed in some predominantly Muslim countries in 2006. One interpretation of the low-key protests is that the Muslim leaders have taken an attitude of moral supremacy toward the provocations and argued that “this is not about our religion or the Prophet Mohammed; and thus we should ignore these media events.”⁸

Another thread that has kept the event alive and evolving consists of various kinds of attacks and threats. Some of these have been exposed by the police and

security officials, some have led to destructive consequences – as the opening example in this chapter shows. Already in the summer of 2006, German authorities disrupted an alleged plan to bomb regional trains during the 2006 Soccer World Cup tournament (cf. Hahn et al 2007). There are several other incidents of this kind, perhaps one of the most meaningful of which took place in Denmark more than two years after the heated coverage of 2005. In February 2008 the Danish Intelligence service arrested three men for plotting to murder one of the cartoonists, Kurt Westergaard (the man who drew the prophet Mohammed with a bomb in his turban). In reaction to this most of the Danish newspapers – including the ones that had criticized the initial publication – joined hands in the condemnation and republished the cartoons.

These re-occurring news events – of which we have only referred to some – testify to the fact that in some ways those who wanted to use the cartoons, their publication and re-publications as an ideological weapon to divide the world have succeeded in doing so. The cartoons have become a landmark in the global media discourse. Continuing to read on our opening example of the Reuters news story we find the following:

The blast coincided with an anti-cartoon rally in the city of Multan attended by about 200 people.

After hearing news of the bomb, some protesters shouted "Allahu Akbar" (God is greatest).

"Whoever commits blasphemy against the Prophet Mohammad will face more serious consequences than this", said city cleric Intizar Hussain. "If it is a suicide attack, then whoever did it will go to heaven." (Reuters June 2, 2008)

Sadly, and without doubt, this will not be last we hear of the cartoons. The event in the media keeps unfolding and recurring. The rather simplistic roles it suggests to various participants are strong and useful for various agendas.

The Project

This book grows out of an earlier project in which we surveyed the ways in which the cartoon conflict was covered in 14 different countries. The initial report (Kunelius, Eide et al. 2007) on these nationally framed studies forms the main empirical base from which we work in this book.

After studying a diversity of local settings and contexts in which the cartoon event unfolded, we wanted to develop the common themes and questions at a more transnational level.

This has meant that many of the chapters we offer here take some analytical or conceptual distance from the actual event narrated above. We hope to have been able distinguish and elaborate some of the lessons of the event, both for global media and media research. Despite the different foci and themes of

the chapters – as well as the varied cultural and academic backgrounds of the authors – we feel it is safe to say that we all share an attempt to not only make sense of how media and journalists take part in the construction and evolution of such an event but also to use the “long event” of the cartoon controversy as an opportunity to learn and raise questions about what the media (and media research) should do better.

Notes

1. For instance Assyrian International News Agency reported: “No Outrage When Arab Paper Published the Muhammad Cartoons.”, quoting a blog for saying “The Egyptian paper criticized the bad taste of the cartoons but it did not incite hatred protests” <http://www.aina.org/news/2006029110300.htm>. The same point is made by several Danish writers (Thomson, 2006:85, Hansen & Hundedvadt 2006: 259).
2. The original letter, see <http://www.filtrat.dk/grafik/Letterfromambassadors.pdf> (2.6.2008).
3. The letter in response, see <http://gfx-master.tv2.dk/images/Nyhederne/Pdf/side3.pdf> (2.6.2008)
4. The reasoning of the public prosecutor is as follows: “It is therefore not a correct rendering of the law, when it is claimed in the article in *Jyllands-Posten* that freedom of speech is incompatible with calls for consideration for religious feelings, and than one must be prepared to accept “insult, mock, and ridicule”. He goes on to state that the bomb-in-the-turban cartoon is right on the limit of going too far. “This representation can be claimed to be perceived as an offense and insult of the prophet, who is a model for Muslim believers” (See Larsen and Seidenfaden 2006: 245).
5. See: http://www.danmission.dk/index.php?indl_id=3110&id=933 (Accessed 5 June 2008).
6. On September 9, 2006, the BBC News reported that the Muslim boycott of Danish goods had reduced Denmark’s total exports by 15.5% between February and June. This was attributed to a decline in Middle East exports by approximately 50%. The estimated cost to Danish businesses was around 134 million. (<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/5329642.stm>, accessed June 6 2008).
7. Almost all were killed in Afghanistan, Libya, Nigeria and Pakistan.
8. This is a quote from a Muslim participant in seminar in Oslo Norway, Litteraturhuset, November 29, 2007.

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Chapter 3

The Twelve Cartoons

A Discursive Inquiry

Amin Alhassan

The twelve cartoons, with which the Danish newspaper *Jyllands-Posten* lampooned Islam and Prophet Mohammed in September 2005, are particularly interesting as objects of semiotic and discursive inquiry. Whether as participants in media debates and scholarly discourses, or as participants in the dramatic and violent – or peaceful – reactions on the streets, the majority of actors involved in the global uproar, probably did not see all the twelve cartoons in the form that *Jyllands-Posten* (JP) published them. Most of the world's newspapers that took part in the debates told their respective readerships about the cartoons and their consequences as a media event but did not reproduce the images. This media attitude of not publishing the cartoons but rather, commenting on them, can be likened to the practice of not reproducing visual hate-speech materials when they become subjects of public dispute and debate. It may also be compared to child-porn related criminal acts where the media will report the event without re-producing the materials in question even if the channel of discourse is technologically a visual medium.

However, the twelve cartoons differ from the situation of child-pornographic representations because some newspapers legitimately did reproduce them, and some websites have archived them for public access without contravening any local or national laws. In addition, one cannot be faulted for privately feasting one's eyes on them and even producing a semiotic and discursive engagement as a scholarly exercise – unlike child pornographic representations for example. This, then, is the basis for the present chapter. It is an attempt to use the methodological frameworks of semiotics and discourse analysis to interrogate the now infamous twelve images. What semiotic tropes make the cartoons provocative and offensive to some constituencies of global publics? The issue arises not only with Muslims. Indeed, some major Christian organizations and secular entities found the cartoons offensive as well. On the other hand, how can the cartoons be also said to communicate ambivalence – in the sense that some people, including Muslims, did not find the cartoons offensive. As signs and representations that are decoded by the audience, how do the various constitutive elements interact with their interlocutors? Beyond the semiotic

ambivalence of the cartoons as signs, what were the discursive sociocultural and political frameworks that propelled the cartoons as motivated codes of a communicative event? How do we read the cartoons beyond their immediate aesthetics as “works of art” and “acts of critique” to account for their discursive signification within international relations of the contemporary conjuncture?

Without claiming any kind of exhaustiveness, this chapter aims at opening up these questions with a detailed look at the twelve cartoons themselves.¹ There is already some considerable amount of scholarly discussion of the local Danish political environment under which the cartoons can be situated and contextualized (see for instance Kunelius, Eide et al. 2007, and Hervik, Chapter 4, in this volume.) Instead of looking at various contexts (as the rest of this book does), this chapter is primarily focused on directly deconstructing the cartoons to unpack their discursive articulations. In effect it is an attempt at *contextualized readings* of the twelve cartoons beyond their aesthetic significations. I look at their function as acts of speech justifiable by some according to liberal notions of democratic rights, and demonized by others as excessive and beyond the limits of speech rights.

Textually Speaking

The twelve cartoons drawn by different artists were published on page 3 of JP in September 2005. But what really globalized the issue as a media event was when in January 2006 several European newspapers re-printed some of the cartoons. The members of the controversy were re-kindled in Denmark when several Danish newspapers re-printed the cartoons in February 2008 in protest at the alleged attempted murder of Kurt Westergaard, one of the authors of the original JP cartoons. When JP published the cartoons in 2005, it captioned the story “Muhammeds ansigt” loosely translated as Mohammed’s Face, or the Face of Mohammed. In a synecdochic reading, it can be translated as the Face of Islam. Whichever way one looks at it the Islamic denotative and connotative meanings are unmistakable. Just above the bold captioned text are the two most strongly coded cartoons of the whole set. They leave no doubt in the mind of the beholder what all this is about. These two cartoons each have strong Islamic signifiers.

The Turban and Its Content

One of these two main cartoons, the one arguably most provocative, is a bomb about to go off and sitting on the head of a bearded man with a heavy mustache and whiskers. For analytical purposes, we may call this the “weaponized human head”. The bomb, painted black, matches the black facial hair and thick eyebrows; aesthetically it has the sartorial elegance of a turban. Thus the reader sees a bomb in the form of a human head dressed in turban about to detonate.

The bomb's fuse, a string that protrudes from the human head/bomb is shown as having been set up to go off in seconds. At this stage, the weaponized human head could be mistaken for a sketch of any of the Asian religions whose adherents wear turbans. In order to delimit its scope as a signifier, this weaponized human head has the most cherished creed of Islam written across its forehead (in the most popular Arabic calligraphy). The text of this unmistakably Islamic iconic statement, called the *shahadah*, translates as: "There is no god except Allah and Mohammed is Allah's messenger." This is the standard declaration of faith which all new converts must recite and which must be witnessed by the Muslim community before the convert is accepted. In Islam, this is considered the first of the five founding pillars which define the faith. It is also an exclamatory statement that Muslims invoke whenever they are confronted with a crisis situation. In addition, it is the preferred last testament that a Muslim recites before death. All Muslims will easily recognize this statement without the slightest prompting. For the non-Muslim, the Arabic text on the bomb precludes other meanings and denotes the weaponized head as Islamic.

The "Green Crescent"

Beside the weaponized head representing Islam and suicide bombing, is a cartoon that uses color symbolism, universal Islamic codes, sartorial, and biological identifiers to lampoon Muslims and Arabs. We may call this the "green crescent". It is important to clarify the distinction between a Muslim and an Arab; the two are not interchangeable in a critical sense; however they have been conflated at the level of the popular imaginary employed by JP. This cartoon portrays a human head with a thick black beard, black whiskers and eyebrows, and a white turban. The nose is Semitic in appearance and emblazoned in green across the face is a huge crescent and a star resembling the lunar symbol and star frequently mounted on top of minarets as a visual marker of a Muslim prayer house. Both the green moon and the green star are positioned to mimic their position on the minarets of mosques. In addition, the star covers the right eye. What the viewer sees is a one-eyed, bearded Muslim face in a turban. The proximity of this cartoon to the weaponized Muslim head allows them to be encompassed by the same bold caption – the Face of Mohammed. Both cartoons are emblematic and they work collectively to constitute a clear and bold message. The use of green here speaks very much about Islam, the world religion most closely associated with that color. It conveys the message of "the green threat" that is often reported in neoconservative narratives that conflate terrorism and Islam, arguing that they pose the major threat to Western civilization. Following the collapse of the Soviet Union and the Eastern bloc, many in the Western media have switched from dire warnings about "the red threat" to a green one.

Ambivalence

Whereas these two above-mentioned cartoons (the weaponized head and the green-starry-eyed lunar monster-face of an unmistakable iconic male Arab face) are dead serious in terms of intent and articulation, not all the others are so clear in their message. For instance, two of the three cartoons that are positioned on the vertical borders of the headline “Muhammeds Ansigt” are caricatures that weigh heavily on the side of ambivalence. On the left side of the headline is a European-looking man wearing glasses and a turban, and holding a cartoon of a bearded man who appears to be iconically Arab or Muslim. Embossed on the turban is an orange-like object with the inscription “PR Stunt”. It is accompanied by a vertical ray of light flowing from above and illuminating the orange-like object. The cartoon background is sky-blue. The cartoon character could be read as a representation of Flemming Rose, the Cultural Pages Editor of JP, who commissioned the cartoon contest. But Danes are likely to associate the character in this cartoon with Kåre Bluitgen, the Danish children’s book author who was unable to find an illustrator of Islam and Prophet Mohammed, which he wanted for his children’s book. The orange falling on his head resonates with a Danish expression that suggests an orange falling on one’s head is a sign of luck. This Danish contextual reading, which may have had little impact on the world outside Denmark, therefore suggests that Kåre Bluitgen went public about his inability to get an illustrator “just to get cheap publicity” (Rose 2006). In a sense then this is one of several of the cartoons that carry a double articulation (Eco 1976: 231) and also constitutes a meta-narrative of a cartoon referring to the cartoons. It is a cartoon commentary about the cartoons in general (i.e. the twelve).

The Criminal Identification Parade

The other cartoon with a double articulation of both the West (Europe and Christian) and the East (Arab and Islam) is a representation of a criminal identification parade of seven faces: all are wearing turbans; four are fully bearded; one is clean shaved and two are female. One of the apparent females wears the *bindi*, a cosmetic ethnic marker associated with South East Asian and South Asian women. In the lineup one character purportedly represents the leader of the anti-immigration Danish People’s Party “as if she were a suspected criminal” (Rose 2006). A man facing the seven members of the line-up says, “Hmm... I don’t recognize any of them”.² In addition one of the seven faces wears a necklace with the inverted Y peace sign commonly associated with left wing “politically correct” people.

The Man at Prayer

On the right side of the headline one finds the image of an iconic Muslim man in an Islamic prayer pose; that is, standing with his arms folded against his

chest. We may call this, the fifth image of the original JP cartoons, the “praying man”. It is one of the five cartoons that surround the bold caption: *Mubammeds ansigt*. This image of a man wearing a turban and “Islamic” clothes and apparently in supplication to his Creator is not a normal devotee. His action is vulgarized by two horn-like protrusions emanating from his turban – horns that in several religions are often associated with the devil or with evil in general. He is also shown to be in sandals, and heavily bearded; however, this time he has red hair. The horn-like protrusions may as well be that of a bull. From a distance the two horns look like a halo, but this apparent aura of glory easily vanishes upon a second look. Some have interpreted the horns as a crescent stuck in the moon. Others also said the loose garments with the wild growth of beard add up to the semblance of a moron in a mental hospital³. Be this as it may, his Muslim-look is a highly motivated code in this image. The consequent message is something like the following: a Muslim and a moron at prayer may simultaneously be a devil incarnate. This is one of several moments of double articulations in the entire collection.

So far, five of the twelve cartoons have been described. This initial focus on these five is warranted due to their prominence in the original JP publication. Often, captions of pictures perform the function of framing the meaning of the pictures and can be considered to be the most significant constituent of any image (Barthes 1981, Price 1994). If this is so, the first five cartoons that border the caption should be given prominence in the scheme of meanings and connotations. I am not suggesting that the remaining seven cartoons, which I will describe shortly, are not of any significance. I want rather to stress that the first five constitute a first order of the spectacle that indeed all twelve cartoons represent. The second and comprehensive order is the entire collection of twelve cartoons. So the division of the entire set into two groups is for analytical and descriptive purposes only.

The Heavenly Scene

The remaining seven cartoons are positioned right beneath the five and the general caption. These seven images are arranged such that they enclose a three-column text that gives the background to the commissioning and publication of the cartoons. With the exception of three, all the cartoons published by JP are rendered in color; and the three that are in black and white are among the latter seven. For analytical purposes, I want to label these three, 1) “the heavenly scene”, 2) “the five dumb women”, and 3) “the stressed cartoonist”.

The Heavenly Scene shows what purports to be a scene from the afterlife, somewhere above the clouds, with four to five male human images queuing to receive their heavenly rewards in the form of virgins. These human bodies discharge waves of heat suggesting they have been burned. A man, dressed in a white robe, with a black overcoat and a white turban stands before them and shouts: “Stop! Stop! We have run out of virgins!” Just above them is the

text “Muhammed”. Both the text and the image give the effect of a scene of the afterlife or judgment day where human acts are to be rewarded. In this case there is only one reward: virgins.

Dumb Women and Stressed Cartoonist

The “five dumb women” shows five iconically female heads dressed in *bijab*. This sparsely illustrated caricature of the *bijab* shows a very artistic use of the Star of David and the crescent of Islam to designate the face. The image of these five female heads would have been difficult and ambiguous to decode – if they had not been accompanied by the following rhyming doggerel: “Prophet! / daft and dumb / keeping woman / under thumb” to bring home the message about how the cartoonist chooses to represent Muslim women. The use of the Star of David, a Jewish symbol, adds up to the complexity of the image. However, the use of the text as an additional resource helps to fix its meaning as specifically about Muslims and Islam, and distinguishing it from Judaism.

The “stressed cartoonist” sketch is also one of the five or six cartoons of the collection that carry either multiple articulations or a meta-narrative. In this particular case is the image is of an apparently Danish cartoonist sweating profusely under the stress of producing a caricature of Mohammed. The caricature under development shows the portrait of a man of Middle Eastern origin with the caption “Muhammed”. The cartoonist is visibly challenged to undertake the task. It remains unclear whether this is an autobiographical cartoon or whether the man in the picture is for instance depicting the veteran Danish cartoonist Kurt Westergaard. This particular cartoon suggests the fear of the cartoonists who participated in the JP competition that they were undertaking what could potentially be a dangerous mission. So instead of offering us the “face of Mohammed” we are given the face of the cartoonist tasked to show the face of Mohammed. As such the cartoon articulates the atmosphere of fear of responding to the JP call, and in this sense it joins the mission declared by the paper.

“Just a Sketch”

A colored cartoon sitting beside the “stressed cartoonist” shows what appeared to be an Islamic religious leader taking a hard look at a page, possibly at cartoons that dared to poke fun at Mohammed. He is apparently in a mosque (we may call this the “mosque scene”) and right behind him is a group of angry machete-wielding Muslim men ready to charge. The Islamic leader, positioned to look like an Imam, seems to realize the page he is holding is not a big problem after all. Thus he beckons the machete-wielding men to back off. Below, a Danish text, loosely translated into English, reads: “Relax folks, it is just a sketch made by a Dane from southwest Denmark”. Like “the stressed cartoonist”, this cartoon is also a meta-commentary on the cartoons. It foresees the reaction that the publication will generate. The Imam is represented like

a commander, who has the power of authorizing or stopping violence. In this case the Imam opted for tolerance and understanding, sending a message that the cartoons are tolerable acts of speech, just a sketch by a Dane.

Beside this “mosque scene” and at the lower left corner of the JP original rendering is what I want to call “the classroom scene”. Here a school boy, in Grade 7A with the name “Mohammed” is standing before a green classroom writing board apparently leading his class in reciting the text on the board. No other class members are shown. The text on the green board is in Arabic letters, but in Persian, and it loosely translates as: “Jyllands-Posten’s journalists are a bunch of reactionary provocateurs”. On the T-shirt that the boy wears is the text “Fremtiden” which translates as “Future”. This cartoon puts up a meta-narrative and multiple articulations of the cartoon affair and preempts the reaction of the Islamic world, including Persian Iran.⁴ It may suggest that in reactions to the cartoons, school children will be taught a particular response which will brand JP as reactionary and offensive. It may also be playing on children’s book author Kåre Bluitgen’s search for an illustrator. It is clear, however, that this cartoon can also be read as a criticism of JP for calling for the cartoons – and thus as a meta-commentary.

Niqab and Nomad

The last two of the cartoons do not easily yield a specific meaning. In one, which I choose to call the “bewildered man with two women”, a man in a Middle Eastern type robe and a turban is holding a dagger as if he is being confronted by a threat. His beard and whiskers look electrified with strings of hair standing out. This gives the man the look of someone highly agitated. Right behind him are two women dressed in black *niqab* with a rectangular opening that shows each of the women’s eyes. While the women’s eyes are transfixed and looking at the same direction as the dagger wielding man who seems to lead them, the man has his eyes blacked out. Is this a play on the perception among some Muslims that Mohammed’s face cannot be depicted? The rectangular shape that blacks out his sight is about the same size as the ones that allow the women to look out. The clothes of the three characters clearly show they are Muslims. This cartoon is drawn on a green canvas. In the first instance it denotes a group of two terrified looking women led by a blind man who holds a weapon. Is he holding the dagger in self-defense and an act of protecting the women? Are the women taken hostage by the man? Are they charging after something? Are the women hostages of matrimony in a polygynous relationship who need to be rescued by modernity? Or more specifically, is this cartoon making an issue of the Prophet Mohammed and his multiple wives? These questions do yield multi-layered answers. Again, multiple interpretations are possible,

Open codes seem to be a dominant trope in these twelve cartoons. Indeed, the last of the cartoons to be described here is the most generously invested with angles of meaning. This last cartoon, which I designate as the “despondent

nomad”, depicts a man walking with his donkey. The donkey is carrying his goods. This man wears a red turban and walks ahead of the beast of burden. Behind him is what appears to be a twilight sun, but painted in pink. This man is in sandals, and has a thick black beard. He seems to be walking leisurely and holds a long walking stick. In a sense the image appears to be a typical illustration for children’s Bible stories about a Bedouin in the desert returning home from a long trading journey.

What I have done so far is to give situational descriptions of the cartoons as they appear on the original JP pages. These descriptions then offer us an opportunity to deconstruct the twelve cartoons as a *communicative event*. What follows is a critical engagement with the cartoons through the framework of discourse analysis.

Discursively Speaking

Two methodological approaches under the rubric of discourse analysis are appealing in regard to this exercise. Norman Fairclough’s critical discourse methodological framework (Fairclough 1995) and Laclau and Mouffe’s explication of articulation theory as a methodological inquiry (Laclau and Mouffe 2001) are instructive here. In outlining critical discourse analysis as a methodology, Fairclough defines his approach as seeking to investigate systematically “relationships of causality and determination between a) discursive practice, events and texts and b) broader social and cultural structures, relations and process ... how such practices, events and texts arise out of and are ideologically shaped by relations of power and struggles over power ... how the opacity of these relationships between discourse and society is itself a factor in securing power and hegemony” (Fairclough 1995, in Phillips and Jørgensen 2002, 63).

While critical discourse analytical approaches generally tend to point out the character of discourse as a social practice, Fairclough’s approach is distinguished as showing *how* discourse has a dialectical relationship to other social dimensions. In other words, discourse constitutes the social, as much as existing social structures shape discourse. An analysis should therefore consider what Fairclough has identified as the three levels of the discursive process: text, discourse practice, and the sociocultural practice. Text is defined as the medium of representation while discourse practice is defined as the process of text production and consumption. The sociocultural practice encapsulates the social and cultural conditions under which the communicative event occurs (Fairclough 1995, in Phillips and Jørgensen 2002, 63).

Fairclough’s three dimensional approaches to discourse analysis can be complemented with the positioning of social practice as discourse that Laclau and Mouffe explicate in their theory of articulation:

We will call *articulation* any practice establishing a relation among elements such that their identity is modified as a result of the articulatory practice. The

structured totality resulting from the articulatory practice, we call *discourse*. The differential positions, insofar as they appear articulated within a discourse, we call *moments*. By contrast, we will call an *element* any difference that is not discursively articulated (Laclau and Mouffe 2001: 105).

This understanding of *elements*, and *moments*, together with *nodal points* as results of previously crystallized discourse, and *field of discursivity* as the surplus of elements after an articulation, are helpful conceptual tools that can be used in interrogating the performative function of the cartoons. Laclau and Mouffe's concept of "field of overdetermination"⁵ – as realm of contingency of elements and moments – helps us to tease out how certain cartoons were highly provocative while some were not. Every act of discourse is an attempt at excluding contending interpretations and meaning and to privileging a particular meaning. Thus in a sense every discursive act is an attempt at the reduction of possibilities and in the service of a particular monocausal interpretation. These excluded elements and moments in the discursive act constitute what Laclau and Mouffe describe as *field of discursivity*. Thus the field of discursivity "is a reservoir for the 'surplus of meaning' produced by the articulatory practice – that is, the meanings that each sign has, or has had, in other discourses, but which are excluded by the specific discourse in order to create a unity of meaning" (quoted in Phillips and Jørgensen 2002: 27).

Outside every discourse then is a field of discursivity, being constituted by unused or rejected elements and trajectories. If discourse is understood as an act of determining a particular meaning, then it is an attempt towards *closure*. But the resulting closure is at best a temporary and contingent one in the sense that the field of discursivity always has elements, moments and nodal points that can be mobilized to contest the closure on another occasion. Laclau and Mouffe point out that articulations are contingent acts in a field that can never be permanently fixed. This is how discourse becomes an ideological act and ideological struggles are in the first instance, discursive contests. Discourse, as an act of ascribing particular meanings through articulations of elements and moments is a *political* act, insofar as it involves the exclusion of some other meanings.

Antagonistic and Ambivalent

A helpful and rewarding categorization to use to make sense of the cartoons, as a discursive act and a communicative event, is the grouping of the cartoons into three: patently antagonistic, strategically ambivalent and meta-commentaries. I should once again qualify that this categorization is very much shaped by my own subject position and is not meant as an objective scheme.

Table 1. Three Categories of the Cartoons

Patently Antagonistic	Strategically Ambivalent	Meta-Commentaries
Weaponized human head	Despondent nomad	PR stunt
Green crescent	Bewildered man with two women	Criminal identification parade
Praying man		The stressed cartoonist
Heavenly scene		The mosque scene
The five dumb women		The classroom scene

As a scheme for signifying meaning, the categorization can be contested on the grounds of how I have decoded them. But that is not my intention here. The categorization, a heuristic move, helps us to unpack the entire publication as an articulation and to make sense of the differing responses to the publication as a communicative event. In such a move, *articulation* and *discourse* are used interchangeably. If discourse is understood as an attempt at fixing meaning within a particular domain, the JP cartoons constituted a project whose aim was to establish a particular meaning through its pages to its readership. Here, innocence, is not, discursively speaking, a tenable position. But ambivalence is. But ultimately, ambivalence is deployed as a strategic discursive act aimed at a particular meaning. Ambivalence is not an end in the process of establishing meaning. By this categorization, the majority of the cartoons were not frontally offensive in their articulation of Islam and Muslims – if, that is, we read them as works submitted individually before they were editorially framed around the headline of “Mohammed’s face”. Even without the framing power of the headline, the other five can be read as having no scruples in their negative representation of Islam and Muslims.

The five cartoons listed as patently antagonistic have something in common. In their articulation of the “face of Mohammed” they mobilized elements and moments into constituting a sketch that leaves very little room for alternative determinations of meaning. The level of surplus of meaning is minimal. Thus each of the five is powerfully invested in a field of overdetermination with scant elements within the field of discursivity. Take for instance the weaponized human head. This sketch, which seem to have been the most provocative, effectively combines the elements of i) the bomb, ii) the turban, iii) the Islamic reverence for the beard, and iv) the *shahadah*, into articulating what purports to be not just a suicide bomber, but one whose religion is Islam. We can make sense of this cartoon from the perspective of a critical discourse analysis by mapping out the three levels of text, discourse practice and sociocultural practice.

The cartoon form, as genre of critique and public communication is one that has a universal appeal in the sense that it transcends the limits of literacy and numeracy. As an iconic representation it commands a wider reach than a newspaper story articulated with words, given its emphasis on the visual and the more accessible codes of the sketch. Given the political and cultural

environment in Denmark under which the cartoons were initially produced and consumed (see Kunelius et. al 2007 and Hervik and Berg 2007), the socio-cultural framework of meaning was obviously anti-Islamic and anti-Arab. The sociocultural environment in Denmark and the global discourses on terrorism, and on Islamic extremism linked with terrorism worked to locate the cartoons in an objectified (and for that matter less contingent) field of overdetermination of meaning. When one searches for alternative meanings in this particular cartoon, the inscribing of the *shahadah* on the bomb demobilizes any surplus of meanings (elements) that one might potentially access to re-articulate an alternative meaning.

Thus the Arabic text has the strategic function of establishing what Stuart Hall (1986: 53-54) would probably have called “magnetic lines of tendency” or “lines of tangential force” in guiding one to read the bomb as being Muslim. The Arabic text, the *shahadah*, then, is the strategic element that defines and guarantees the bias of this articulation. Thanks to the activities of Al Qaeda especially on and after September 11, 2001, Islam sometimes easily is equated with terrorism at the level of the popular imaginary. The weaponized head conveys what in semiotics is considered as a mythic statement of a Muslim suicide bomber who is about to go into action on the instruction of his faith. A mythic statement, as Roland Barthes (1972) says requires no explanation. It is positioned as innocent speech or common sense. Its meaning is so commonsensical that it requires very little effort to understand it, even though it is very difficult to offer an aberrant decoding. A mythic statement that is iconic (as against textual/symbolic) is doubly fortified into what Laclau and Mouffe (2001) define as nodal point in public discourse. A nodal point is a master signifier in discursive acts of articulations around which other signs are ordered. Here then is the power of this Kurt Westergaard cartoon (“the weaponized head” as a nodal point) presenting a clearly unambiguous message of Muslims, suicide bombing, and terrorism as commutative.

It is interesting to point out that JP and Flemming Rose have a different reading of their own publication. Rose, while conceding that some have read the weaponized head cartoon as Mohammed being depicted as a terrorist, he disagrees:

I read it differently: Some individuals have taken the religion of Islam hostage by committing terrorist acts in the name of the prophet. They are the ones who have given the religion a bad name. The cartoon also plays into the fairy tale about Aladdin and the orange that fell into his turban and made his fortune. This suggests that the bomb comes from the outside world and is not an inherent characteristic of the prophet (Rose 2006).

These words of Rose support the argument that cartoon publishers and large parts of their readership may belong to different interpretative communities. If Rose had elected to publish prose and not cartoons to make this point, he would probably be seen universally as a friend of Islam. His after-the-fact read-

ing of his own actions, however, may be irrelevant as the cartoon has since acquired a life of its own.

In comparing the “weaponized head” with the “despondent nomad” – which I have categorized as an ambivalent image – we easily see the uses of surplus meanings in any project of signification. There is no text and the scene can be read in many ways. If the weaponized human head is heavily invested in the field of overdetermination, the despondent nomad comes as a text with an expansive reservoir of surplus of meaning, or a field of discursivity. Any act of signification that allows a prolific field of discursivity itself easily becomes a floating signifier. As Laclau and Mouffe (2001: 112) explain, any act of discourse is an “attempt to dominate the field of discursivity, to arrest the flow of differences, to construct a centre”. Thus by allowing proliferation in the field of discursivity and not domination and control, a sign becomes liberated and available for different interpretations. From this perspective, another distinction that we can make between the categories is that, whereas the patently antagonistic are aimed at a closure of meaning, the strategically ambivalent are aimed at staging floating signifiers for the edification of the public.

Given the background to the production of the cartoons, one can appreciate that some of the entries were probably entered as a form of resistance. According to Flemming Rose, out of 25 active cartoonists who were asked responded to the call for cartoons. From the 12 published one can see that even within these there were entries that were made as a form of resistance to idea of publication. Whether it was a productive form of resistance is another question. Thus the seven cartoons (or most of them) categorized here as strategically ambivalent and meta-commentaries can also be read as deliberate acts of resistance. Take for instance the criminal identification parade, and the PR stunt sketches. The PR stunt sketch takes the request from *Jyllands-Posten* to draw the face of Mohammed and turns it on its head by supposedly poking fun at children’s book author Bluitgen and JP itself. No Islamic or Muslim element is articulated in exclusivity.

Productive Resistance?

In the previous section I described the “despondent nomad” sketch as the cartoon that was most generously invested with angles of meaning. From the perspective of articulation theory, this is the least ideological: it comes with a sumptuous field of discursivity and a highly contingent field of overdetermination. From this perspective, and as elaborated by Laclau and Mouffe (2001) every act of discourse is aimed at reducing the contingency of the sign so articulated. The less contingency that there is in what is articulated the more it is productive as an instrument of power. This cartoon can be read, like the other cartoons with an extravagant field of discursivity, as an artistic attempt to engage with the power position of JP which called for the cartoon entries. But is that, strategically speaking, a productive form of resistance?

The criminal identification lineup sketch is highly ambiguous in its denotation and connotation. What can you input to a cartoon that has a peace activist, a diplomatic looking female, the leader of a Danish political party, a Muslim cleric look-alike and several other faces that defy easy categorization? And as if to deliberately de-motivate this caricature as a code, the text "Hmm... I don't recognize any of them" adds to the labor of making meaning on this occasion. However, a second attempt at deconstructing this particular cartoon and contextualizing it with the eleven others and the overall headline soon brings out its strategic use of intertextuality and interdiscursivity. This particular cartoon has a rectangular shape with heavy dark frame. Right above it is the headline which announces "Muhammeds ansigt". Is this speaking to the multiple faces of Islam? Read alone with the headline this is a meaning that can effortlessly be arrived at and can be viewed as a harmless piece of representation. But given that it was not published alone with the headline, this conjecture is a semiotic trajectory that is highly improbable for the average reader of JP. However, read in conjunction with the two highly context-specific faces – one weaponized and Arab-looking and one religiously defaced face (one-eyed, green crescent), the connotative meaning erupts and flows in abundance. Literally stated, Muslims are today such a widespread social phenomenon in Europe that any attempt to identify them would be impossible. Yet – the message has it – they are a dangerous lot, blinded by their faith and ready to turn their own lives into weapons of mass destruction. Read this way, this cartoon panders to the statistically indefensible hype in certain conservative media circles about a certain European perception of a Muslim-cum-Arab demographic bomb now said to be occurring in Europe. Consider, for instance, the following quotation from an advisor to President Bush's White House and Director of Middle Eastern Studies at John's Hopkins University, Fouad Ajami: "There has been a lot of running room for these people in liberal, multicultural states, where there is the post-modern idea that all forms of expression are permissible. Not for nothing is London called Londonistan. Britain's tolerance has been tailor-made for these people." (Lynda Hurst "Discontent in Eurabia" *Toronto Star*, February 11, 2006 p. A06).

In the sketch of the "five dumb women" it is the accompanying text which actually hammers home what is being signified. Without the text, the five effigies could as well be read as decorated pylons. The poetic text: "Prophet! / daft and dumb / keeping women / under thumb" has several elements that speak to different subject positions of interlocutors. For some Muslims who are well versed in the text of the Quran, this act of parody is an excessive one. Whether or not by coincidence, the four lines of the text mimic the rhythmic structure of two verses in the Quran that are also on the theme of the dumb. Part of Quranic verse 2: 171 reads: "Deaf, dumb, and blind, they are void of wisdom" while the entire verse of Quran 2: 18 reads: "Deaf, dumb, and blind, they will not return (to the path)." This close coincidence with some parts of the Quran makes this apparently innocent and harmless sketch a more powerful, multi-vocal parody enriched by different layers and levels of meaning among the various members of the public.

Heteroglossia

In a Bakhtinian sense, these five effigies and text that are presented as one of the twelve cartoons is a heteroglossic text. Heteroglossia, according to Bakhtin (1981), marks the existence of centrifugal and centripetal forces within a language or a text, the existence of distinct, conflicting sometimes and complementary codes within a single linguistic code. At some level, a heteroglossic text plays with intertextuality and what Fairclough (1995) defines as orders of discourse. The five dumb women sketch has several contending orders of discourses, including a very clerical one that is founded on the Quran's verse structure. Then there is the play on the concept of five pillars of Islam, and the Jewish symbol of the Star of David. The cartoon jangles the nerves of both the highly educated Muslim and the little-educated grassroots Muslim by playing not only with the idea of verse structure but also with the number five, as in five pillars of Islam. Then again, anyone familiar with the global hullabaloo surrounding the Salman Rushdie affair with the publication of his novel *Satanic Verses* will understand this discourse practice at play in this particular sketch.

Futuristic

Three of the cartoons, the stressed cartoonist, the mosque scene and the classroom scene may all be described as futuristic. They are creative in their imagination of the future after the publications. The classroom scene tells us how the event will end as knowledge to be passed on to the future generation of Muslims. The Mosque scene predicts the reaction of the Muslim community while the stressed cartoonist comments on the occupational hazards of the cartoonist. What message would have been sent out if JP had published only these three futurist cartoons? Is it likely to have been considered offensive by a section of the global Muslim community? It is probably unlikely because of the nuances of the elements articulated within them. To think of the entire collection as one communicative event (which for most of the reading public of JP, was actually the case), one can make the argument that the powerfully coded elements and moments that are articulated into representing the weaponized human head, the heavenly scene, and the green crescent, have worked in collaboration with the headline to overdetermine the entire collection as provocative if not offensive. This may be one of the explanations why the majority of the cartoons, while not "patently offensive" to some, did not prevent the aggressive and tumultuous response from some Muslim communities.

The Discursive Situation

However, such a reading may be inadequate if we do not examine the reception of the cartoon issue by the Danish government and its handling of the crisis, when it initially started to simmer as a domestic Danish affair. Thus the

sociocultural practice around which the entire controversy evolved, was undoubtedly part of the structuring of the reception. As Hervik (see Chapter 4, in this volume) shows, the Danish government of Prime Minister Rasmussen had its own agenda. It framed the initial Muslim response as a freedom of speech issue and described free speech as something “fundamentally Danish”. His refusal to meet the ambassadors of Muslim countries and the framing of the issue as a case of East vs. West cultural differences were as contributory elements as were the actions of the Imams who traveled to the Middle East to give a new twist to the crises with the publication of non-JP cartoons purported to be from JP. All these features had an impact on how the codes of the cartoons were motivated. But such a global mapping of the reception of the cartoons is beyond the scope of this reading.

We know for a fact that in this particular case of the JP cartoons, cartoonists were invited to enter their sketches on Mohammed and that these twelve cartoons selected were not the outcome of a regular newsroom editorial process. In a regular newspaper cartoon, the scope of meaning is fluid. There is evidence to suggest that readers of newspaper cartoons do not easily share the same frames of meaning as was intended by the cartoonists (Carl 1968; Gamson and Stuart 1992: 62). But on this particular occasion circumstances differed because it was the result of a particular editorial act, an open call to cartoonists to submit their work for possible publication. The political environment in Denmark had itself worked to make these cartoons a highly motivated set of restricted codes difficult to read outside the preferred frames and scope of meaning. The preferred and privileged field of overdetermination was one that demonized the Muslim and Arab community. The global discourse on terrorism, the war in Iraq and Afghanistan, had all worked to create a crystallized discourse of anti-Islam.

I want to use the heavenly scene cartoon as a specific point of illustration. Let us for a moment imagine that this cartoon is removed from the set of twelve. Read without context and without the text, this particular cartoon does not easily yield a meaning. Indeed it may generate a comic moment even for a Muslim. At this point, the heavenly scene cartoon is a text which is warranted by the journalistic and artistic discourse as critique. From a Faircloughian discourse analytical perspective, the production of the cartoon and its consumption are located, justified and legitimated under the discourse practice of newspaper journalism, cartooning and critique. In other words, the discourse practice of journalism allows the genre of cartoons as critique to be consumed. But located within the socio-cultural milieu there was a public perception that suicide bombers were likely to be Muslims motivated by the promise of virgins waiting patiently as rewards in the afterlife. Along with this perception, a profusion of meanings comes into play. These meanings go beyond what was initially warranted by discourse practice. Here, then the promise of virgins as a reward for turning one's body into a weapon of mass destruction, is a phantom image. Virgins are in short supply. In some sense this cartoon has the lure of a public service communication. It pokes fun to discourage the brutal act of

suicide bombing. That is the artist functioning as a critic in the public sphere. But given its very Islamic tone, including the identification of the announcer as Mohammed, this image contributes to what Murad (2004) describes as a postmodernist attempt to deny the history of suicide bombing as a political act of sacrifice – to re-designate it as a fundamental feature of Islam. Thus the initial comic moment transforms into a moment of anguish for some; a moment of confusion and ambivalence for others; and for a third category of people, a moment of affirmation that this is a test case regarding what constitutes an acceptable offense under a liberal democracy.

Notes

1. The background for this 'reading' was a meeting in Drøbak, near Oslo, Norway, in December 2007, of scholars from some twelve countries including seven coming from outside Europe, namely, Canada, United States, Indonesia, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Israel and Egypt. As part of this three-day meeting of researchers with scholarly interest in the Danish Mohammed cartoons, members of the group examined and analysed the cartoons and contributed from their individual subjective positions, expressing what each thought of the cartoons. Such an exercise, while very limited in scope, was a rare opportunity to test the cartoons. While all the members shared the common feature of being academics, there was the fact of diversity of faith or faith background and coming from different countries with varying journalistic traditions and speech rights jurisprudence. Each of the twelve cartoons was shown to the international group of scholars during those meetings, to allow for discussion. Some of the readings in this paper are gleaned from the group exercise. But as someone who supplements the distilling of the group discussion with his own readings, I should also qualify that my subject positions do frame this analysis, as is the case in any act of reading. In addition, I should point out that this chapter is not a report of the discussions of the group.
2. Some of the international group of scholars at the Drøbak meeting associated this indecisive man with Flemming Rose.
3. These were expressed positions at the Drøbak meeting.
4. The use of Persian text reveals a sophisticated understanding of Islam in the Middle East. Iran is the only country in the Middle East which is not Arab but Persian and Islamic.
5. In criticizing Louis Althusser's mobilization of overdetermination to explain multiple causality and yet revert to essential determination in privileging the economy, Laclau and Mouffe (2001, 99) introduce "field of overdetermination" to mean "the field of contingent variation as opposed to essential determination".

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II. Professional Issues

Chapter 4

Original Spin and Its Side Effects

Freedom of Speech as Danish News Management

Peter Hervik

How do the media influence the writing of history? What will be remembered in the future about the Mohammed cartoon crisis? How will the history of the cartoon affair be written in ten years? When is history as collective memory actually written?

These were some of the underlying questions that might well have been raised in Denmark in late March of 2006. After the cartoon affair had burst upon the international news scene Prime Minister Anders Fogh Rasmussen went out to the media, scolding corporations, some large Danish newspapers, and public intellectuals for not standing up for the freedom of speech. His proactive attack in the media created some debate, yet there was little attention paid to his underlying aim. He wanted the cartoon affair to be remembered specifically as a free speech issue and *not* as a reaction to the ideology of an increasingly anti-Islamic government.

In this chapter I examine the role of the Danish government in the cartoon crisis from the perspective of news management, a process of management that began in October 2005, when the cartoon publications became the center of the government's successful political spin; namely to insist that it was a free speech issue.¹ This original spin successfully transformed the issue of possible self-censorship of cartoonists into stories about the struggle between the "good countries" with free speech and the "bad ones" without it.

An important factor behind the success of the spin was the re-politicization of the "journalistic field", where newspapers increasingly are becoming political actors (Hjarvard 2006). In this environment, the correspondence of the views seen in newspapers editorials and news articles becomes more and more direct (Hervik and Berg 2007), and journalists are targets of political spin strategies, often crafted by spin doctors who themselves are trained as journalists (*Journalisten* 2006). In the case of the Mohammed cartoons, the main Danish newspapers clearly chose their sides and thereby strengthened the re-politicization of the news media.

A successful spin diverts attention from troublesome issues, controversial relationships, and political blunders (Gould 1998, Høybye et al. 2007, Nielsen 2004,

Press 2002). One particularly important promoter of the Danish government's spin strategy in the cartoon affair was provided by a network of transnationally ideologically like-minded people. Arguments and values shared with American neo-conservatism sustain the dominant frame of understanding of the cartoon crisis in Denmark, where radical right-wing,² anti-Islam pundits filled newspapers with opinion pieces and commentaries, particularly *Jyllands-Posten* (Hervik and Berg 2007).³ This chapter will also look at how the government's political spin relates to the dominant ways of understanding the cartoons as discerned from the media coverage.

Three Danish Frames of Understanding

In an analysis of 232 selected articles from seven different newspapers from 15 January to 15 March 2006, we found three broad frames employed for making sense of the case. The dominant frame is captured by a statement "Free speech is the issue, and it is a Danish issue."⁴ In this frame freedom of speech was constructed in opposition to self-censorship in response to the fear of Islam. Violence and intolerance were actively associated with Islam. Free speech was not debated for what it is and how it works, but is debated in terms of "having it" or "not having it". We have it, they do not. "They" are portrayed as being against freedom itself, and the frame constructs a battle of values or a "clash of civilizations". In the journalistic field, sponsors of this frame were *Jyllands-Posten*, plus tabloid papers like *B.T.* and *Ekstra Bladet*. This is also the frame which was predominant in the stance taken by the Danish government.

The second frame claims that the affair is about "Freedom of speech as a human right, with limitations". In the journalistic field, it is sponsored by another government-friendly paper, *Berlingske Tidende*. This paper found that the publication of the cartoons was an unnecessary and premature act. However, it then placed the responsibility for the development of the crisis on the Danish Imams and showed sympathy with those Muslims and others who are the victims of Islamist dominance. The frame wrapped this stance in a language based on the notions of human rights, understanding, respect and sensibility.

The third frame of understanding was a counter reaction to Frame One and it claimed that "Demonization of Muslims is the issue, not free speech". Of the Danish newspapers *Politiken* mainly sponsored this frame. This frame criticizes *Jyllands-Posten* and the government's handling of the cartoon affair, but at the same time it defended the right to freedom itself – the right to make a fool of oneself. The Prime Minister was seen as a "stubborn, arrogant manipulator", who refused to admit his blunders, and *Jyllands-Posten* was accused of drumming up nationalism and anti-Islamic attitudes. Danish Muslims were portrayed as co-citizens, while the main cause of the escalation of the conflict was ascribed to the government's handling of the evolving story.

We have constructed below a table (Table 1.) showing the main ideas in each frame by answering the five questions we originally posed to our sample.

Table 1. The Three Danish Frames – A Struggle over News and Views

Frames	Freedom of speech as a Danish freedom	Freedom of speech; a Western universal human right threatened by Islamism	Demonisation of Muslims and political spin is the issue; not freedom of speech
<i>What is the problem?</i>	Islam, Islamism, the dark and uncivilized Middle East	Islamism with a lack of human rights such as freedom of speech	Demonisation of Muslims in Denmark and political spin, not freedom of speech
<i>Who created the problem?</i>	Islamic rulers and the Danish Imams	Islamists in the Middle East	<i>Jyllands-Posten</i> , the Government and the Danish People's Party
<i>What actors are presented in what roles; who are the good ones, who are the bad ones?</i>	The Danish "we" are the good ones defending freedom of speech, the ones limiting the freedom in any way are the bad ones.	"We" in the "West" are the good ones; "the rulers in the Middle East" are the bad ones.	There exists no "we" in this framing, it is rather "moral" who is put in this position, whereas <i>Jyllands-Posten</i> , the Government and the Danish People's Party are the bad ones.
<i>What can be done?</i>	Fight, be provocative and stand firm in the fight for freedom of speech.	"We" can fight the fight for the oppressed populations in the Middle East	The solution is dialogue and co-existence.
<i>What is the language of the frame?</i>	A language characterized by dichotomised terms: "us" and "them", a "black and white" world perspective	Orientalist language	Didactic, aggressive, frustrated.

The first frame, "Free speech is the issue, and it is a Danish issue" dominated the domestic news coverage. A parallel free speech frame was also dominant in the Western media and coverage in general. The supporters of this frame used a particularly rigid division of the Western world and Islam dressed in an aggressive confrontational language, often akin to what Risto Kunelius and Amin Alhassan call "liberal fundamentalism" (see Kunelius and Alhassan, Chapter 5 in this volume). Political spin played a big role in how this frame gained its dominance. Looking into the origins of the affair in Denmark one can see that such language is part of a larger political development in Danish politics. The Danish government coalition of right wing parties, the Liberal Party (Venstre) and the Conservatives (De Konservative) engaged themselves with the far-right wing Danish People's Party (Dansk Folkeparti) in a development that made it more and more difficult to distinguish politicians' points of view when it came to neo-nationalist and anti-immigrant issues – the only remaining line of demarcation being the Danish People's Party's resistance towards further integration and enlargement of the European Union.⁵

In Denmark, champions of the dominant frame were highly visible as writers in *Jyllands-Posten* and *Berlingske Tidende* (which carried the line of the second frame) and were often supported economically by the Jyllands-Posten Foundation. This frame gained further support from a cluster of transnational, far right, anti-Islamic writers. In this chapter I will also follow some paths of that network as it stretches on to neo-conservatives in the USA. Certain core values emerge through this network, such as the argument that Danish (and Western) culture is more civilized and morally superior to “non-Western cultures” (here including Islam). I will argue that the emergence of political and legal differentiation of newcomers to Danish society is embedded in the denial of moral equivalency between the two, which is followed by a call for a stance of no compromise and no apology when facing Muslim requests or even simply when facing visible “Muslim” difference (see also Boe and Hervik, Chapter 12, in this volume).

Political Spin as Media Practice

The phenomenon of political spin became germane in Denmark in 1998 after a stunning parliamentary election defeat that led the chair-man of the Liberal Party, Uffe Elleman Jensen, to step down. Mesmerised by the new ideas of overcoming the crisis of political communication between the party and its voters, the new party chairman, Anders Fogh Rasmussen, immediately hired a spin doctor, Henrik Quortrup, to help him get ahead of the opposition and win the position as Prime Minister in the next election. Rasmussen had studied Philip Gould’s ideas (1998) and also visited Tony Blair’s advisors in London. Today, no other party in Denmark spends more money than the Liberal Party on political spin.⁶ Successful spinning helped the party to an overwhelming victory in November 2001 with a nationalist agenda and calls for tougher laws of integration of non-Western foreigners. One of the first steps for Prime Minister Rasmussen was to hire spin doctors for each of the cabinet members and introduce new practices for handling and feeding the press.

Spin is not confined to politics, but refers more generally to representing or stating one’s case in a favourable light. During Ronald Reagan’s presidency in the US, spin communication grew drastically as politicians tried to be efficient communicators in short sound bites. Spin communication evolved as the more systematic effort to proactively play on the media’s logic and actions (Høybye et al. 2007). According to Bill Press “Spin is a variation on the truth; lying has no connection to the truth” (2002: xxxviii). More precisely, spin is the act of formulating rhetoric through “a certain angle on the truth” in the media by someone with a certain political interest to further their case or that of a certain politician (Press 2002). As such spin strategists are always aware of opposing views, as they try to set the agenda, foreseeing how their case can be framed or associated with something positive, for instance, presenting themselves as heroes, while opponents are villains or even terrorists as in “either you are with us, or you are with the terrorists.”

Spinning relates to the media and is a form of political communication, but usually refers to the strategy right behind utterances in the news media (Nielsen 2004). One of the metaphors often evoked to explain the spin, is the baseball metaphor, where “putting a spin on the ball” is that certain twist or rotation that gives the ball a curved path towards the receiver (Høybye et al. 2007: 12). The guys who work out the ways of spinning the ball, including the pitcher, would be spin doctors, or simply press secretaries, since they deal with a variety of political communication issues.

Spin doctoring, contract policy, testing your message in focus groups, offering prepared statements, circulating talking points, priming, making sharp punch lines, planting histories, dividing journalists into a positively treated A team and a negatively treated B team, weekly controlled press conferences, are some of the many practices that relate to this sort of political communication practice. In addition, there are the practices of choosing plus words rather than minus words, attacking your opponent rather than justifying yourself, giving vague answers. These all relate to spin strategies that did not start with Tony Blair or Bill Clinton, but these were the political leaders who “broke the spinning wheel” (Press 2002). Spin is the actual communication, like the throw of the baseball, and not to be mistaken for target group analysis, testing messages in focus groups. These activities are necessary preconditions for a working out a good political spin (Nielsen and Kock 2007: 28).

A recent example from the Danish political scene shows how government spin can try to shift what seems to be a losing political situation. In the light of increasing criticism, the Danish government finally decided to withdraw the approximately 500 Danish troops from Iraq. Upon their return in the summer of 2007, the media revealed that 330 million Euros had been wasted; several soldiers had died or were seriously wounded, while the security situation in Iraq had become worse since the Danes had first arrived. Iraqi men claimed in the television news that there was more terrorism now than when the Danes arrived. Faced with this negative scenario Prime Minister Rasmussen launched a carefully designed spin to fend off the criticism. His spin on this story made headlines even in the otherwise government-critical daily, *Politiken*: “We gave Iraq the offer about democracy that we had promised.” Obviously, then, Iraqis were at fault for not wanting to accept the offer of democracy by the good, even heroic, Danes (*Politiken*, August 10, 2007).

In this article, spin is analyzed at the textual level and not through interviews with those people who were involved in the actual preparation and carrying out the spin strategies behind the scenes. The guiding methodological questions of my analysis have been the following: Where does the story come out? Why was this occasion used to say precisely this? Is it a single story? Who is coming out with what messages? Is the communication pro-active or re-active? Who is to gain and who is to lose? (See Nielsen and Kock 2007). Answering these questions helps us to see how the media coverage of cartoon affair was managed.

Spinning the Cartoon Affair

Cartoon Affair

Initially, *Morgenavisen Jyllands-Posten's* publication of the twelve cartoons on September 30, 2005 brought little coverage by domestic newspapers. Only with the merging reactions from Muslim groups and others in early October did the media interest pick up. As such, this is not surprising. After all, it can be said that *Jyllands-Posten* followed a previous pattern with provocations and Islamophobic news pieces (Andreassen 2007, Hervik 1999, 2002, 2009, Hussain 2000, Hussain 2002).⁷ Some of the most frequent words employed in *Jyllands-Posten's* editorials and articles can, for instance, be found in a survey from the summer of 2001. Islam is talked about as being “abhorrent” (vederstyggelig), “darkening” (formørkelse) and “medieval-like” (middelalderlig). In an editorial called “Forces of darkness” three young Danish Muslims with Pakistani background were regarded as “fundamentalists”, who spoke from the platform of “norms of medieval religious value”, and the Danes – in all their obvious naivety gave the “darkened forces the freedom to introduce conditions of the Middle Ages to this country” (*Jyllands-Posten* May 27, 2001 in Hervik 2002). Muslims let themselves be represented in Denmark by “active debaters, who demand basic changes, so that Denmark is adjusted to Muslim groups, who, with medieval goals desire something close to Afghani conditions, even though Islam is not necessarily synonymous with the reactionary dark clouds of the Middle Ages” (*Jyllands-Posten*, August 17, 2001 in Hervik 2002). In Denmark we have “made it beyond the medieval phase and the accompanying scientific and legal mentality”⁸ (*Jyllands-Posten*, September 9, in Hervik 2002). Therefore it was perhaps not surprising that the three most controversial drawings were drawn by three different cartoonists already employed by the paper itself; the accompanying text by cultural editor Flemming Rose, and the Op-Ed piece carried little news value for the rest of the country's newspapers.

From this perspective, the Mohammed cartoons were simply the latest step in a development that had taken place in the last fifteen years. Since the early 1990s, Denmark has experienced the emergence of a neo-nationalism intimately linked to neo-racism and populism (Hervik 2006, 2009).⁹ Politics have been dominated by a build-up of Danish national identity against immigrants, refugees and descendants, particularly those who come from non-Western countries. Sometimes these newcomers have been called “visible minorities”, partly due to complexions that are somewhat darker than those of native Danes, but also for their socio-cultural markers. Their rights have been reduced, their obligations have increased. Political parties and some mainstream media outlets have on three major occasions shown themselves to be closely involved in politicized projects. The first out was the tabloid newspaper, *Ekstra Bladet* which in the spring of 1997, entered into a symbiotic relationship with the newly formed Danish People's Party and with whom they shared a neo-racist agenda targeting immigrants and their descendants (Hervik 1999, Hervik 2009). The second major event, the Mona Sheikh Case, exploded in the summer of 2001. Three

Danish-born Muslims of Pakistani ethnic origin were forced to leave politics due to vicious (and false) allegations about their “infiltration” into Danish politics. The examples above from *Jyllands-Posten*’s editorials in 2001 were part of this personalized attack.

The government’s need for political spin came in October 2005. Eleven ambassadors from countries representing more than 500 million people had asked for a meeting with the Government of Denmark to discuss concerns about the eruption of political violence following the cartoon publications. The Prime Minister ignored their concerns and denied them a meeting. His decision was controversial, but at the time it was supported by several opposition politicians. Still, there was much debate and criticism, international as well as national. The meeting brought news media commentaries, many from the stunned ambassadors: Since the story could potentially become damaging for the government, it had to react.

The ambassadors had written the Prime Minister, saying we “urge your Excellency to *take all those responsible to task under the law* of the land in the interest of inter-faith harmony” (Jerichow and Rode 2006: 25, also available at www.wikipedia.com), (my emphasis). A similar letter was sent by the Organisation of Islamic Conference (OIC) a few days later. The Prime Minister wrote back:

The Danish society is based on respect for the freedom of expression, on religious tolerance and on equal standards for all religions. Freedom of expression is the very foundation of Danish democracy. Freedom of expression has a wide scope and the Danish government has *no means of influencing the press*. However, Danish legislation prohibits acts or expressions of a blasphemous or discriminatory nature. *The offended party may bring such acts or expressions to court*, and it is for the courts to decide in individual cases (Larsen and Seidenfaden 2006: 329) [my emphasis].

According to the spin interpretation, the ambassadors’ “taking to task under the law” became a request for a legal intervention, and as such constituted putting a limit on the freedom of speech. Language experts looked at the Prime Minister’s response and concluded that the ambassadors’ letter was open to several interpretations and that the Prime Minister had chosen a negative interpretation (Larsen and Seidenfaden 2006, Thomsen 2006).

Later, the ambassadors responded by saying they were of course aware of the Danish legal system and they were not asking for legal interference. Nevertheless, the government spin – that the ambassadors were calling for legal interference – was repeated again and again by different politicians and in different media outlets. The spin was highly successful.¹⁰

Damage Control

From the time of the unfortunate rejection of the meeting with the eleven ambassadors, Denmark’s government has continuously found itself in a situ-

ation of crisis. The Prime Minister repeatedly referred to this as the biggest crisis in Denmark since World War II. The current crisis peaked in late January and early February 2006 with violent demonstrations and boycotts of Danish goods. From a spin perspective the assignment has been throughout one of damage control, although with fluctuations of intensity. At least five major spin strategies can be identified in the media coverage, the aim of which has been to put the Prime Minister in a favourable light and to portray the Muslims as the source of the problem.

The first of the five strategies is the insistence that the cartoon issue is primarily about freedom of speech. Either you say “yes” or “no” to free speech. I shall come back to this strategy in a moment. The second spin tactics is to personalize the Prime Minister’s disagreement with the publication of the cartoons.¹¹ On January 30, 2006 this is what Rasmussen did and immediately made headlines. Third – and closely tied to the personalized statement – is offering an “apology”, a diplomatic opening, even though this apology lacks content. Instead, the logic was “we are sorry if your feelings are hurt. We had no intention of doing so.” The underlying logic is “if you are hurt, it is because you have misunderstood our intentions.” Fourth, blaming and attacking the Imams for stirring up trouble both domestically and in the Middle East. This spin turned out to be particularly strong and successful as a means of diverting attention from the troublesome offending cartoons and the political blunder of not granting the ambassadors a meeting. In the fifth strategy, Muslims are to solve the problems themselves, which is tied to the earlier spin of placing blame on the Imams. They must take responsibility for what they have caused, and while they are the focus of attention the Prime Minister’s role is diminished and gradually moved out of sight.

Free Speech as Political Spin

The free speech spin was present throughout the media coverage, but it was particularly clear on October 30, 2005. Prime Minister Rasmussen chose *Jyllands-Posten* for a major interview: “Fogh: Freedom of Speech Must Be Used for Provocation”, which came as “a reaction to an explosive debate about the satirical drawings of the Prophet Mohammed.” The story was *Jyllands-Posten*’s main feature on this Sunday, the day when the newspaper readership is greater than on weekdays. It was written by two journalists and there were no signs of critical questions to the Prime Minister, who repeated the spin interpretation of the ambassadors’ letter as a request to “intervene with the press”.

Rasmussen framed the emerging cartoon issue by saying: “What is fundamental in this case is that enlightened and free societies are more successful than un-enlightened non-free societies, exactly because some dare to provoke and criticize authorities, whether they be political or religious authorities.” He then let readers of *Jyllands-Posten* know that it is necessary to use free speech for provocation: “I will never accept that respect for people’s religious convictions should lead to constraints on the possibilities of the press for bringing critique, humour or satire.” (*Jyllands-Posten*, October 30, 2005).

Terrorism is evoked twice in the interview in connection with the critical voices in the Danish debate: “[...] I must say that the terrorists’ aim is to make us all so scared that we give up the fundamental values of our society” Later the reporter wrote: “The Prime Minister strongly warns about self-censorship, because it limits freedom of speech.” The writer then went on to quote him saying: “It is thought-provoking that an author wanted to publish a book where cartoonists refused to be named. One can easily conclude that someone has reached their goal whether we call them terrorists...” (ibid.). In sum, here the Prime Minister indirectly endorsed *Jyllands-Posten*’s publication of the cartoons and at the same time maintained his enduring spin, his twisted answer to the ambassadors’ request for a dialogue.

The Prime Minister’s spin is part of the first frame (“Free speech is the issue, and it is a Danish issue”) which is expressed in these crucial statements: “Certain countries lack basic insight and understanding, for what a true democracy is.” (ibid.).

A Palestinian political representative gave the opinion that the drawings were an attack on Islam and Muslims. Rasmussen responded to the criticism by condemning the representative for not understanding what the principles of a true democracy are and what free speech is about. (ibid.). In this way he managed to use the spin to transform the issue from an internal Danish question to a question about “who understands free speech” and “who does not”.

The political spin reiterated at the Prime Minister and the government correctly insisted that the cartoon affair is a question of free speech. Any criticism of the government was equated with not understanding the nature of democracy and freedom of speech. In our analysis of the Danish media coverage of the cartoons (or in any of the six journalistic and popular books that have come out in Danish on the cartoon affair)¹² we have yet to find anyone, who denies *Jyllands-Posten* the constitutional right to publish the cartoons. In this respect the story is not about free speech as a legal issue.

According to the doctrine of liberalism, free speech is necessary for a well-functioning democracy. Thus, counter-arguments can and should be heard and learned from, so that in subsequent dialogue it is possible to achieve rational grounds for decision-making, public administration and civilized citizenship. No one is complete or perfect, therefore a free and open debate based on credible information is necessary (NOU 1999). The core of liberalism lies in the “idea of a free marketplace of ideas with its mechanism of self-righting truth” (Nordenstreng 2007). Free speech is not absolute, but regulated and the principle that regulates the free speech in the public sphere, but not the private, is based on the confirmation of citizens who are socialized and educated into participating in public debate. The state is responsible for safeguarding a certain minimum quality of the debate by providing some rules. These rules come out via general education and through laws on racism, blasphemy and libel (*Information*, February 3, 2006).

The legal aspects of free speech were only occasionally debated. Arguments about the offending character of the cartoons, or some of the cartoons, their

necessary or unnecessary provocative disposition, and their premature nature are themselves expressions of the functioning of free speech. They are also political statements within a politicized Danish news media. The person who criticizes, or even condemns, a certain utterance is not just challenging free speech. You cannot, argues a Danish professor of law, defend this criticism of specific utterances or the depictions of Mohammed as a terrorist, by referring to free speech. When one makes a response, one should stay within the same discourse to which one is challenged to respond (Zahle in *Politiken*, February 13, 2006).

There is no reason for the Prime Minister not to involve himself in the (political) debate about the cartoons. Nothing prevents him from stating that he disagrees with the cartoon link between Mohammed and terrorism (ibid.). Giving a free speech frame, rather than responding to the criticism, consists of political spin rather than freedom of speech. Once the Prime Minister shifted the emphasis from the ambassadors' concern to his own preferred spin (that he cannot interfere with the editorial process of a newspaper and anyone who could not understand this did not understand the nature of free speech), then he had passed the point of no return. The denial of dialogue is unquestionable and will make any later "apology" appear to be nothing other than an insincerity, which is precisely how, for instance, Pakistani and Indonesian news media were quick to interpret the Prime Minister's response (Daniels 2007, Shaukat 2006).

In January and February 2007 the free speech spin took on a more polarized and Orientalist character at the expense of a debate over the growing concern about the negative effects of the rather fierce statements in the Danish news media. Individual imams in Denmark were targeted, but so were governments, who criticized the cartoons. They were accused for not having free speech, unlike Denmark, countries whose governments criticized the cartoons were accused of not having free speech – like Denmark. In an interview with *Al-Arabiya* the Prime Minister explained:

I have a very important message to you: The Danish population has defended free speech and the freedom of religion for generations. We have a deep respect for all religions, including Islam, and it is important for me to tell you, that the Danish people have no intentions about insulting Muslims (Rasmussen, *Al-Arabiya* February 2, 2006).

Writing History

The free speech spin reappeared domestically at a moment when the cartoon issue seemed to have peaked. The Prime Minister gave an interview on Sunday, February 26, 2006 to *Berlingske Tidende* – another government friendly newspaper, which also has a larger readership on Sundays. Again there were two journalists and no explicitly critical questions. Rasmussen's prepared message

was delivered as an unusual chastisement of Danish authors, newspapers, public intellectuals and the business community. He explained that while violence was occurring around the world, Danes were navel-gazing – if, that is, they insisted on tying the response to the cartoons to the Danish immigration and integration politics. In the Mohammed crisis, he maintained, “we” have found ourselves up against un-containable forces. “We” implies Denmark, Danes, and the Western world against an Other composed of the Muslim world. “There is a crisis between Denmark and the Muslim World” (*Berlingske Tidende*, February 26, 2006).

This much reiterated spin statement on free speech insists that the issue is either giving a “yes” or a “no” to free speech. As such it is not unlike the Bush doctrine “Either you are with us or you are with the terrorists” (*Politiken*, February 28, 2006). This is the same slogan used earlier by the Danish Prime Minister when he was criticized for the Danish military engagement in Iraq.

First, the Prime Minister established the dichotomy of two unassailable categories, between “us”, the Danes who have free speech and have done nothing wrong, and “them”, the Muslim countries who do not have free speech and have done much wrong. Then he launched his critique against “certain intellectual circles”, “authors”, “newspapers”¹³ and “parts of the business community” for not standing up for free speech during the crisis. Rasmussen went on and offered his own explanation for this failure. The failure comes from an erroneous framing of the cartoon issue. Those people who do not stand up for free speech are those who do not want to align themselves with the Danish People’s Party, *Jyllands-Posten* and the government – the alleged true defenders of free speech.

The debate is not about whether *Jyllands-Posten*’s publication of the cartoons is a case of free speech. But by insisting that *it is* a free speech issue, the government can save face by deflecting attention from itself and blaming Muslims and Muslim countries. A former spin doctor Lotte Hansen recently explained the logic of the Prime Minister’s persistent and proactive emphasis on free speech as a question of history:

The interview is an attempt to write history. He is telling those who are going to write the history about this story that it was about free speech ... It is his attempt to make sure that the history of this case is written as an ideological question about free speech, where he stood firm while others hesitated (*Politiken*, February 28, 2006, Jersild og Spin, March 4, 2006).

In this long-term political spin, Fogh Rasmussen wants the story to be remembered as a free speech issue and not as an expression of a government or a Danish newspaper with a neo-nationalist and an anti-Islamic agenda and a government with ambivalent diplomatic capabilities. And not very surprisingly, many Danes subscribe to the free speech aspect, and do not want to see their country in this light, which makes it easier to locate the source of the problem, and lay the blame outside Denmark’s borders.

According to Le Goff, “there are at least two histories: that of collective memory and that of historians. The first appears as essentially mythic, deformed, and anachronistic. But it constitutes the lived reality of the never completed relation between present and past” (Le Goff 1992: 111), and collective memory *is* the dominant way of writing and re-writing history (Sturken 1997). Le Goff argues that there must be a second time round when historical information should illuminate collective memory and help it rectify its errors (Le Goff 1992).

The collective memory of the Mohammed crisis as a free speech issue, between “us” who have it, and “the Muslim Others” who do not have it, stems primarily from the news media’s coverage, which again has become more and more politicized in the recent decade. It seems as if the free speech argument has become the most successful political spin argument with its inherent transformation of the debate. In fact the debate in the Danish news is marred by this repeated assertion that “freedom of speech is a Danish freedom” and foreign events such as demonstrations (violent and peaceful), burning of Danish flags and boycotts *are not* examples of freedom of expression. The moral anger of some Danes is tremendous when it comes to the foreign reactions, but when it comes to the cartoon publications, the right to publish is the first thing evoked. Hence, the debate suggests that the free speech response is not much more than a reflection of the powerful, hegemonic dichotomization of a positive “us” and a negative “them” in Danish society.

The Neo-conservative Bond

In February 2006 Christopher Bollyn of the *American Free Press* wrote:

The International Herald Tribune, which reported on the offensive cartoons on January 1, noted that even the liberalism of Rose had its limits when it came to criticism of Zionist leaders and their crimes. Rose also has clear ties to the Zionist Neo-Cons behind the “war on terror”.
(...)

Rose travelled to Philadelphia in October 2004 to visit Daniel Pipes, the Neo-Con ideologue who says the only path to Middle East peace will come through a total Israeli military victory. Rose then penned a positive article about Pipes, who compares “militant Islam” with fascism and communism.
(http://www.mathaba.net/0_index.shtml?x=508448)

In early February 2006, culture editor, Flemming Rose’s relationship to Daniel Pipes became the target of scrutiny and conspiracy thinking in different news stories across continents. Rose had published an article based on a friendly interview with Pipes (*Jyllands-Posten*, October 29, 2004). The conspiracy claimed that by provoking Muslims, they would again emerge as a violent threat – resulting in a clash of civilizations that would lead to the wished for outcome in the Middle East: military victory. Rose’s sympathies with the radical

right-wing, neo-conservative historian Pipes were toned down by both Rose himself and Pipes; afterwards, the story slowly vanished.¹⁴ Conspiracy theories usually involve the role of a foreign state, but the news media were unable to provide such a link.

The highest level state-to-state relationship based on neo-conservatism is of course the Danish Prime Minister's friendship with the government of George Bush, a relationship that has resulted in Denmark's military engagement in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Calling something a conspiracy immediately renders it suspicious and dismissible. However, looking more widely than the Rose-Pipes connection and Rose's years in Washington D.C., what other actual relations are there between Danish journalists and opinion makers and American neo-conservatives? To answer this question I turn primarily to some of the actors within Frame One, "It is a case of free speech, it is a Danish issue."

Radical Danish right-winger Lars Hedegaard has been an active participant in the news media for many years. In August 2002, together with Daniel Pipes, he co-authored a commentary that appeared in several countries including Canada, the USA, Israel and Germany. The commentary was called "Something Rotten in Denmark?" More than anything the article is a sensationalist attack on Muslims in Denmark with deceiving and sensationalist statements like the following: (a) "A Muslim group in Denmark announced a few days ago that a \$30,000 bounty would be paid for the murder of several prominent Danish Jews, a threat that garnered wide international notice." (b) "Muslims are only 4 percent of Denmark's 5.4 million people but make up a majority of the country's convicted rapists." (c) "Muslim violence threatens Denmark's approximately 6,000 Jews, who increasingly depend on police protection" (Pipes and Hedegaard 2002).

Hedegaard's friend on the radical right is Helle Merete Brix who wrote opinion pieces during the cartoon crisis. She has acknowledged that she and Hedegaard exchanged points of view with Daniel Pipes (www.sharia.dk), a point that further acknowledges this channel of influence.¹⁵

Hedegaard, Brix and other Frame One writers have been working together in a semi-secret society called the Giordano Bruno Society, where *Jyllands-Posten's* commentator Ralf Pittelkow and Liberal Party Member of Parliament Karen Jespersen (Minister of Social Welfare) were other prominent members (*Demos Nyhedsbrev* 2006, *Information*, December 4, 2003, *Berlingske Tidende*, December 1, 2003).¹⁶ The members are critical of Islam, which they claim is threatening to take over the world. Some of the members were active in marginalizing young Danish Muslims from national politics, while most others remain anonymous (see earlier). Hedegaard and Brix are also co-founders of the Free Speech Society (Trykkefrihedsselskabet), where radical Christian minister and Member of Parliament for the Danish People's Party Søren Krarup can be found. Krarup is a true devotee to the clash of civilizations thesis. In speaking about the Iraqi invasion 2003, he explained in the Parliament (Folketinget): "[I]n the end, this war is about the opposition between Christianity and Islam, between the West and Islam" (Krarup, November 25, 2004, <http://folketinget.dk>). In the

Danish parliament and elsewhere, he compares the fight against Islam with the fight against Nazism in Germany in the 1930s. The Free Speech Society, of which he is one of the founders, is supported economically by The Jyllands-Posten Foundation.¹⁷ Recently, the Free Speech Society granted a new annual free speech prize – the Sappho Prize, and awarded it to a skilled journalist working intrepidly in the cartoon affair for free speech and without compromise. The recipient was Flemming Rose. In addition, the Society gave its freedom of the press prize, the Free Press Prize, to Daniel Pipes, for “his fight for free speech, resistance to the spread of Islam, his work for academic freedom in American Universities¹⁸ and his support for Muslim dissidents, who speak directly against Mecca.” (<http://www.sappho.dk/Den%20loebende/trykkefrihedsprisen2007.html>). Hedegaard continues to translate texts that are written by Pipes and published on the society’s web pages. In 2008 the approximately 7,000 Euro “Freedom of Speech Prize” will be given to cartoonist Kurt Westergaard, “who has integrated journalistic excellence with a fearless uncompromising stance.” (<http://www.sappho.dk/Den%20loebende/sapphoprisen2008.html>)

In the aftermath of the violent reactions depicted in the media around the globe to the cartoon story and the Prime Minister’s rejection of a dialogue with the Muslim ambassadors, pressure mounted on Flemming Rose. He left Denmark around February 9 and went to the USA, where he had a speaking engagement with the Brookings Institution’s think tank. But rather than being on vacation, Rose did a series of interviews for *Jyllands-Posten* that was later published as a book called *American Voices*, sponsored by the Jyllands-Posten Foundation (2006). Some of these interviewees are either part of the epistemic neo-conservative community and/or anti-Islamics, such as Francis Fukuyama, Richard Perle, Bill Kristol, Bernard Lewis, Sam Harris, Wafa Sultan, Christopher Hitchens, Fouad Ajami, Newt Gingrich, Charles Murray and David Brooks. What several of these people share, and also share with Flemming Rose, is their historical origin as left-wingers who have been “mugged by reality”. Today that implies taking an uncompromising stance towards Islam, seeing it as the most dangerous religion. Rose also engaged himself in a series of public engagements, often with neo-conservative institutions, for instance The Ayn Rand Institute’s day-long conference in Boston called “The Jihad Against the West: The Real Threat and the Right Response.” Besides Flemming Rose, Daniel Pipes was another of the “Middle East Experts” who spoke on that occasion (<http://www.aynrand.org/site>).

Recently, Frame One writers, Hedegaard¹⁹ and Brix, have also joined the Benador Associates, a company run by Eleana Benador that serves as “a principal neo-conservative marketing agency.” (<http://rightweb.irc-online.org>). Among the promoted are neo-conservatives are Richard Perle, James Woolsey, Michael Ledeen, Frank Gaffney and now also Lars Hedegaard and Helle Brix. Former director of Benador was Daniel Pipes (*ibid.*). In short, Frame One – defining the issue as a Danish and later a transnational issue of free speech – emerges from a network of actors reaching from *Jyllands-Posten* to the neo-conservative radical right wing in the USA.

Sharing Core Values?

Another angle to the actual relationship – its frequency, nature and overall importance – is instead to look more broadly at how the frame “It is about free speech, and it’s a Danish issue”, relates to neo-conservatism in its view of the nature of the relationship between Danes/Westerners and Muslims/Islam. “Muslim” could be substituted with “Islamicist” (an idea promoted by Daniel Pipes) to include the second frame “Freedom of speech as a human right with limitations”, since Islamicists are far more encompassing than, for instance, their Egyptian denotation of the Muslim Brotherhood. Even though one needs to be careful with news stories that may be copying the mistake of others, journalists who comment on the Rose and Pipes relationship again and again repeat that the publication of the cartoons by *Jyllands-Posten* was nothing but a calculated provocation meant to create or strengthen an image of Muslims as evil and dangerous, hence keeping the clash of civilizations ideology active. Although talk about the clash of civilizations throughout the international coverage is filled with denials of this ideology, this narrative has still become one of the most dominant narratives circulating the global public sphere.

The nature of the opposition between Danes/Westerners with free speech and Muslims/Islamists without free speech has, in the eyes of the Danish right-wing media coverage, a significant resemblance to neo-conservatism and the clash of civilizations narrative. What is particularly interesting is that the narrative is seldom properly historicized; it fails to properly historicize the birth of the concept in a particularly dense historical period. Properly done, historicizing makes it more difficult to maintain the entrenched division of the cultural differences between “the West” and “the Muslim” world, since they are so interwoven to begin with.

Prior to the mega-events of 1989 under the presidency of Ronald Reagan and aided by Donald Rumsfelt and Dick Cheney, the neo-conservatives’ plan has been to destabilize the southern border of the Soviet Union by supporting radical and militant Muslims who would fight against the Russians. This was particularly clear in Afghanistan and Pakistan, but also in Iran where the Shah was ousted and later, in 1979, Ayatollah Khomeini came to power. When the Iron Curtain fell to pieces in 1989, Bernard Lewis knew well that the militant Muslims would pose a problem, since they had been equipped with sophisticated American weapons.²⁰ In his coining of the concept “Clash of Civilizations” (Lewis 1990), he – and three years later he was joined by Samuel Huntington (1993) – asked what would be the biggest sources of conflict in the era after the Soviet empire had fallen. “Culture”, “civilization”, and “identity” were the answers. The answer parallels a classic utterance of German ideologue Carl Schmitt during the Nazi decades: “we don’t know who we are, if we don’t know our enemies” (Schmitt 1996). The major enemy in the clash of civilizations was Islam and China, and since both could not be fought at the same time, Islam was selected as the opponent to be delegated as the primary enemy. Only if you treat your adversary as an enemy and you are ready to die for your politics does politics become

responsible and real, said Schmitt, echoed by the academic father figure of neo-conservatism, Professor Leo Strauss. In this view compromise, negotiations, and apologies were signs of weakness, originally a critique of the liberal democratic Weimar Republic that was unable to stop Nazism. Later, in our times, this critique of liberal democracy has been used about the left-wing, the multiculturalists, the liberals, the relativists, conflict-resolvers who used dollars rather than guns, and the politically correct who stood in the way and hindered the just fight against the threatening and dangerous Muslim enemy (Rasch 2000, Schmitt 1996). Another assumption associated with this viewpoint can be tied to the same neo-conservative ancestor, Leo Strauss, and is seen in Donald Rumsfeld's and Dick Cheney's clash with Henry Kissinger, realist *par excellence*, in the mid 1970s. Roughly put, Kissinger sought a balance of power as a key to manage conflicts regardless of what means it would take to reach the balance, whereas the neo-conservatives would declare again and again that there can be no moral equivalency between Western democracy and other forms of rule. "Our system of government" is morally superior and it is our duty to spread this to the rest of the world. The military should be used for this purpose, since we have the strongest military of all. In short, morality is legitimate for settling who is good and who is evil. Politically your opponent should be treated as an enemy with antagonistic zero-tolerance, even seeking to injure, overthrow or confound the opponent, sometimes harmfully or deadly (Coll 2004, Mann 2004).

For Schmitt's concept of the political there must be a clearly defined opponent and "final consequence": "'concrete opposition in view' and 'bound to a concrete situation, the final consequences of which is a grouping into friends and enemies (which expresses itself in war of revolution)'" (Meier 1995: 5). Strauss expresses these principles of his philosophical interpretation to be "radical probing, going ever deeper, and bringing things to a climax, with the goal of driving the discussion to a confrontation over the very foundations of the political" (Meier 1995: 4-5).

Within this school of thought, the public sphere is not for dialogue but an area for serious battling and confrontation. Within this scheme, spinning is a weapon in the battlefield, a field where your enemies are known and attacked, since you fear the final outcome. With the philosophy of Strauss and Schmitt in the baggage, there is no limit to how far your uncompromising stance can go and how radical your language can develop since you seek a confrontation, since confrontation is the responsible way to do "the political."

In the Danish media coverage of the cartoon crisis, particularly in Frame One, "it is a case of free speech, it is a Danish issue" and Frame Two, "Freedom of speech as a human right, with limitations" (Hervik and Berg 2007), Muslims or Islamists respectively are treated as the enemy to be contained, while at the same time national identity is being built through this enemy imagery. I have argued earlier that about 80% of the Danish voters see the relationship between native Danish and Muslims as incompatible (2004). This enemy is needed for the construction of Danish national identity, which is a project that has been emerging in Denmark since the mid 1990s (Hervik 2006). In this pe-

ried a number of studies have demonstrated a rigid dichotomization between the morally superior Danes (with free speech for instance) and “the Others”, particularly non-Westerners and particularly Muslims, who do not have free speech and whose static, unevolving culture is hundreds of years behind. This view is present in *Jyllands-Posten*’s editorial on September 30, 2005. In an earlier research project I showed this was also present in the editorials throughout the summer of 2001 (Hervik 2002). Within this dichotomization it has become legitimate to treat newly arriving immigrants as different from native Danes (Holm 2007, Hvenegaard-Lassen 2002).

Just as both Schmitt and Strauss have stressed, liberal democracies are weak since they rest on the willingness to compromise. In Frames One and Two, including the Danish Prime Minister’s rejection of a meeting, compromising was not a possibility and zero tolerance the only solution (see also Boe and Hervik, Chapter 12 in this volume). Therefore one can argue that to refuse to meet with the Muslim ambassadors from a neo-conservative perspective is not a blunder, but part of a fight to beat the opponent. An apology (or dialogue) is also not an option. The so-called apology offered on January 30, 2006 by the Prime Minister, saying that personally, he would not have published the cartoons, was interpreted by most Danish commentators as being only a pseudo-apology.

Conclusion

In the early phases of the cartoon story, free speech (or freedom of the press) was not the key issue, with two exceptions, that of Flemming Rose arguing that free speech was used by *Jyllands-Posten* to ridicule and mock Islam, and that of the Prime Minister defending *Jyllands-Posten* and arguing the necessity to use provocations. During the media debate no one ever denied *Jyllands-Posten* its right to publish the cartoons. Criticizing the cartoons was not a criticism of freedom of speech.

But free speech became the issue with the spin launched on October 30, 2005 in *Jyllands-Posten*. Ever since the unfortunate rejection of a meeting with the eleven ambassadors, the government has found itself in a situation of crisis. The major spin strategy for the purpose of damage control was to insist that the issue was about free speech, who has it and who does not. The message was repeated and repeated using the advertisement technique to hammer through the theme. Thus, when the day came, the issue would be perceived as one of free speech and not one of criticizing a neo-racist, neo-nationalist and anti-Muslim government and newspaper. In the process, the government, as well as the cultural editor, Flemming Rose, shared the arguments, and in the process I argue, the issue was transformed from possibly discussing the limits of free speech (as expressed in *Jyllands-Posten*’s unwillingness to published cartoons of Jesus) to one of having free speech or not. In the frame “Freedom of speech as a human right with limitations”, the limits of free speech and the responsibility to test

free speech were emphasized, however attention was directed toward Islamists, who, the public was repeatedly informed, were the threat to be addressed.

But this still was not really about free speech. True free speech would be to demand that the Muslims' rights to free speech would be underscored or defended, but they are not, as if Voltaire did not apply to Muslims. Instead the principle of free speech was used to ridicule Muslims.

In general, the purpose of the spin-oriented government news management and spin was and is to:

1. hold the support of voters
2. save face in the presence of obvious blunders
3. control history as collective memory
4. be on the offensive, rather than being defensive and justifying
5. divert attention away from troublesome areas.

The handling of the cartoon crisis shows clear signs of fulfilling these aims. Public attention was diverted from the ideological bond with neo-conservatives, which, if it came out too strongly in the media, would be highly unpopular since the Danish voting majority is anti-Bush. Justification of government action (damage control) with free speech discourse also made it difficult to talk about the limits of free speech without turning it into an issue of having or not having freedom of expression. This still continues to be the frame that dominates the controversy. Thus discussion about the limits of how far the freedom of speech should be allowed to go tend to get drowned in the discourse of passionate, self-explanatory, armchair absolutists (Gates 1993). This is the price we have to pay for the spin.

Notes

1. Parts of this draft were originally presented at the 9th EASA Biennial Conference, Bristol, Sept 18-21, 2006 as part of the session "Understanding Media Practices" organized by Birgit Bräuchler and John Postill. Another version was presented at the 57th Annual International Communication Associations Conference in San Francisco, May 24-28, 2007. I would like to thank the audiences of both events for comments and suggestions. My special thanks to Clarissa Berg and Carolina Boe for outstanding help and inspiration.
2. Radical right is here used for the ideology which accepts "direct democracy", but is critical of constitutionalism, attacks "elites" and adheres to a strong nationalism that builds on fierce criticism of ethnic minority presence. In Cas Mudde's more technical scheme these three elements correspond to authoritarianism, populism, and nativism (alternatively nationalism and xenophobia) (Mudde 2004).
3. The annual report of the Danish Security Intelligence Service (Police rather than military) notes that in the wake of the Mohammed cartoon crisis there is no noteworthy increase in leftwing extremist activities but a significant increase among members of the extreme right wing. Furthermore the reports note that there is an increasing professionalized use of the media by right-wing groups (www.pet.dk).

4. In addition to the close monitoring of the Danish press throughout the project, we conducted a frame analysis of how the news media dealt with the principle of freedom of speech in five mainstream newspapers *Morgenavisen Jyllands-Posten*, *Politiken*, *Berlingske Tidende*, *Ekstra Bladet*, and *B.T.* as well as two papers with a more limited audience *Kristeligt Dagblad* and *Information*. The sample was limited to editorials, columns, feature articles and op-eds by Danish public intellectuals and politicians limiting our material to the mentioned 232 articles.
5. One of the drastic agreements reached by the three parties in late 2001 was to close the Danish Centre for Human Rights, accusing its leader for being political correct and critical of the Danish People's Party. Only through high-level international intervention was the center saved, but then only in a re-structured domesticated version, now called "The Danish Institute for Human Rights."
6. Second in using these modernized communication strategies has been the radical right-wing, populist party, the Danish People's Party, which is known to have had the country's most skilled, brutally efficient, controversial spin doctor from the period 2001-2005 – Søren Espersen (Nielsen 2004).
7. Cartoonists were given only a few days to response to Flemming Rose's call for drawings of Mohammed "as they saw him." The Danish Union of Journalists' newsletter revealed that 15 out of 42 cartoonists contacted were against *Jyllands-Posten's* idea, some referring to it as "a campaign initiated by *Jyllands-Posten* (*Journalisten* 2006).
8. A curious fact can be introduced here. About 85% of Danes are members of the Danish Protestant Church. Only 1-2 % attend Church regularly. If Danes considered themselves "relaxed", or say nominal Christians, it is interesting to know that 31% believe in reincarnation (Hervik 2002).
9. For the conceptual link between nationalism and racism see also Appadurai 2006, Banks and Gingrich 2006, Miles 1993, Wimmer and Glick Schiller 2002). In political communication "nationalism" and "racism" are negative (minus) words to be carefully avoided.
10. Spin strategies draw on advertisement to help sell the political message and maintain a positive image. One of the basic principles of spinning is precisely repetition.
11. This spin came about after an hour-long conversation with Naser Khader (Thomsen 2006), who is a "civilized other" in Danish public life (See Boe and Hervik, Chapter 12, in this volume).
12. Hansen and Hundevadt 2006; Hornbech 2006; Jerichow and Rode 2006; Larsen and Seidenfaden 2006; Rothstein and Rothstein 2006; Thomsen 2006.
13. Government critical newspapers *Politiken* and *Information* in particular but not government friendly papers *Jyllands-Posten* and *Berlingske Tidende*.
14. Among Pipes' controversial points of views is the claim that the only road to peace in the Middle East is total Israeli military victory. He also wrote this much quoted statement: "West European societies are unprepared for the massive immigration of brown-skinned peoples cooking strange foods and not exactly maintaining Germanic standards of hygiene" (Pipes 1990).
15. Daniel Pipes also maintains a Danish language website: <http://dk.danielpipes.org/>
16. Members of this society are known for their many radical right opinion pieces in the Danish mass media. Hedegaard explains: "We don't believe that the academic discussion in this country is satisfactory. Many of the books that we have read are not part of the public debate in Denmark. Therefore we have been sitting down educating ourselves and each other in what is being written around the world." Feminist, anti-Islamist member, Jette Plesner Dali goes on "We are concerned about whether our open democratic society is becoming a paradise for organizations with a different agenda." (*Demos Nyhedsbrev* 2006).
17. Member of the board for The Jyllands-Posten Foundation and its think tank, CEBOS, David Gress, has his own neo-conservative dimension including being a holder of a John M. Olin Professorship at Boston University. The Olin Foundation has been a generous contributor to the neo-conservatives in the USA.
18. Called "Campus Watch".

19. Hedegaard goes far in his attack on Islam. Among many examples is this statement: "Beneath Muslim culture is a tradition for cutting the throat of free thinking people" (*Jyllands-Posten*, Op-Ed page, February 1, 2006).
20. Bernard Lewis and Samuel Huntington are two salient examples of Orientalists, against whom Edward Said has developed his concept of Orientalism – particularly Lewis. (For the Orientalism and Occidentalism critique see Eide this volume.)

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Chapter 5

Complexities of an Ideology in Action

Liberalism and the Cartoon Affair

Risto Kunelius & Amin Alhassan

When one looks at how the media around the world tackled the Danish Mohammed cartoon issue one has the chance to examine ideology (liberalism) in action. The press reaction to the events provides a wealth of material that shows how journalists and other public figures have used the resources of liberalism in order to make sense of what happened, to determine what was right and where they themselves stood in the debate. Their own articulations of their positions enable us to glimpse some of the key elements of the liberal tradition, seen through the eyes of its passionate defenders, its "in house" critics, as well as, the proponents of its hegemonic position. At the same time, we can ask how the debate possibly redefines the tradition of liberalism, or at least how it illustrates those forms that liberalism (as a discursive field) is adopting in present-day globalizing, multicultural circumstances.

In terms of liberalism, the potential for freedom of expression, speech and the press has become the main problematic within the debate at the core of the cartoon affair. The conflict challenged journalists in different political and cultural contexts by forcing them to take positions in this debate, by defining themselves, making distinctions between themselves and others and elaborating their respective values. In this sense, the case provides a basic *conflict* that is necessary for any analysis of ideology or hegemonic discourse. The conflict drew the nodal point of liberalism into a political debate, and at least for a moment, the terrain of "free speech" became more than just an abstract rhetorical space in which to rehearse the repertoire of the liberal tradition. Even more to the point, this issue revealed liberalism as it was actually articulated with the role and responsibilities of the media, and it showed how the precepts of liberalism provided the defining conflict of the discussion. The press reactions not only shed light into the anatomy of the liberal discourse in general but into the ways in which the media situate themselves inside this discourse in particular. In addition to an analysis of ideology (in this case, liberalism), we also become involved in an analysis of how actors and institutions legitimate their privileged positions (in this case, within the rich imagery of the free speech rhetoric).

The cartoon case exemplifies in many ways the new circumstances in which liberalism in general and free speech theory in particular are translated from abstract ideas into rhetoric and action. These circumstances challenge the modern boundaries within which the liberal tradition had been formulated and within which it has been used to govern action and behaviour. The event became transnational and thus it (re)positioned the news media in relation to the state and national identity. It became trans-cultural, raising tensions, and contentious questions, regarding what was arguably the most contagious imagined ideological line of contemporary world order. It was also (partly) initiated by the media themselves, thus it meant that the media were talking about and justifying their own actions.

As Peter Hervik shows in Chapter 4, the fact that the cartoon affair came to be handled so dominantly in a frame of “freedom” was in itself an act of framing. In September 2005, the political field in Denmark, where the initial moves took place, was already defined and structured. Thus, also other frames and vocabularies with which the act could have been articulated were available. The initial page containing the 12 cartoons recognizes this nicely. As Amin Alhassan points out in his analysis of the cartoons themselves (in Chapter 3) some of the cartoons actually make fun of *Jyllands-Postens* Mohammed cartoon project and they question the initiatives behind the logic of asking cartoonists to draw the forbidden face of Prophet Mohammed (by calling the whole event a “publicity stunt”, or by placing cultural editor Flemming Rose into the cartoons). In a similar fashion, the explanatory text offered by *Jyllands-Posten* – which strongly suggests that this is a test of free speech – implies that other readings of their action are potentially present. Thus, there was nothing necessarily natural, nor anything intrinsic to the act itself, that would suggest such a strong dominance of the free speech frame for this issue. But the dominance of the frame – at least in the so called Western media – was a fact all the same. As a fact, the dominance of the free speech frame is also a symptom of the ideological field in which it appeared: it is a hegemonic fact that testifies to the central place that the term “freedom” holds in the modern self-imagination of the West. It also shows how importantly “freedom” serves as a cornerstone for the legitimacy discourse of the modern, liberal news media. And certainly the international reactions in the Western media show that when journalists look for international professional solidarity, “free speech” is a key part of the globalizing, transnational vocabulary they will and can use.

What is beside the point in this chapter is the question of whether we consider this centrality of the free speech frame a good or a bad thing. The centrality of the frame provides the opportunity for our analysis. We will *not* dwell extensively on whether or not free speech theory gives us a definite answer to the question of whether or not the cartoons should have been either commissioned, published or re-published. Thus, in one sense, our concern is *not* with the issue of free speech: in their respective legal regimes many newspapers clearly had this right, and one can forcefully defend the argument that this should be the case everywhere. Freedom of speech, freedom

of expression and the freedom of press – and press criticism – are and should be fundamental rights of democratic life. While one recognizes this starting point, however, one should also pay attention to the fact that “free speech” is a changing historical construction. Its limits and logic have been defined in particular circumstances. Its intellectual innovations have been crafted by particular actors when facing particular challenges. This has demanded that the notion of “free speech” itself has remained one of the topics of critical discussion. Our notes regarding the cartoon event should thus be seen as a footnote to the discourse of *self-criticism* that takes place at the heart of the liberal democratic tradition at its best.

A Framework for Thinking

Analysing any discourse means looking at it from positions defined in other discourses. This, in turn, means that there are many ways in which one could start to unpack the basic dimensions of liberalism (from collective-individual, from material-idealistic, or even from a geopolitical standpoint for instance). In our reading of the cartoon controversy, and its articulations of liberalism, we focus on two particular conceptual dimensions.

The first dimension concerns *universalism/particularism* (global or local validity) of values and particularly the value of free speech. The debate about the cartoons was shaped so that most (if not all) participants had to consider their stand on the question about how universal or overarching the value of “free speech” or “freedom of expression” is considered to be. At the same time, a much larger historical and philosophical apparatus was usually mobilized. Considering universality of values also meant considering, explicitly or implicitly, questions about history and transcendental, teleological notions. Thus, free speech – as part of the networked discourse of concepts and as part of liberalism – evoked also the grand narrative of modernity and its self-understanding about the evolution of humanity towards transcendental goals. Due to the explicit free speech framing, this was a dimension that was often rather *explicitly* worked on in the debate.

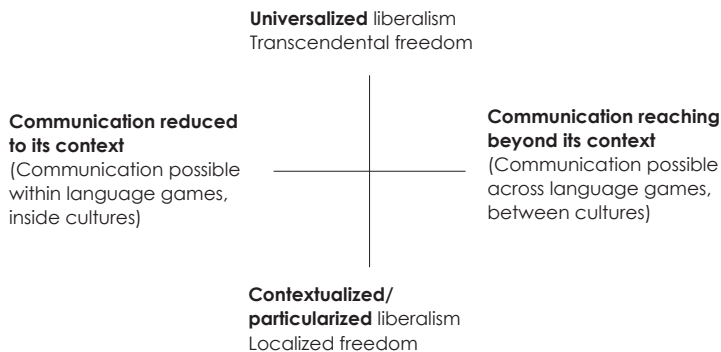
Our second analytical dimension focuses on the role of *communication*. In the debate, authors had to think about the ground on which a possible solution or compromise in the conflict could be found or should be sought after. At the same time they had to articulate (albeit often implicitly) their view on the potential for communication and intercultural dialogue in the conflict. Roughly put, this dimension is stretched between a view where communication is reduced to its cultural and material conditions and a view where communication is seen as a potential means of transcending such differences.

We do not focus on these dimensions because we would consider them the most important ingredients of liberalism. Rather, we think they enable us to provoke fruitful, self-critical questions about the ways in which media and communication theory at the moment is able to tackle the complicated chal-

lenges of globalizing media realities. The universalism dimension opens up the question of trans-cultural validity of norms and values. The communication dimension opens up the basic notions (about language and communication) that underlie our theorizations about the media. We think that by pointing to different *combinations* of universalism and communicativeness we can get some sense of the underlying structure of the discursive field in which the debate about the Mohammed cartoons took place. Figure 1 sketches this analytical framework (Figure 1.).

A few cautionary remarks are in order before continuing. Multiple and complex universes of philosophical and political discourse open up when we begin to look for possible answers to either one of these questions, let alone their combinations. Individual authors and theorists offer sometimes complex, sometimes vague answers to these concerns. And since these are rather fundamental issues, answers are often also somewhat paradoxical. These are, shortly put, extremely difficult and troubling questions. At the same time, however, in terms of theory, we feel they are too important to be left alone in the contemporary contexts in which we act and theorize about the media. Below, we first take a brief look at each dimension separately and then examine how various extreme (theoretical) positions in the field can be identified as combinations or simultaneous articulations of these questions.

Figure 1. Universalism and Communicativeness, A Framework



The vertical dimension of the model is expanded when we answer the unavoidable question: how does the author of a particular text define the status of “freedom of speech” as a value, and consequently the historical role of liberalism? Obviously, one extreme end of this vertical dimension is the *liberal* (modern) version of seeing freedom of speech as a historically transcendental *universal* value. In this view, freedom of speech is one of the fundamental forces (if not *the* fundamental force) of human history and democracy. Such a universalistic view can often take the form of quoting grand authors of the Enlightenment tradition (see for instance Phillips, Chapter 6, in this volume). The arguments

for universalizing free speech can be grounded epistemologically (as the only available method for guarding truth against falsehoods) or democratically (as the safeguard against institutionalised powers or “the tyranny of the majority” or as a more or less articulate combination of both, and here one of the classical references is John Stuart Mill (1993: 7)¹. They can also (in a somewhat later reading of the tradition) be grounded culturally, emphasizing broad free speech as a key characteristic a culture that cultivates tolerance of difference (Bollinger 1986). Although “the individual” in these discourses is the actual site in which freedom can or cannot be achieved, the idea is that freedom is a transcendental value and thus has a valid claim to universalize itself. The value of “free speech” thus transcends individual suffering and feelings. For the cause of freedom, individuals have to be ready to suffer (the pain of tolerating others’ views and beliefs or the hardships of fighting against the majority and the holders of power). Although few thinkers would in actual circumstances defend an abstract and absolute freedom of speech, many would argue that it is a unique historical achievement. For instance, after pointing out the personal, political and religious interests out of which John Milton’s *Areopagitica* (1644) emerged, Brian Winston (2005: 30) reminds us of the ways in which Milton himself later in life opposed free speech, but despite this he had articulated a principle that transcended his own interests and life trajectory:

As a Latin Secretary to the English republic, he [Milton] even became for a time Cromwell’s censor, himself a licenser of the press. Only the rhetoric of *Areopagitica* remained, a monument to modern Europe’s concept of free and individual expression that neither the cracks in its foundation nor the buffets of time have as yet overthrown (Winston 2005: 30).

At the other end of the vertical dimension all values are seen as local constructions. This thoroughly *particularistic* (or contextual) position, then, would also see “freedom of speech” as just a culturally specific “local” ideological concept and liberalism as a product of particular historical circumstances. Just as it is difficult in practice to find a person who actually believes in absolute free speech (Eagleton 2004: 202), also extreme particularism becomes a paradoxical position: it is based on the universal truth that there are no universal truths (absolute relativism). There are, however, thinkers who have produced elaborate versions of this “anti-metaphysical” tendency. For instance, Richard Rorty (1989, 1998) combined both the epistemological and democratic critiques of modern liberalism. He argued that everyone (and every culture) ultimately has their “final vocabulary” which, however, is only a vocabulary; hence, disputes about vocabularies cannot be decided with a correspondent reference to “reality” or other metaphysical terrains such as values (presumably, then, not even “freedom”). For Rorty, this anti-metaphysical position is something achieved by and with an attitude of irony (which still enables you to act “as if” your vocabulary was worth dying for). Another version of relativity of values is offered by Stanley Fish (2002) who still argues that the:

unavailability of neutral standards or of a general theory of free speech (...) does not prevent us either from knowing what is good or working to bring it about. That knowledge is ours by virtue of being situated moral beings; and if we go with it and do not disdain it in favour of empty abstractions, it will direct us to the resources, wholly and benignly political, by means of which our deepest convictions and aspirations might be realized (Fish 2002: 231).

Such philosophical abstractions were, of course, neither excessively nor explicitly invoked in the press debate about the Mohammed cartoons. They do, however help us to recognize an important conceptual distinction in the debate, at least in the dominant form in which it took place in the Western press. The event of the cartoons provoked authors to work their views on the difference between either looking at liberalism as composed of a universal (or somehow teleological) idea and set of values, or situating liberalism into a more relativist or contextual (culturalist) frame. Just as the defence of freedom as universal could take several shapes (epistemological, political or cultural), also its critics could point to its relativity – either in relation to time (liberalism and freedom as historically changing and situated values) or in relation to space (emphasizing that it is merely one ideology among many in our contemporary landscape) – or, in relation to their political ambitions.

Although single authors seldom present themselves as extreme cases of “either/or”, their arguments take place within a force-field between universal and culturally situated versions of free speech. In the case of the Mohammed cartoons in particular, one might suggest that the field was – conceptually – a rather polarizing one²: there were strong tendencies that favoured reducing discussants into “either/or”. In the cartoon debate, and not very surprisingly, usually journalists and editorialists positioned themselves in varying degrees towards the first position whereas critics of the cartoons often looked for their rhetorical ammunition from the latter one.

The universal-contextual dimension is important but analytically, it is clearly inadequate. It fails to capture the differences *among* the “universalists” and “particularists” (or absolute and relative, or the “modern” and the “late-modern”). In order to add to the nuances of the debates, we offer another underlying dimension: the question about *communication* and its potential to overcome cultural horizons. Adding this dimension makes the terrain more complex and problematic, but we hope it also helps to elaborate on some crucial aspects of global communication and the implications the cartoon event has with regard to communication theory. Our second dimension, then, is expanded by thinking about the potential *communicativeness of communication*, in other words the broad rational (or reasonable) potential of public deliberation. At the left hand end of the horizontal dimension (Figure 1) there is a position informed by a theory of communication where languages are theoretically seen as culturally closed games. According to this view, the limits of symbolic interaction, dialogue or deliberation, and possibilities of understanding, are set by the limits of culture and identities. In a sense, we can recognize this position already in

its classic origins: humans and peoples not belonging to the realm of “reason” were referred to as “barbarians”. Theoretically, a corresponding tendency (albeit in an inverted manner and from the perspective of the “barbarians”, if you wish) is articulated by social theorists who argue (with high degrees of sophistication and with detailed reservations) that power and exclusion are always present in a given practice of deliberation and rules of “rationality” (Fraser 1990). These positions in social theory emphasize the way in which language-use is structured and limited by more or less institutionalized social power (cf. Bourdieu 1980). They suggest that “universal rationality” is only possible in particular contexts that favour (by virtue of exclusion) certain symbolic capitals. Thus, dialogue and rationality in communication are always framed by a “way of life” (cf. Mouffe 2000), and that power always “constitutes” us, our communities and rules of discourse. The apparent universality of a given discourse, then, is based on the power of *not paying* attention to some people, some identities and some experiences.

Such criticism of rationality and communication can of course grow from various backgrounds and with various motives. In contemporary social theory it usually emerges from a politically critical, and epistemologically constructivist background. As such these views have played a very important role in challenging the narrow, western, patriarchal, largely white universalising tendencies of modernity. However, in doing so they may also have prepared the political and epistemological ground for their opponents to rearticulate their values as something beyond reason and criticism. It is striking in this respect, for instance, to see the constructivist base from which Samuel Huntington’s model of the world order grows:

Simplified paradigms or maps are indispensable for human thought and action. On the one hand, we may explicitly formulate theories or models and consciously use them to guide our behaviour. Alternatively, we may deny the need for such guides and assume that we will act only in terms of specific “objective” facts, dealing with each case “on its merits”. If we assume this, however, we delude ourselves. For in the back of our minds are hidden assumptions, biases, and prejudices that determine how we perceive reality, what facts we look at and how we judge their importance and merits. We need explicit or implicit models so as to be able to:

1. order and generalize about reality;
2. understand causal relationships among phenomena;
3. anticipate and, if we are lucky, predict future developments;
4. distinguish what is important from what is not important; and
5. show us what paths we should take to achieve our goals. (Huntington 1996: 30)

The long quote opens up the common terrain from which very different kinds of critics have challenged modernity and its universally tinted realism. Thus,

it is worth thinking about whether in addition to informing a power struggle of subordinate identities within societies and orders, the same epistemological position has also informed views which construct undeniable and taken-for-granted otherness. Such a position (that starts by problematizing the potential of communication for intercultural learning and insight) can also grow from a much less theoretically reflective terrain, emphasising that people of different cultures simply *are* different (culturally, religiously, ethnically, etc), merely because this is the way things are. In any case, these positions share the idea where language is mainly placed in the cultural and material context of a life form or a culture that, in turn, is always based on some fundamental assumptions which are beyond the reach of the language users.

Although nuances and political motives of arguing this position obviously vary a lot, *communication* in this position could be read as a vehicle for closing our cultural horizons rather than as a mechanism for opening them up. Language and discussion are viewed as an extension of material relations and fields of reproduction rather than as phenomena of learning or innovation. Communication takes place analytically always after some kind of (cultural) “power” has constituted us (our hidden assumptions, biases and prejudices). Hence, “deliberation” or “dialogue” are possible only between relatively shared forms of identity and become a continuation of this reproduction of power. Chantal Mouffe (2000) offers one formulation of this point, paraphrasing the late Wittgenstein: “to agree on a definition of a term is not enough and we need an agreement in the way we use it” (Mouffe 2000: 11). This agreement – the rules of the language game – is ultimately set outside language; a shared identity or way of life is seen as a necessary precondition for dialogue.

Down at the right hand end of the communication axis we find the reverse belief. According to this position, language and communication are mutually potential means for an inter-subjective and intercultural exchange in which experiences and arguments travel across cultural boundaries and the borders of collectively shared identities. Some of the most obvious thinkers at this end of the spectrum could be – albeit in different ways – authors such as Dewey, Habermas or Popper. Where Popper (1955/2002: 474) simply says that it is a “mistake” to think that people are different from each other and cannot learn from each other, Habermas (1987), faced by the later (post-modern) criticism of rationality³, builds his case on a different interpretation of Wittgenstein. Reconstructing the human communicative capacity inscribed in ordinary language, Habermas argues that this capacity evolves (or has evolved) not merely into a skill of taking the “other’s” perspective in a conversation but also into a reflexivity about the *rules* of communication (Habermas 1987: 1-22). Such an approach to communication then claims that we cannot argue solely within a set of rules, but rather that we may also take up the constitutional agreements and rules as topics of our discourse, and that such possible reflexivity about the rules, principles and agreements (whether these are explicit or not) is not only possible but actually an essential element of what we (should) call rationality. This does necessarily lead to a belief about language operating somehow as an

abstract code, or out of context as a realm of rationality. Actually, it means that capacities enabled by language enable us to communicate in various contexts – and cross over the cultural horizons within which we live. At this end of the communication dimension, language is potentially a mechanism that opens up our horizons and creates a possibility for intercultural insights and learning. Karl Popper (perhaps a slightly surprising figure here, but nonetheless, see Fuller [2003]), is a writer who defends and defines communication and dialogue from this point of view, and does so by means of clear argumentation.

The Western rationalist tradition, which derives from the Greeks, is the tradition of critical discussion – of examining and testing propositions or theories by attempting to refute them. This critical rational method must not be mistaken for a method of proof, that is to say, for a method of finally establishing truth; nor is it a method which always secures agreement. Its value lies, rather, in the fact that participants in a discussion will, to some extent, change their minds and part as wiser men (Popper 1955/2002, 474).⁴

Technically speaking (though not of course for individual thinkers), the left side of the communication axis comes close to “fundamentalism”, defined in terms of communication theory. At the very end of this axis there is a position that is grounded on a belief that there are always rules of language use that are set by the cultural context in which we communicate and that these rules cannot be called into question within the language game being played. Entering such a language game from outside means not entering a debate first and then becoming converted, but rather the reverse, a genuine dialogue is only possible between those who share the fundamental beliefs or dogma (and thus the same identities). Fundamentalism as a practice of safeguarding one imagined “literal” meaning of a text thus assumes a monophonic interpretative community with a “necrophilic” attitude to the sacred texts that are employed to set the horizons of identities (cf. Eagleton 2004). In a parallel manner the notion of communication which informs this end of the horizontal spectrum (communication dimension) is always based on the logic that some fundamental parts of the conceptual frame of discussion are to be taken for granted, and cannot be called into debate. When it comes to people or groups who are interpreted as *essentially different*, consensus is unachievable. Interaction between radically different people can only lead to one becoming *converted* into the other (yet not by the force of argument and reason but by some kind of proselytism or other means of pressure).

On the other communicative end of the axis (right side) we come not only closer to the virtues of diplomacy and real politics but also closer to the basic idea that cross-cultural dialogue is possible and worth while. At the dialogue end of this axis, the very fact that a conversation and exchange is still going on (and has not turned into politics by other means) is a valuable achievement in itself. It is based on a belief that despite all the difficulties and misunderstandings, the fact that we live in a shared *world* (and not only a world shared

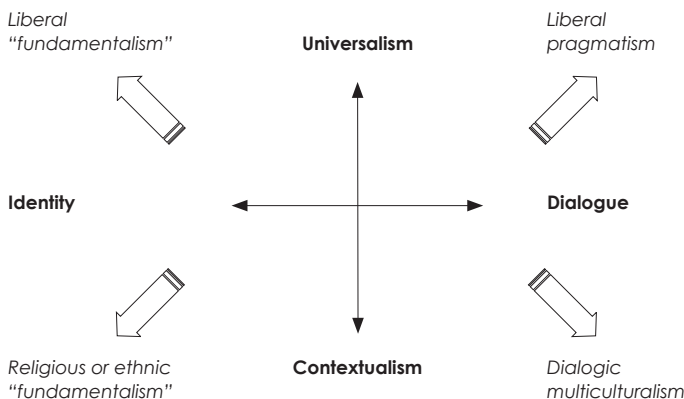
within a language game) makes rational and reasonable communication both practically necessary and theoretically possible. Thus, there is a belief in the chance of overcoming and extending the limits of given identities where over time, with patience, different cultures can learn from each other.

By bringing to mind these briefly sketched dimensions, we want to open up a field of theoretical combinations with which to describe some of the dynamics of the global debate on the limits, potentials and possibilities of freedom of speech that the Mohammed cartoons provoked. We do not claim that the field covers all the essential dimensions of the debate, nor do we think that the framework is without problems. For instance, it is clearly shaped according to thematizations within Western social theory, and it is difficult to position individual theorists in any one of the combinations that emerge from the model. But we offer it as an analytical attempt to grasp in at least two ways the central dilemma of *cultural relativism* in the context of a global media event. In this spirit of self-criticism and self-analysis, then, we now turn to the extreme combinations the model opens up.

The Field for the Debate: Four Extreme Positions for “Freedom of Speech”

The framework constructed above enables us to differentiate between four extreme or logical positions. These are 1) the liberal “fundamentalist”, 2) the ethnic or religious “fundamentalist”, 3) the liberal pragmatist and 4) the dialogical multiculturalist standpoint. It is important to emphasize that the positions are “logical” ones. They can perhaps be said to define the *limits* of discussion and very seldom, if ever, are represented or openly claimed in the debate. In actual journalism, there is a tendency by all authors in such situations to offer at least rhetorical reservations about their position. Figure 2 below is here presented as an illustrative guide to the four positions.

Figure 2. Four Extreme Positions in Terms on Freedom of Speech



Liberal fundamentalism might sound like an oxymoron, but at least technically it is a conceivable position. It combines two things: a belief in the universal value of (individual) freedom and limited belief on the power of communication to cross cultural borders. Here, the heritage of liberalism and modernity are cultivated into a position where freedom of speech is seen as the primary value to defend and uphold. Free speech is something to be defended universally and abstractly, irrespective of the content matter we are dealing with. Taken to its extreme, this means that all or most transgressions of the cultural boundaries of habit or taste are deemed legitimate, and indeed welcome. These tendencies were tellingly articulated when many journalists found it important to defend the right to publish the cartoons *despite* the fact – or even precisely *because* – they thought the cartoons were of bad taste and poor “quality”.

Liberal fundamentalism usually legitimises itself in epistemological terms, saying that an absolute right to publish is a way to discover the truth by maximizing the counter-evidence to common sense and dominant understandings. Often or always it brackets the questions of power differences, thus blurring the distinction between right to speak and right to publish (in a mass circulation newspaper). This is in a sense an a-historical interpretation of the doctrine of liberalism which (at least in the beginning) developed as a rhetoric with which to challenge the *dominant* orders of society. In the cartoon case, liberal fundamentalism thus politically tended to argue that religious minorities (Muslims) in the West – by virtue of less pure minded liberals becoming too politically correct – were about to gain the upper hand and that their views (like the views of all those in power) had to be challenged. In the construction of this conceptual landscape, the idea of the “global” threat of Islam was an important rhetorical device. The following quote from a journalist in *Le Figaro* is just one example:

In order to survive in a World where they are not in the majority, democracies should be persuaded by the superiority of their own system, and impose it at home without any compromise, ready for anything, so as to prevent the development of an assault from the outside which may endanger them (Stéphanie Denis, *Le Figaro*, February 6, 2006, Letters-to-the-Editors Section).

One can also take as an example the response of Flemming Rose. He categorically denied being a liberal fundamentalist, and justified the publication of the cartoons as an attempt to integrate Muslims into Denmark: “into the Danish tradition of satire because you are part of our society, not strangers” (Rose 2006). We should qualify that Flemming Rose’s position here is a form of liberalism that borders on a fundamentalism of a sort, despite his refusal of the label of liberal fundamentalist (we will return to this later). Liberal fundamentalism, thus, is a position based on a confirmed identity, and clearly is a position in which one is convinced of the superiority of that position and its logic. Extremely taken, without accepting the universality of “freedom of speech” as a starting point, communication with someone in this position would be rather difficult.

Consequently, for those who occupy this position, the world is inhabited by a multitude of “others”, and indeed liberals are the minority in this world. With these others, the liberal argument goes, communication is rather hopeless, and it is clear that other means are needed to defend freedom of speech. For a liberal fundamentalist – and this really is the defining question – deliberation about freedom of speech or its application in given context is “out of bounds” and not part of the language game they agree to play⁵. Freedom in this identity-grounded sense can of course come with responsibilities, but these are either toward the shared culture of “liberals” or toward the absolute, transcendental value of free speech itself.

Liberal pragmatists also carry a high or semi-doctrinal respect for “freedom” of speech and the project of modern secularisation, but their views are tempered by a belief in the virtues of communication. Thus, liberal pragmatists hope and believe that in the long run “freedom” will prevail (either due to its superior ideology and its symmetry with human nature or because it offers material benefits to people). However, they believe that the best way to enhance this process is through a diplomatic, civil interaction with those who have yet to “see the light”. Hence, this position does not submit everything to the imperative of freedom, and actually thinks that its presumably universal tendencies have to be – in practice – tempered with a sense of more practical and local considerations. This position was, for a variety of reasons, assumed by many western political leaders as well as a number of editorial writers in the cartoons debate. It was also this compromising attitude of politicians that was often ridiculed in the West by journalists. In any case, an extreme liberal pragmatist would consider it more important to keep the dialogue going than to set about guarding the absolute purity of freedom of speech with the possible risk of ending the communication. The premise is that freedom is a fundamental value but at the same time an idea and an ideal whose complete realization we can only approximate. Theoretically, this position is generally also more aware of the fact that liberalism is a historical construction, and not necessarily a natural evolutionary process; as such it is a process that has changed and is changing both in its principles and its practices.

Perhaps a telling example of these tendencies in the Western press was that various discussants in the West frequently acknowledged that *individual* Muslim religious feelings had genuinely been hurt. Thus, the individualisation (liberal secularization) of the notion of religion (cf. Taylor 2002) and the “sacred” ground of individual experience provided one rhetorical way of finding a narrow piece of “common ground” in the debate. This is how a tabloid newspaper in Finland formulated a version of liberal pragmatism:

An open discussion based on the Western philosophy of free speech with the extreme Islamists has turned out be overtly difficult. ... It is as difficult to have a rational discussion with extreme Christian fanatics who in the US are ready to kill doctors as a part of their fight against abortion...Freedom

of speech is a cornerstone of democracy but it should not be seen as any kind duty to make tasteless fun of other people's fundamental values. (*Ilta-Sanomat*, editorial.6.2.2006)

Some variants of pragmatism can be seen to be based on the idea that liberalism's true virtue is its ability to cultivate tolerance (rather than finding out the truth by discriminating between Self and the Other). While this might be the latent and underlying tendency in much of liberal pragmatism, through its stronger conceptualization of communication, pragmatism can also take more dialogic forms. It suggests that the very principle of freedom of speech, by virtue of being a concept *used* in changing political contexts, must also be seen as an object of negotiation and interpretation. Pragmatism, in this sense, is a position where freedom comes with a responsibility but not to an identity or a local community but rather with the idea of continuing dialogue. In this vein it points to an accountable and responsive use of freedom of speech, and in fact already begins to refer to or overlap with the next position.

Dialogical multiculturalism shares with liberal pragmatism the attitude that conversation and dialogue is an essence of the human condition. This position sees dialogue and intercultural conversation potentially as ways of learning, and since this is considered a fundamental form of human activity, dialogue as such should be prioritized over the absolutism of freedom of speech. But where liberal pragmatism sees freedom of speech as a particularly great achievement of the Western world (and one worth saving and cultivating further), multiculturalism is more clearly based on a direct *criticism of modernity*, as well as of liberalism and rationalism. Indeed, in some ways (in Western academic arenas) this position can be seen as an offspring of critical theory, something that emerged out of critical theory after the "linguistic turn".⁶ In the cartoon debate, a typical argument from this position would claim that all people, groups and cultures have various kinds of censorship related to manners, beliefs, taste and power structures. This cultural fact, however, does not prevent us from increasing a mutual understanding. In articulating such a position Sharon Burnside, the Public Editor of *The Toronto Star*, relies on academic sources in the cartoon debate in Canada:

Professor Stephen Ward introduced the notion of global journalism ethics in his book, *The Invention of Journalism Ethics*, published in 2004. "Beyond technology, there is another social fact that challenges journalism – the tension between pluralism and globalization", he wrote. "The audience is no longer local or national. It is international. The impact of a story carries over borders ... irresponsible and parochial journalism can wreak havoc....Our world is connected electronically like never before, yet this grid of connections coexists with a collision of cultures, values and philosophies of life. We have not thought out these tensions. ... This is a great opportunity to discuss how we balance freedom and responsibility in this new pluralistic

world.” (Sharon Burnside, “It Is Time to Talk about Freedom” *The Toronto Star*, Feb. 25, 2006 p. F-06).

Prince Charles of the UK, expressed similar sentiments while visiting the Al Azhar University in Cairo in March 2006:

The recent ghastly strife and anger over the Danish cartoons show the danger that comes of our failure to listen and to respect what is precious and sacred to others. [...] In my view, the true mark of a civilized society is the respect it pays to minorities and to strangers (*The Ottawa Citizen* “Charles Attacks Danish Cartoons in Egypt”, March 22, 2006, p. A-07).

Tendencies of dialogic multiculturalism can be read from texts produced in a number of contexts. Thus a more religiously inclined version would claim that it is important to retain a sense of the sacred and an ability to respect the sacredness of others in society. But the crucial difference between this view and technically “fundamentalist” versions would be that dialogical multiculturalism would emphasize the fact that we – despite some dogmatic differences of religion – share at least two things: the world in which we live and the sense of the sacred (in however secularized form) as a necessary ingredient of human cultural forms. These ingredients, then, are (in the extreme logical form of multiculturalism) what the “common” identity of human nature is made of and which provide a chance for understanding others without necessarily becoming them; an opportunity for insight into the identity of the other and a possibility of learning individually and culturally⁷. In a sense, this position “provincializes” the European Modern and repositions it as just one version that can only be related to other modernities (cf. Taylor 2004).

The fourth position in our framework can be called *religious or ethnic fundamentalism*. Extreme versions of this combination would mean that we believe the human world to be utterly culturally relative and that our abilities to overcome these horizons by means of the communication of difference are very limited, if not non-existent. This view informs a position where one does not look for consensus, compromises or moments of learning in one’s encounters with others. Such fundamentalism does not even think or hope that (eventually) all people will agree with it (it needs its Others as all identity-grounded positions do). It argues that local cultures and communities are not only somewhat self-sufficient and valuable as a part of the diversity of the whole (as a dialogic multiculturalism would) but should also be seen as *sovereign*. It recognizes the cultural relativity of the world but instead of looking for *insight* into other cultural, religious, or political experience (as dialogic multiculturalism would do) it aims at protecting its own stable world order ultimately by *refusing to argue* or communicate on its behalf. This kind of fundamentalism is, of course, historically a companion to modernity, often appearing as a reaction to modernity. It can take the form of religious communities’ self exclusion from

“progress”, for instance denying themselves modern technology, although periodically adopting some amount of it and articulating it as “authentic enough”. It may also take the form of ethnic cleansing or religiously motivated forms of violence as a form of regulation and boundary maintenance. But such fundamentalist tendencies are to be evidenced also in less vivid and dramatic forms. It is important to point out that such “fundamentalism” appears everywhere. In a world dominated by secular discourses, it is often (in the West) recognized only when it takes the form of religion (fundamentalist Islam, fundamentalist Christianity), but one might well argue that other semi-secular identities (such as membership in a nation-state) sometimes function in the same manner. In public discourse, national interest, national identity, or national culture often function as a starting point that needs no argument to back it up.

In the case of the cartoon conflict, it is of course relatively easy to recognize fundamentalist arguments from those who argued that the cartoonists who initially drew the pictures should be punished (see Eide, Chapter 9 and Saleh, Chapter 10, in this volume). An extreme example of this is a *fatwa* (a version of what earlier Christianity would have called *ex-communication*) ultimately legitimizing the death of an infidel. Another example that falls into this category would be some of the hate speech slogans in the (not perhaps dominant but violent and much media-covered) street demonstrations against *Jyllands-Posten* and against Denmark. It is uncommon to find this position in the opinion pieces of the press because at least *formally* such texts take the form of a discourse with arguments (thus they open up to and recognize other arguments and their claims to validity). But a strong reference to traditional values and authentic interpretations are often diagnostic of this tendency.

Before closing the discussion about “ethnic fundamentalism” it is important to come back to where we started. As we see in Flemming Rose’s defence of the publications of the cartoons, much of what is presented – or what came to be presented in the free speech dominated frames of the debate – is based on “fundamentalist” tendencies that are at least theoretically not part of the logical structure of “liberal fundamentalism”. What is often used is categories of national identities, of being “European”, or referring to common sense and good taste (for better or worse), or even referring to satire and mockery as identifiers of the culture into which immigrant Muslims must be cultivated into (see also Boe and Hervik, Chapter 12, in this volume). These formulations resort to seeking identities and horizons that have historically been the sites within which liberalism and its free speech tradition were conceived. In this way, they also depart from “liberal fundamentalism” and define their position in more particularistic manner.

It is here that the strong *national* emphasis of the coverage of the cartoon controversy becomes an important and interesting theme. As counter-potential for hegemonic concepts, one could argue that “fundamental” liberalism *could* have been – but seldom was – a weapon *against* these very same limits.

Thus there is a difference – and we believe it is an important one – between the “fundamentalisms” of Figure 2, even if both positions are based on their

logically absolute principles. One can certainly think that life for people with diverse cultural identities can be more rewarding in a society dominated by liberal fundamentalism than by ethnic fundamentalism. Liberalism has been both the dominant growth environment of multiculturalism and one of its main opponents, and at least, so far, one can say that it has somehow tolerated both its “own” fundamentalists as well as its critics (the multiculturalists). At the same time, the cartoons event perhaps indicates that we are nearing the limits of liberalism in such situations.

Conclusion

The cartoon conflict has produced a flood of press coverage on the issue of free speech and the problems of intercultural dialogue. This material provides a rich source for looking at how the media reacted in a global conflict, how it allowed different voices to express themselves and how it framed these voices. The framework presenting the four extreme positions on free speech is an attempt to develop a vocabulary with which to see the broader dynamics into which debates took place. We are not presenting this framework as a tool meant for labelling people or identifying particular actors, but rather we present it as result of an attempt – made in a communicative spirit – to undertake *self-analysis*. We hope we have been able to identify some of the important ingredients from which our ideas and argumentation are made of.

Liberal notions of freedom of speech, and by extension, freedom of the press, despite being generally accepted as part of the bedrock of modern democratic societies, tend to produce differing outcomes in practice. A transnational evaluation of speech rights and media freedoms articulated during moments such as the Danish Mohammed cartoons controversy suggests that despite the common philosophical origins of speech rights, there are variations that reflect the diversity of contexts. By presenting a sketch of the varieties and dynamics of landscape of “liberalism”, we do not seek to provide a normative framework of how “free speech” ought to be. Rather, we have used the cartoon publication, as well as the discourses on free speech rights that were generated by it, as an opportunity to sketch the landscape in which the struggle over communicative rights is taking place at the moment.

In the end, we believe the analytical grids outlined in this chapter can also be used as a way of describing the most common positions between which many of us oscillate within the tradition of liberalism and modernity. It might very well be that when the subject matter changes and norms or semi-sacred taboos change, some of us who have sympathized with multiculturalist positions on earlier occasions may feel much tempted to wave a dogmatic flag. But for the communication and media research community, for the professional community of international journalists, this is where the potential lessons of the cartoon event lie. It offers us an interesting and self-reflective chance to spell out some of the ingredients from which our thinking is currently composed.

Our own position in this debate – after trying to understand various positions – is that in the current contexts of global media a crucial task for media research and social theory is to keep the central concepts of the debate open and contested. We believe that the best weapons against fundamentalism in all its forms – for meeting the challenges of globalization media – are reflexivity and willingness to try to analyze the rules of one's own language game. Whether in the end it proves to be a belief or a fact, it is our position that there is an urgent need to act on the assumption that communication – even in the era of forcefully imagined cultural divides – cannot be totally reduced to a function of its cultural and material context.

Notes

1. In such cases, it is important to separate the tradition of reading and interpretation (which is always part of latter day wisdom and legitimation processes) and the actual classic writings themselves. In the case of free speech, see for instance Peters 2005, Winston 2005, Nerone (ed.) 1995.
2. This implies the presence of other forces in in the context of the debate, for instance such powerful discourses as the "clash of civilizations", "war on terror" etc.
3. Habermas' *Theory of Communicative Action* is, in a sense an attempt to anchor his theory of modernity and rationality beyond the historical definitions of western modernity. Thus by arguing that the capacities provided by language are capacities of the species he also suggests that there are shared resources of rationality across cultural borders.
4. Popper (1955: 474) goes on as follows: "It is often asserted that discussion is only possible between people who have a common language and accept common basic assumptions. I think that this is a mistake. All that is needed is a readiness to learn from one's partner in the discussion, which includes a genuine wish to understand what he intends to say. If this readiness is there, the discussion will be the more fruitful the more the partners' backgrounds differ. Thus the value of a discussion depends largely upon the variety of the competing views. Had there been no Tower of Babel, we should invent it. The liberal does not dream of perfect consensus of opinion; he only hopes for the mutual fertilization of opinions, and the consequent growth of ideas. Even when we solve a problem to universal satisfaction, we create, in solving it, many new problems over which we are bound to disagree. This is not to be regretted." For a somewhat parallel reading of Popper in relation to public sphere theory, see Hartley (1996: 69-70).
5. Here, it is worth noting that Flemming Rose – after the controversy – explicitly *denies* that he would be a total laissez-faire liberalist. Indeed, from his formulation we can get a glimpse of the fact that the identity that his editorial policy is defending is *not* in fact liberal but otherwise defined.
6. Some variants of multiculturalism might come close to *occidentalism* (Buruma & Margalit 2005), while others would – even in relation to Western modernity itself – emphasise a more dialogic attitude.
7. If liberal pragmatism in its extreme universal form retains a belief in *rationality* through the fact that all people are language users (and that this means we share resources of communicative rationality), an extremely particularizing version of dialogic multiculturalism retains (again, through the belief that we share the material world and some basic ways of making sense of it) a belief in being *reasonable*. On being rational and/or reasonable and the heritage of modern thought, see Toulmin (1990).

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Chapter 6

Who Spoke and Who was Heard in the Cartoons Debate?

Angela Phillips

The belief that ideas should be tested, to the point of destruction if necessary, and that all voices must be heard, lies at the very core of Western ideas of democracy with its roots traceable back to ancient Greece. It is the concept of the agora: the place where people of reason were able to form their ideas, argue for them and influence the course of decision making, which underpins the Habermasian (Habermas 1996) model of the idealised public sphere: that moment in early nineteenth century England, when the press, freed of state control, became a channel for political debate, and before the media of the modern and late modern period became (in this analysis), merely the means by which the interest groups of the elite jockey for power.

This vision of an idealised public sphere, or some version of it, is the one to which most critics refer when they consider the place of the media in the modern world. It is the ideal against which scholars measure the success or failure of the modern news media in a democracy. It underpins media legislation in democratic countries. It is a vision that asks, not merely whether people understand or are interested in what is written or said, but whether this form of communication fulfils the requirements of democracy. Does it inform, does it represent different points of view and/or different political positions? Is it sufficiently independent of the state and its institutions to form a critique of them?

In the Western press, defence of press freedom has become almost an article of faith, often trotted out as the reason for invasion of privacy, and occasionally in defence of the right to insult but rarely examined in the original context of the struggle for democracy. The freedom to publish is indeed vital to democratic debate, but that freedom necessarily goes along with the power to publish and as historians of the press have demonstrated, that power is not equally distributed. The rise of advertising in the mid nineteenth century, far from freeing voices and opening debate, led to: "A steady transfer of control of the popular press to capitalist entrepreneurs" (Curran 1991: 39, Curran and Seaton 1997). That control has not decreased – indeed in the old Western democracies the number of newspaper publishers is shrinking as local newspapers are bought

by multi-national conglomerates (OFCOM 2007) which are rapidly establishing themselves as multi-media news services on line. The rise of Google news has done little to change this balance. While the powerless have more access to publishing via the net, the conglomerates still dominate both off line and on, using the power of their brands to establish dominion (*ibid*).

There are those who would suggest that the modern media, owned and controlled by massive media corporations with an interest merely in making money, are incapable of fulfilling the “representative rights” of the people because it is those who own and control the media who determine who will speak (Adorno 1991, Herman and Chomsky 1988, etc). More nuanced critiques recognise the variations across and within media systems and point to: market interventions (in particular in Central Northern Europe) to broaden the spread of opinions; the role of public broadcasting in providing platforms for under-represented voices; and to the politically partisan press in much of Southern Europe as evidence that commercial interests do not always operate unopposed (Hallin and Mancini 2004: 68). James Curran (1991: 52) describes various ways in which a third route might be created between Marxist gloom and liberal market enthusiasm in which it would be possible to “recreate the media as a public sphere in a form that is relatively autonomous from both government and the market.” He suggests (1991: 16): “A basic requirement of a democratic media system should be that it represents all significant interests in society” and that this is already being achieved, to some extent via, for example, public broadcasting in the UK and press subsidy in Scandinavia.

But is this enough to ensure that a multiplicity of voices are heard? Many would argue that it is not because, a media which represents only those voices it deems as ‘significant’, is a media which merely ‘shuffles the pack’, replacing one elite group with another as different power blocks struggle to achieve hegemony. In representing only those interests that are already deemed ‘significant’ it further confirms and re-establishes their significance. As Stuart Hall points out (referring to Foucault); “Every regime of representation is a regime of power” (1994: 394-5). Those who have the power to describe what or who is important, also *establish* what or who (and which societies) are important. This power to represent and through representation to hold “the Other” in its place, is described by Edward Said:

The construction of identity – for identity, whether of Orient or Occident, France or Britain, while obviously a repository of distinct collective experiences, *is* finally a construction – involves establishing opposites and “others” whose actuality is always subject to the continuous interpretation and re-interpretation of their differences from “us”. Each age and society re-creates its “Others”. (Said 1995: 332)

The “Others” of Said’s Orient are to be found both within and without Western societies. Those furthest away from power are least likely to have been able to define *themselves* within the dominant discourse of the society in which

they live. Gayatri Spivak defines one such (“subaltern”) group: “You have the foreign elite and the indigenous elite. Below that you will have the vectors of upward, downward, sideward backward mobility. But then there is a space which is, for all practical purposes outside those lines” (Spivak in Landry and MacLean 1996: 288-9). Those outside the lines are the “Others” of the dominant discourse. They are present in every society, and when they speak, as Spivak explains, they cannot be heard. In an interview about her essay, *Can the Subaltern Speak* (1995), she explains “Even when the subaltern makes an effort to the death to speak, she is not able to be heard, and speaking and hearing complete the speech act.” (Spivak 1996: 292)

So the question of who speaks, who is heard, and how they are validated, both reflects the power structures as they exist and helps to confirm them. Those who are ‘Other’ are reduced to a descriptive space ascribed to them by those who define and constitute “us”. In the context of such an analysis questions of freedom of speech take on a far greater complexity that cannot simply be addressed by the operation of a mechanistic view of “press freedom” in which newspaper editors have the right to decide, free of coercion, what they will publish. Because, as Wendy Brown observes, in *States of Injury*; “Rights that empower those in one social location or strata may dis-empower those in another.” (Brown 1995: 98)

In nineteenth century England the most disempowered, and therefore the voices least likely to be heard, were those of working class women – who did not frequent coffee houses or salons and were therefore excluded from debates that took place there – a point forcefully made by numerous critics of Habermas (Fraser 1987). In twenty first century Europe the most disempowered groups are, arguably, migrant populations.

Against this background how do newspaper editors interpret and exercise their hard won rights to press freedom? Do they feel the obligation to open up a space for debate in the terms that enlightenment philosopher J.S. Mill described for them?

If opponents of all important truths do not exist, it is indispensable to imagine them, and supply them with the strongest arguments which the most skilful devil’s advocate can conjure up (Mills 1869 [*On Liberty*]: 37).

An analysis of the coverage of the Danish Mohammed cartoons affair provided a useful opportunity to examine how editors made use of their right to publish and the degree to which they responded to the opportunity to invite the public to “engage in rational discussion” (Habermas 1996). In a world of trans-nationalism in which cultures cross borders and narrowly nationalistic assumptions are increasingly being tested, this was a golden opportunity for newspapers to open their pages to a debate that affects not only the media but also democracy.

The Voice of the Editors

At the very heart of any debate about democratic freedom lie the questions:

Who is licensed to talk about other people's experience? Who is empowered to ventriloquise other people's opinions? Who is licensed to picture other people's lives? Who chooses who will be heard and who will be consigned to silence, who will be seen and who will remain invisible? (Murdock 1994: 28).

In countries (such as Russia, Egypt and China), that freedom is heavily circumscribed from above by government. In Western democracies it may be circumscribed by the decision of the owners (the editor of *France Soir*, for example, was sacked by its owner for publishing the cartoons); but in all cases it will be editors who make the day-to-day decisions as to how a story will be framed, who will be heard and who will remain invisible.

Defending Free Speech

According to the earlier country by country research (Kunelius, Eide et al. 2007) on the cartoons coverage, most editors accepted the frame of reference provided by *Jyllands-Posten*¹, that freedom of speech was threatened and in need of defence, although views split along national and political lines as to whether the publication of the cartoons had been a legitimate test or an inconsiderate act of folly. Concepts of press freedom, and freedom of speech, were used almost interchangeably and were generally viewed as a "historically transcendent universal value...one of the – if not the – fundamental forces of human history and the most important part of our (Western) heritage" (Ibid. 2007: 16). As the American researchers put it:

What could have been framed as an attack by journalism on Islam or the Muslim world or even as an example of shoddy journalism practice, was instead framed as a broader, more potent cultural conflict in which journalism is portrayed as *representing* [my italics] Western values and defending its freedoms. ...Attacks on the press are seen as attacks on Western values. Other views in the US were heard only on the "Letters" pages. (Craft and Oyedele 2007: 181)

Many of the most vociferous supporters of *Jyllands-Posten* published the cartoons themselves as an act of solidarity – living proof of the power and independence of the press. Others desisted from publishing while arguing forcefully for their colleagues right to do so. Even one Pakistani commentator, in the magazine *Herald*, defended the publication of the cartoons: not only as a right, but as something necessary to do in the changing European situation. Where they engaged with philosophy it was rare, outside the newspapers of the 'East' and Canada (to which we return later), to find reference to recent debates on representation, identity formation, Orientalism or post colonial

theory. Editors of newspapers in Europe and America seemed to be frozen in the nineteenth century or earlier, turning for inspiration to the Enlightenment and to the writings by Voltaire, John Stuart Mill, David Hume and John Locke. Some editors and columnists assumed that these philosophers would automatically defend the right of a newspaper to insult a prophet.

Those favouring an absolutist approach to freedom of speech often referred to Voltaire with the (mis-attributed) quote: "I disapprove of what you say, but I will defend to the death your right to say it" (see for example *The Daily Telegraph*, editorial, February 7, 2006). Indeed Voltaire wrote just as persuasively about tolerance:

But it is clearer still that we ought to be tolerant of one another, because we are all weak, inconsistent, liable to fickleness and error. Shall a reed laid low in the mud by the wind say to a fellow reed fallen in the opposite direction: "Crawl as I crawl, wretch, or I shall petition that you be torn up by the roots and burned?" (Voltaire 1764, in Woolf 1924).

The editors taking the absolutist view argued that they were protesting against the *intolerance* of their Muslim minorities. In other words, that they, the editors, were being asked to bow to the will of the prophet Mohammed, as it were, to: "crawl as I crawl". But in so doing they avoided the issue of power. In Voltaire's time it was those in power (the church and the state) that forbade freedom of speech and insisted that reeds, however they were naturally disposed, should all fall the same way. In the context of a Danish state, with a secular government (currently aligned with the anti-immigration Danish People's Party) and in a newspaper that supports (and was supported by) the Prime Minister, we might ask whether indeed it was the Muslims who were demanding conformity to social norms? It could be argued that, had Voltaire been there to speak, he would have seen the role of *Jyllands-Posten* in a rather different light. Was it not possible to see the provocative publication of hurtful cartoons as precisely a call to: "Crawl as I crawl, wretch, or I shall petition that you be torn up by the roots and burned?"

British philosopher David Hume (see 1742/1987 "Of Liberty and The Press") might have provided a stronger philosophical foundation than Voltaire for the absolutist view. Hume saw press freedom as the foundation upon which all other freedoms rest in a democracy, assuming that bigotry will always lose in a free debate and that in any case newspapers have no responsibility for the consequences of such bigotry. Hume, in the same essay, defends this position by suggesting that press freedom is an "innocuous freedom" because people read in isolation and are therefore unlikely to react violently in the way they might react to a demagogue rallying them by a speech to a crowd: "The liberty of the press, therefore, however abused, can scarcely ever excite popular tumults or rebellion". (Miller 1987)

In the light of subsequent events (in Nazi Germany and Rwanda to cite just two examples) it appears that the press (or the news media) can help to "incite

tumult”, however those arguing for a strong form of Press Freedom suggest that it is the subsequent use of the words by those who wish to foment rebellion, rather than the words themselves, which are to blame for any violence which does appear to ensue. Few editors went so far as to suggest that race hate legislation, banning material which might be considered liable to “incite racial hatred” (which exists in every country studied) should be repealed, although many editorials did suggest that European Muslim communities were effectively using the cartoon affair as a stalking-horse to try and push through tighter restrictions against racially discriminatory publications – and that such attempts should be stoutly resisted.

The absolutist view was widely adopted by those who published the cartoons, including the left-wing French satirical magazine *Charlie Hebdo*, which chose to act in solidarity with a right-wing popular newspaper (*Jyllands-Posten*), rather than with a minority group that felt it had been insulted. Editor Philippe Val declared: “The question is not whether these cartoons were good but whether we have the right to publish them.”² *Charlie Hebdo* was unusual. It was most often right-wing newspapers, opposed to immigration, that were quickest to support *Jyllands-Posten*. Fear of a resurgent Islam was at times the explicit, but often the unspoken subject of much of the debate (see Eide, Chapter 9, in this volume). Charles Moore, ex-editor of the UK’s *Daily Telegraph* (which didn’t publish the cartoons) put it bluntly: “I wish someone would mention the word that dominates Western culture in the face of militant Islam – fear. And then I wish someone would face it down” (*The Daily Telegraph*, 4 February 2008).

This argument suggested that Muslims (less than three per cent of the British population and some eight to ten per cent of the French population) were a threat to enlightenment values in their adopted countries.

Freedom and Restraint

In Pakistan pragmatic liberalism was one of the dominant discourses, in particular in the editorials in the elite English language press, a position Pakistani editors shared with many European and North American newspapers. Those editors who decided not to publish were more likely to reach for John Locke or J.S. Mill for support, citing either the need to “avoid harm”, or to be tolerant. The “harm” argument was rarely employed, perhaps because editors tended to the view expressed by British philosopher, A.C. Grayling (*Independent on Sunday*, February 19, 2006) that “Anyone can drum themselves into feeling outraged; why should this be allowed to silence others?”

In “An Essay Concerning Human Understanding”, John Locke (1693) said that people should be tolerant of each other’s beliefs as long as they did not impinge on individual freedoms (Peters 2005: 112). Locke might have argued (as many editors did) that Muslims should “tolerate” the desire of a Danish newspaper to lampoon their Prophet. But others pointed out that a tolerant editor would not have published because, as Locke also said, “If a Roman Catholic believe that to be really the body of Christ that another man calls bread, he does no

injury thereby to his neighbour.” (Locke in Peters 2005: 112) Had Locke been around in 2006 he might have argued that if Muslims object to pictures of the Prophet then what harm does it do to those who have no interest in the Prophet? Many of the editorials in newspapers across Europe and North America took precisely this view. An editorial in *The Daily Mail*, a right-wing British daily, explained the position taken initially by all the British daily press.

Freedom of speech, as we have said, is a treasured characteristic of a civilised society. But great freedoms involve great responsibilities. And an obligation of free speech is that you do not gratuitously insult those with whom you disagree.

While the Mail would fight to the death to defend those papers that printed the offending cartoons, it disagrees with the fact that they have done so. (*The Daily Mail*, February 3, 2006)

In Sweden and the UK, where the cartoons were not re-printed, tolerance was usually associated with a clear sense of superiority that Jaques Derrida might have been describing when he said:

Tolerance is always on the side of the ‘reason of the strongest’. Where ‘might is right’; it is a supplementary mark of sovereignty, which says of the other from its elevated position, I am letting you be, you are not insufferable, I am leaving you a place in my home, but do not forget that it is my home (Derrida 2003: 129).

In both countries the level of tolerance decreased as the crisis grew. In the UK a small but angry demonstration against the publication, in which anti-Western placards were used, was the turning point. The placards were certainly inflammatory. One said; “Europe, you will pay. Your 9/11 is on its way”; another said: “Bin Laden is on his way”. All but one newspaper (*The Times*) suggested that the demonstrators should not be accorded a right to freedom of expression but rather that they should be arrested for incitement or even, according to an editorial in the UK’s liberal *Guardian* newspaper, deported – for exercising their freedom to demonstrate in a less than conciliatory manner.

Dialogic Multiculturalism

But what about those who refused to argue within the ‘free speech’ territory established by *Jyllands-Posten*, and tried to move the debate towards a discussion about racism and power (Dialogic Multiculturalism – see Kunelius and Alhassan, Chapter 5, in this volume)? Those arguing along these lines opposed publication, not on grounds of taste or respect for difference, nor out of deference to a higher being, but rather, on the grounds that the cartoons were a deliberate attack on a minority group and that their publication did not deserve the support of anti-racist democrats. Indeed they suggested that the cartoons represented a

new bench-mark in a growing intolerance against ethnic minorities. The argument suggests that a mass-market publication, that uses its power deliberately to provoke a marginalised community, should be judged on the quality of that act alone. This discourse asks: "What was the real motive for publication?" This perspective takes on a particular importance because it speaks to a need to examine established assumptions. Human rights campaigner Francesca Klug captures this view in one of a series of articles in *The Guardian*

Liberal secularists cite Enlightenment heroes such as Voltaire, Kant and Mill to underline their cause. But they fail to distinguish between free speech as an essential means to challenge state or church monopoly power and stigmatising vulnerable religious or ethnic minorities in the name of a free press. (*The Guardian*, February 18, 2006)

In Pakistan, quite a few contributions adhered to "dialogic multiculturalism" and radical religious fundamentalism. The only other non-Islamic country in our research survey (discounting Russia where the debate was very heavily directed from the centre) in which the "dialogic multiculturalism" discourse moved from the margins to the mainstream, was Canada (Alhassan 2007). Here editors were forced, from the start, to argue within a very different frame from that put forward by *Jyllands-Posten*. The debate about multiculturalism is now well established in Canada and it was reinforced when the United Church of Canada wrote a public letter to the Canadian Islamic Council of Imams, suggesting that the cartoons had been; "intended to incite racial and religious hatred." Editorials in many newspapers vociferously opposed this view but, given the position of the United Church as an authoritative voice representative of dominant, Western, European values, they could not ignore it and although a poll (COMPAS Feb 2006) suggested that 70 per cent of working journalists would have liked the cartoons to be published, the structure of the debate was such that to do so would have been widely seen as a racist provocation.

No daily newspaper editors felt inclined to be so categorised and most saw the need to allow space on their pages for views like those expressed by the United Church. As a result the Canadian debate moved between two opposing positions rather than, as in the case of Europe, between those who accepted the right to publish and others who merely doubted the wisdom of doing so. Although there were twice as many comment pieces took the liberal fundamentalist view (30) as opposed to the "dialogic multiculturalism" view, and five newspapers had a significant liberal fundamentalist bias, six newspapers gave equal space to the "dialogic multiculturalism" and three newspapers expressed only this discourse and included no alternative views.

Elsewhere, although all the 14 countries involved in the country-by-country research on the cartoons have legislation in place to prevent the publication of inflammatory material likely to cause racial intolerance, few editorials dealt with the possibility that the cartoons could have been designed to do so, and in many cases, the right wing, anti-immigration stance of the party in power in

Denmark, was not seen as relevant background information. Editors of some (though by no means all) newspapers did however allow space for this view to be expressed by other contributors. Sarah Joseph, editor of *EMEL* an Anglo-Muslim magazine, wrote the following in *The Guardian* (February 3, 2006):

Now the great shape-shifter of fascism seems to have taken on the clothes of “freedom of speech”. If these cartoons were designed to provoke Muslim fundamentalists, maybe they have done more to reveal the prejudices of Europe. Europe has a history of turning on its minorities. Will that be its future too? (*The Guardian*, February 3, 2006)

Most Muslim contributors in the UK took this view and so did a number of prominent left-wing intellectuals. In several newspapers however it did not appear at all. In Denmark the debate split between newspapers, with *Jyllands-Posten* (not surprisingly) espousing the liberal fundamentalist view while the more left-wing *Politiken* argued from a dialogic multiculturalism position. In Finland the debate broke differently with the more “elite” newspapers taking a sharper liberal view whereas the smaller, and more tabloid, newspapers took a more conciliatory position and one of the more rural newspapers adopted something close to dialogic multiculturalism. This was a distribution of views that Finnish researchers attributed to “A latent sense of religious solidarity with those whose sacred values had been insulted” (Kunelius et al. 2007: 214). In America this view was only given breathing space in the letters pages.

The Voice of the Politicians

Editors and journalists decide which voices will be heard and how they will be framed but politicians rank high amongst the voices most likely to be called upon. Given that much of the concern about press freedom concerns the relationship between journalism and the state, it was instructive to consider how representatives of the state were treated in newspapers. In Russia, (ranked 140 with China 162 in the Annual Worldwide Press Freedom Index – RSF 2007), the state intervened directly and two newspapers were closed down (one temporarily) for publishing the cartoons (Bakoulin 2007: 159). Seeing which way the political wind was blowing, the Russian press moved towards a position favouring “peaceful co-existence” and used the opportunity to criticise the West for its attitudes toward Muslims. In the Russian media the debate was seen as an opportunity, not to defend press freedom, but to attack the West. In Pakistan, politicians were the most frequently quoted sources. In the early days it was Western politicians but as the news moved to focus on rioting at home, domestic politicians were both more frequently quoted and attacked for failing to prevent the riots.

In the Western democracies, the tendency of newspapers was to separate themselves as much as possible from the politicians. Politicians were widely

heard in these countries but whenever they expressed an opinion favouring restraint, they were subject to press criticism. In the UK all the national newspapers studied had produced almost identical editorials in which they stood up for press freedom but made it clear that they would not publish the cartoons. Yet most of these newspapers wrote approvingly of the stance taken by the Danish Prime Minister in defending *Jyllands-Posten* and failed to mention those Danish politicians who had spoken out against the publication. When British Foreign Minister Jack Straw called for restraint, he was roundly condemned in the press (Phillips 2007: 70). In Finland the Prime Minister, President and Foreign Minister all apologised to Muslims when the cartoons were published on a right-wing web-site and, although none of the newspapers published the cartoons themselves, they attacked the politicians suggesting that their stance was comparable to the bad old days when they failed to stand up to the Soviet Union. Risto Kunelius suggests that journalists sought to distinguish themselves from the moderation of politicians by taking a more liberal fundamentalist line (Kunelius et al. 2007: 215).

It is ironic that in a dispute about freedom of expression so many newspapers considered it illegitimate for the elected representatives of the people to express a view – unless that view favoured the publication of the cartoons. This was true as much in those countries in which the cartoons were not published in the press, as in countries where they were published.

The Voices of the Muslim Communities in Europe and America

The Mohammed cartoons were published in order to see what would happen if Mohammed was mocked in print. Researchers in some countries attempted to find out just how much space the Muslim population had been given to respond. Of course it is hard to ascertain which writers are Muslim unless they identify themselves. In the Scandinavian countries, in the USA and the UK, it is considered appropriate for comment writers to identify the position from which they are arguing so it was not hard to see who was speaking and from which perspective. In France there is an assumption that religion is a private matter and it was not easy to read from the comment pieces the religious identity of the writers.

Where some, necessarily partial, information could be gleaned it was possible to spot patterns. In Norway a little more than ten per cent of the comment pieces were written by: “members of minority groups” (Muslim voices were not separated in the research) but the editor of *Aftenposten*, Knut Olav Åmås, (Steien 2007: 46) used a page of the newspaper under the headline: “The Invisible Debate Participants” to encourage more Muslims to come forward. Where members of minority groups had participated, only three spoke from a religious fundamentalist position. Others either supported dialogue or favoured a liberal fundamentalist position; but the six women who wrote all spoke up

against Islam as an oppressive religion. This unanimity was surprising, particularly given the low representation by women in the debate as a whole (twenty per cent). In the UK women made up a third of the contributors (though only three were Muslim) and their views were varied. In the photographs of the demonstrations women were strongly represented in Europe, possibly because of the visual imagery of the veil.

In Sweden there is an older and therefore more settled Muslim population than in Norway and a recognisable minority of Muslim journalists. Here, of those comment pieces where the background of the author could be identified, researchers found that twenty-eight per cent were Muslim. (Wallentin and Ekecrantz 2007: 187). Among these voices there was a sharp division of opinion. Muslim *journalists* took an “ultra liberal” position while those written by other journalists favoured a more conciliatory approach. Comment editors sought out Muslim public intellectuals to express the alternative view that the publication of the cartoons was an abuse of power. These Muslim intellectuals were the only people who voiced this view.

In the UK, with almost the same percentage Muslim population as Sweden, only seven per cent of comment writers were identifiably Muslim and all but one wrote about the publication of the cartoons as an abuse of the power of the press. Three of the newspapers studied had not a single contribution from a Muslim journalist or public intellectual on their comment pages. In the USA (Craft and Oyede 2007: 179), comment pieces and Op-Ed pieces were counted together. Twenty-four per cent of identifiable Op-Ed contributions and Letters to the Editor came from Muslim intellectuals and all but one of these reflected a liberal pragmatist line. There was over-all a lot less debate in America than in Europe. The press took an “outsider” view (see Craft and Waisbord, in Chapter 8 this volume) seeing it as a dispute between Europe and the Muslim world.

The Muslim fundamentalist view was in all cases a minority voice (if heard at all) on the opinion pages but in most cases it was a dominant voice on the news pages. This confirms research into news and news values demonstrating that extreme or conflictual views are always more likely to be included in news reports. (Ericson, Baranek and Chan 1991; Berkowitz and Beach 1993; Manoff and Schudson 1986: 99) In the UK, demonstrations by moderate Muslims asking for tolerance and understanding were not covered in the news pages (although the organiser of one of them was given space on *The Guardian* comment pages) whereas a much smaller demonstration by the more militant Al-Guhuraba was given blanket coverage in all newspapers. In the left-leaning *Guardian* newspaper the dominant Muslim voice was that of Anjam Choudary, spokesperson for Al-Guhuraba. In the *Telegraph*, mainstream British Muslim organisations had only three mentions over a two-week period at the height of the dispute. The most often heard Muslim voices were those of Danish Islamists.

A similar pattern was found in Denmark. Few Muslim voices were heard and the majority were described by researchers as “extremists” (Hervik and Berg 2007: 27). Interestingly, there was a similar (though not so extreme) pattern

in Pakistan where Islamists were given much more coverage than were more moderate Muslims. The only time moderate voices were given equal space on the Pakistani news pages was in *The News*, on February 16-17, 2006, during coverage of the rioting in Lahore.

In Sweden the majority of voices from the street were from “ordinary” Muslims (Ekecrantz and Wallentin 2007: 192). The Swedish analysis also found that journalists made serious efforts to avoid stereotyping Muslims as dangerous. In both France and Israel, internal demonstrations were described as peaceful and were seen as manifestation of peaceful debate: evidence of the public sphere in action (see Nossek and Phillips, Chapter 13, in this volume) whereas demonstrations elsewhere were depicted as violent.

Conclusion

“The struggle over what gets included in the public agenda is itself a struggle for justice and freedom” (Benhabib 1997: 79). Those responsible for publishing the Mohammed cartoons saw this as a struggle to force discussion of Islam onto the public agenda. On the basis of this review of the press coverage at the time, it would appear that the other major stake-holders in this debate – those who represented a range of views within the Muslim communities, or those who opposed publication on principle – had less opportunity to speak or be heard.

In the UK, of the six newspapers examined, three gave no space at all on the comment pages to Muslim voices of any kind. One provided space for one “ultra liberal”, anti-religious, Arab voice. Two gave no space at all to voices that were “against publication on principle” and three more gave space to only one voice with this view. Looking back over the coverage it is hard to see this as a debate at all. It was merely an opportunity to re-enforce the existing beliefs in what is already a highly politically segmented readership. Almost all the genuine debate on the issue was in a single newspaper (*The Guardian*) where philosophers were given space to explain and to question the meaning of press freedom and freedom of expression. By contrast, the Norwegian, Swedish and Finnish press, in spite of the differences of opinion over the decision to publish the cartoons, made greater efforts to open up their pages to voices from minority communities and to recognise the diversity of opinion amongst Muslims themselves.

In the UK, Muslim (and other minority) voices in the left-leaning press were either not asked to defend the freedom of the press, or they declined to do so. In almost all cases they were assumed to be there to represent “the Other” to the “us” of indigenous British people. While this position was clearly seen as “tolerant” it in fact reduced the debate to a contest between “cultures” rather than a debate about “ideas”. Only the right-leaning *Daily Telegraph* presented a dissenting, pro-press-freedom, Muslim voice. In Norway by contrast, minority voices represented notions of liberalism as a transcend-

ent value. They were heard more in anger against organised religion, than in favour of the right to protect religious icons. Nevertheless in all the major national newspapers some space was provided for those who were against publication on principle.

In Sweden (where representation of Muslim voices was greatest at twenty-eight per cent) all those Muslims who were working as journalists spoke up for the “ultra liberal” perspective and editors found other Muslim contributors to represent the opposing view and to speak against the publication of the cartoons. The Swedish Muslim journalists sought to distinguish themselves not only within the journalistic field but also within the field of Muslim public intellectuals who, like their British counter-parts, were inclined to see the dispute as a manifestation of racism.

It is hard to tell whether biases arise entirely from the decisions of the editors who choose which voices will be heard on the comment pages. In Norway concern about the lack of Muslim voices was the subject of an editorial in *Aftenposten* (Åmås, February 23, 2006, see Steien 2007: 46) and one public intellectual suggested that Muslims were not coming forward because: “They are not respected” (*Aftenposten*, March 3, 2006, cited in Steien 2007: 45). In the UK and Sweden the absence of Muslim voices was not itself the subject of debate or discussion in the press.

Where Muslim voices were not heard in the comment columns there did seem to be more attempt to seek them out in the news stories. Once again they were in a minority. In both Sweden and Norway just under one third of voices in the news coverage were Muslims or other minorities. In Sweden there seemed to have been a clear attempt to balance the lack of elite Muslim voices by the use of a larger number of “private voices”. In Sweden there was also a clear attempt to avoid stereotyping. Only two per cent of the news articles included stereotypes of strongly religious Muslims as dangerous (although the pictures told a different story, see Karin Becker, in Chapter 7, this volume, and Ekekrantz and Wallentin 2007). In the UK, in both newspapers surveyed for news coverage (*The Guardian* and *The Daily Telegraph*), there was a preponderance of voices associated with extreme, rather than moderate, organisations. Moderate voices were marginalised – often left to the end of news items. The effect was to represent Muslims as anti-Western and/or violent. This was commented on in the minority Asian language press and by one of the very few Muslims who was given space to write on the comment pages.

What was the reason for the difference between the UK and the Nordic countries? Could it lie partly in the different philosophy and policies towards minorities? In the UK, according to the optimistic interpretation of Parekh (2000: 6), multiculturalism is characterised by a political will to nurture diversity rather than to homogenise it by insisting on assimilation to the majority culture. In the rather less optimistic view of Gerd Baumann (1996) multiculturalism divides people from one another by encouraging them to cleave to a (static) reified “natural” culture (Baumann 1996: 22) rather than recognising the possibility of cross-cultural affinity. In British newspapers, minority voices were not often

heard on the comment pages and when they were, it was assumed (in all cases but one) that they would speak for a particular “Muslim” view that was different from the mainstream view.

There are several possible interpretations of this finding. It could be that Muslim (and minority) intellectuals have taken up the position articulated by Paul Gilroy (1994: 416) in his description of the solidarity within “Black” social movements: “Despite their differences [they] may all discover within that colour a medium through which to articulate their own experiences and make sense of their common exclusion from Britain and Britishness.” Or it might also be that, to return to Stuart Hall (1994: 394), the choice of this particular ‘voice’ from the available voices was an act of “positioning” by those with more control over the dominant regimes of representation.

In Sweden the dominant discourse suggests that refugees and immigrants should be “Swedified” (Wallentin and Ekcecrantz 2007: 189) and within the Swedish press most Muslim journalists were anxious to consolidate that vision of unity. In Norway there seems to have been an attempt to find other views, but once again the louder minority voices attacked Islam and Islamic societies, rather than defending them. The effect was to re-enforce an integrationist or perhaps “assimilationist” rather than a multiculturalist view of the ideal society. Are the Muslim societies of Scandinavia very different from that of the UK or are they merely “differently positioned” within the dominant discourse?

Perhaps the most interesting observation lies in the difference between the European and the Canadian press. Although the majority view of the Canadian press was to uphold the right to publish, the debate took place within a different frame. In Canada most newspapers included views from comment writers who opposed the publication of the cartoons on principled, rather than merely pragmatic grounds. Some, in particular *The Toronto Star*, argued from the start that the argument was not about free speech at all and that the cartoons were an instance of “Islamophobia”.

Why was the balance of the debate so different from that in Europe and the United States? The answer probably lies in previous debates around hate speech jurisprudence and the Canadian Multiculturalism Act (1988) in which Canada declared multiculturalism to be official state policy. Nearly 44% of the population of Canada are foreign born and of these, 73% are from “visible minorities” (Alhassan 2007: 107). The cartoon debate was inevitably seen in the context of community cohesion in a country in which it makes little sense to speak – as Europeans do – of immigrants learning to do things “our way”. Canada’s settled policy of positively encouraging immigration means that a way must be forged between minority groups on equal terms. Not through a negotiation between dominating and subordinate cultures. The debate in Canada was a reflection of a deeper struggle for “symbolic capital” between those who represent the old “European” Canada and a new emerging elite whose cultural heritage is far more diverse. In this context, the voices of the Muslim community were not subaltern voices unable to be heard, but rather representatives of a community elite which happened to be Muslim rather than Christian.

Almost all the newspapers studied in the Western democracies took the defence of press freedom as the starting point for their coverage of the cartoons affair but, with a few exceptions, they mainly used their pages to reinforce the dominant discourses about the West and the Rest. There was some evidence that some editors took the opportunity to try and encourage debate by ensuring that all voices were heard on the substantive issue of whether or not it is reasonable to print deliberately provocative pictures that ridicule the religion of a minority group. However, those who most vociferously argued for the right to press freedom were in most cases the ones who were least likely to open their pages to opposing views.

In each country where the voices of minorities were heard, they tended to be “positioned” so that they reinforced the prevailing agenda. In the UK alternative voices tended to be represented as an ethnic “other” within the multicultural pantheon. In some cases and newspapers that “other” was seen as weak and in need of defending by the majority, and in others cases it was seen as frightening and to be opposed, but the idea that Muslims might be diverse in their views was rarely expressed and moderate Muslim voices were marginalised. On the other hand, in Norway (and amongst journalists in Sweden), Muslim voices tended to represent the Western liberal values expected of an assimilated group. Voices of dissent from prevailing Western values were more to be heard on the streets than in the comment columns and the voices of liberal Muslims were given prominence.

In Pakistan the voices of the elite dominate the English speaking press and the prevailing view was for a cautious liberalism. The columns gave little space to the voices of religious fundamentalism which were prevalent on the streets; on the other hand, little space was also granted to liberal fundamentalism. The majority position, like that espoused by the British press (from which it is derived), was largely in favour of a pragmatic, tolerant liberalism.

To re-visit the words of Spivak (1996: 292), it seems that the “subaltern” spoke via street demonstrations – but whether they were actually heard remains in doubt. Perhaps the figure that for me most symbolises this ‘misheard’ voice, was 22 year old Omar Khayam, the young man released on license from prison who, attempted to speak of his place in British society by demonstrating outside the Danish embassy wearing a bomb belt (*Daily Telegraph*, February 8, 2006). His attempt to exercise his freedom of expression met with such rage and hostility from the press that he was back behind bars within days. This picture was relayed across the world but did anyone really hear what he was trying to say?

Here then is the crux of subaltern representation in multicultural democracies. The subaltern may choose the public square as the sphere of its public participation but, as it turned out in the “cartoon crisis”, representation through the pages of the elite press has a tendency to lead to mis-representation of those who are “spoken for”. For a democratic theory and practice then, a key question remains: how can the subaltern be represented as in “speak for/on behalf of” without being misrepresented? Such a challenge is at the heart of

discussions about multiculturalism, inclusive journalism, and the maintenance of a vibrant public sphere.

In every case (to reference Stanley Fish 1994: 102) the loudest voices favoured the position of the newspaper and reflected the narrow debates around multiculturalism, race and globalisation which are already dominant in these countries. Alternative voices were heard in some instances but they tended to be drowned out by the re-iteration of one particular view. The only country in which the debate could be said to have challenged the status quo and attempted (in some instances) to advance discussion of the critical question of how people are to live together in a multicultural globalised world was in Canada where a struggle for cultural hegemony between the old (European) power elite and a new multi-cultural power elite has opened up the possibility for free speech of the kind that, perhaps, James Curran had in mind when he spoke of a media which “represents all significant interests in society”. The less significant remain un-heard.

Notes

1. In Chapter 5, Kunelius and Alhassan distinguish between four principal positions in the debate: 1) Liberal Fundamentalism and 2) Liberal Pragmatism 3) Ethnic Fundamentalism, 4) Dialogic Multiculturalism (see also Kunelius & Eide 2007).
2. Interview with Radio France February 7, 2005.

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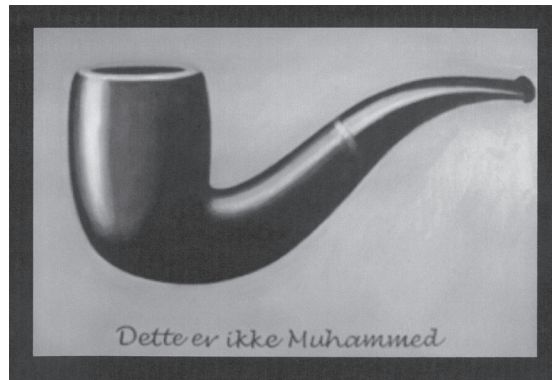
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Chapter 7

The Power of Pictures in Journalistic Discourse

As News, as Commentary, as Art

Karin Becker



*This is not Mohammed**, Lars Mjølner 2007

This chapter examines the roles of images in the transnational discourses of news, focusing on the ways the Mohammed cartoons were distributed and displayed during the period of the controversy surrounding these specific images.¹ One of the many things that can be learned from the controversy over these caricatures is that there are very different image cultures, where we find visual representations integrated into traditions and systems of belief in ways that carry different meanings. Images of the human face or body, covered and revealed, male and female, are found throughout many artistic traditions, but can arouse conflict when contemporary examples begin to circulate in cultures where they challenge accepted traditions of who may appear in public, and under what conditions. A naked child in a 17th century Italian painting is accepted as a religious symbol in Western art, but in a contemporary photograph on the internet becomes a pornographic object. A central question is what happens when different image cultures with their contrasting traditions and beliefs come into conflict with discourses of journalism, both within specific countries and transnationally. This suggests further the importance of examining such cases, for the important insights they can offer into the power and meanings of visual imagery.

Another central aspect in the controversy over the cartoons is to understand how the image works *as an idea*. In the discourses of news, the cartoons have figured both as concrete artifacts, displayed in various visual forms, and also as constructs, representing in the abstract what may and what may not be represented visually in the public sphere of the daily press. Time and again, it is the image as a construct or idea that emerges in the coverage and the debates. The *knowledge that the images exist* has been distributed far more widely than the images themselves. There are undoubtedly many people who have never seen the caricatures in any form. Yet the news that these images were commissioned and published by a Danish newspaper and then spread to the press in other Western and European countries has been sufficient to set in motion a chain of events, with, as we have seen, global consequences.

This further raises important questions about the relationship between discourse and visual representation, central to the controversy over the cartoons. The intricate relation between what has been said or written in this case and what has been pictured is extremely complex, particularly as it entails different cultures and traditions. Following Foucault, and the incompatibility of language and vision, the cartoon controversy can be seen as a discourse about the gap between words and pictures expanded to a global scale. The Mohammed cartoons, both as concepts and as actual images, point to representation as a dialectical field of forces where the referent is notoriously difficult to pin down, where the authority of the speaking subject over the seen image continually shifts (Foucault 1973, Mitchell 1994). Journalists, religious leaders and followers, cartoonists and other artists from across the globe continue to struggle to come to terms with what these images mean. The aim of this chapter is to examine how these specific images – both as concrete artifacts and as abstract constructs between discourses of journalism and art – gained the power to affect events across the globe.

Responding to Pictures

The many prohibitions against images throughout history, of subjects both sacred and profane, are evidence that we have always attributed power to pictures. Bringing objects to life through visual representation has always been fraught with mystery and even danger. In his important work on this subject, Freedberg takes as his point of departure the *response* powerful images evoke and examines how this power has been contained and controlled by attempts to limit the forms of representation. He finds adjustments and permutations, even in cultures with prevailing prohibitions against anthropomorphic representation, and an emphasis of the written over the figured, which go against prevailing ideas about religious traditions forbidding the making of images. Prohibition has rather led to changing rules of signification, and to alternative forms of image-making in an ongoing search for “the proper domain for the satisfaction of a need for representation” (Freedberg 1989: 55).

Important to the controversy over the Mohammed cartoons has been the ongoing discussion of whether or not Mohammed can be pictured and if so, in what ways and within which branches of Islam. Freedberg points out what he describes as a “persistent historic myth” that there is a link between monotheistic religious beliefs and restrictions on figurative imagery, particularly representations of sacred deities. All cultures have imagery in some form. Despite the often severe disapproval of picturing Mohammed and the Hadith, both the Sunnite and Shiite streams of Islam have had a wide variety of images (Freedberg 1989: *ibid*). Taboos on picturing the faces of sacred deities can often be traced to the fear of “enlivening” an image by giving it facial features, rather than to a general refusal of figurative imagery or aniconism. Simple dichotomies between iconic and aniconic cultures and between polytheistic and monotheistic religious traditions fall apart in the face of “the will to image” (Freedberg 1989: *ibid*.). This does not diminish the significance of the conflicts that arise over visual representation; rather the opposite. The conflict reveals a dynamic and ever-changing field where images and their histories are implicated in broader relations of power. The case of the Mohammed caricatures gives us a chance to examine how journalistic discourse about controversial images inflames and informs the field where they circulate – as objects and as ideas.

Images have been used and referred to in the daily press and in discourses of journalism in a wide variety of ways and have often given rise to controversy. Early examples in the western press linked drawings and photographs to sensationalized news coverage. Heavily edited photographs, portraying social scandals and crime, received large play in the pages of the yellow press, within a discourse that understood these images as appealing directly to the emotions, particularly of an illiterate public. In one famed example, photographer Jimmy Hare’s photographs of the sinking of the battleship *Maine* in 1898 for *Colliers*, were used to mobilize U.S. citizens’ support for the war against Spain. The rapid rise of the tabloid press in New York City led to a polarization, as newspapers that avoided sensationalism (notably the *New York Times*) also refrained from using photographs on their front pages. The expressive power of the image was seen as short circuiting the unbiased presentation of news, a fundamental value within the discourse of serious journalism at the time. The survival of these distinct genres of visual journalism can still be found when comparing morning and afternoon newspapers in many western countries. Linked to what continues to be understood as the emotional appeal and expressive power of the image, leading newspapers – the press “of record” – often have strict guidelines to frame and contain the visual representation of news.

This background can be useful to keep in mind when examining similarities and contrasts between the newspapers of different countries and their coverage of the Mohammed cartoon controversy.² This coverage included many different kinds of images in addition to the cartoons themselves. Photographs of news events, on both news and culture pages, portraits of key actors as well as caricatures have appeared in the press throughout the controversy.

Despite diverse “cultures of journalism”, each shaped by a national agenda, and clearly evident in previous research on the Mohammed cartoon controversy (Berkowitz and Eko 2007, Kunelius et al. 2007), there is a well-established set of genres of the ways pictures represent in the press. There are, further, important distinctions between the ways these different genres are inserted into and affect political discourse – a significant factor in the case of the Mohammed cartoons and the imagery surrounding them. As has become patently obvious, cartoons are no longer confined to the editorial pages of the host newspaper, but circulate – both as images and ideas – through transnational and cross-cultural networks. A central argument of this chapter is that it is the joining of expanded networks of image and information flow – typically falling under the rubric of globalization – with the caricature as an image genre that is seen as both journalism and art that has given rise to the cartoon controversy and its many spin-offs. Until we examine more closely the caricature as a specific form of visual critique and its relation to other journalistic genres of visual representation, it is difficult to adequately account for the global impact of the “Mohammed cartoons”.

Pictures in the Press

What pictures may and may not represent in the pages of the daily press depends to a great extent on the genres and contexts of their use. Contemporary forms of visual representation in the press range from *photographs* of current news events and features to *illustrations* (either drawings or photographs or a combination of the two) of subjects that are difficult to capture “live”, to *drawings and caricatures* that provide a visual commentary, often political, on a current event. This spectrum of imagery is coupled to distinct notions of the kind and degree of editorial influence associated with each picture genre and the content of the image. News photographs lie at the end of the spectrum that permits the least influence. Selection and editing are carried out in order to emphasize the most striking features of the event, within limits established by local journalistic conventions around such factors as nudity, violence and a commitment to impartial and balanced representation. Photographs of events such as press conferences, demonstrations, or crime scenes (to take conventional examples) are expected to present a factual representation of what took place.

Illustration is a much broader genre, or cluster of genres, including everything from fashion and food photography to graphics representing social and economic trends or the course of an event through time and space. It is difficult to generalize the degree of editorial influence exerted over this range of illustration practices, which often involves montage combining different visual forms. Illustration is nevertheless characterized by an effort to portray and interpret a phenomenon from a particular perspective. Editorial influence generally exceeds that of the photograph in a news context and the illustra-

tion makes no claim to present the event as an exact visual representation of what took place.³

In cases where news events occur in locations where cameras are impractical, prohibited (such as during courtroom proceedings) or simply not present, drawings may substitute for photographs. Also, when ethical constraints demand anonymity for news sources, drawings may be used. In such cases, editorial restraint is still expected. On the other hand, when drawings are used in place of photographic portraits, particularly for portraying cultural or political figures, individual characteristics can be emphasized or even exaggerated in the representation. These examples can be found most often on opinion pages and in culture sections, where the editorial position of the newspaper is expected to be more apparent.⁴ Such portraits also bring us closer to caricature, and its position in the editorial practices of illustration.

Caricature has a long history in the press as a form of critique typically directed at political elites, social injustice and power abuse. While there continue to be examples of montage, caricatures are usually drawings published on opinion and editorial pages. Unless specifically labeled as presenting “other” points of view, caricatures are generally understood as expressing the editorial position of the newspaper. Thus the Mohammed portrayed in Kurt Westergaard’s drawing of the Prophet with a bomb in his turban can be interpreted as consistent with *Jyllands-Postens* editorial position on the link between Islam and international terrorism.

Like comics, caricature relies heavily on “genre formulas” that are well established on the respective newspaper, by the artists, and in the society where they circulate (Jenkins 2006). Tropes referring to specific politicians, patterns of character (greed, lust, wrath, etc.), political parties and their symbols, to name only a few, are used and re-used in the visual vocabulary of the caricaturist. Again like comics, these drawings employ facial expressions and body language that are to some extent universally comprehensible. However, the specific issue, politician, or event to which they refer may be difficult if not impossible to understand outside the culture within which the newspaper operates. Thus, while they may exhibit a progressive critique, caricatures’ dependence on the culture limits their comprehensibility across cultural boundaries (Möller 2008). Despite this limitation, as we have learned from spread of the Mohammed cartoons, caricatures can have a profound influence.

The Power of Journalistic Images

The different genres of visual representation have the potential to exert influence on the social and political environment in which they circulate. However, because they are created through distinct and different editorial practices, and make different claims for what and how they represent, pictures in the press also address their publics in different ways. While both news photographs and caricatures, to take the extreme examples from the spectrum of visual

representation described above, are intrinsic to agendas of journalistic news coverage, they make different appeals to readers, which in turn influences the kind of impact they have on social and political discourse.

Perlmutter introduced the term “icons of outrage” to identify news photographs that demand public attention (Perlmutter 1998). There is a commonly held assumption that images of this kind have exerted influence on public opinion and government policy, based largely on the news photograph’s claim to truth. The classic example is the persistent belief that news images of atrocities committed by US soldiers in Vietnam and their South Vietnamese allies turned the tide of national opinion, making pursuit of the war untenable for the US government (Perlmutter 1998, Andén-Papadopoulos 2000). Although photographs may be – and often are – posed or staged, the “natural attitude” of the viewer (Bryson 1983) does not question the veracity of the news image. The photograph has long served as a metaphor for journalistic practice, as newspapers as early as the 1840s promised readers “a daguerreotype of the times” (Schiller 1981). A strong mutual construction between the veracity of news and the verisimilitude of the news photograph persists to the present day. The controversy that arises whenever a news photograph is altered in ways that change its apparent meaning confirms how deeply seated this attitude is. “Manipulation” of the photograph is congruent with misleading the public, and the editorial guidelines operating on many news agencies and newspapers can motivate the immediate dismissal of the photographer or editor responsible for altering the image.⁵

The belief in the veracity of the news image cannot alone account for the notion that certain photographs have mobilized public opinion and altered government policy. Even, or perhaps especially, photographs with a strong content can be interpreted in dialectically opposite ways. A striking example is the case of a widely used photograph from the demonstrations in Tiananmen Square in Beijing in June 1989. A photograph showing a lone man, standing in the path of a column of tanks, was transferred over telephone lines by the Associated Press and quickly became an icon in the western press. In this context, the image stood for the courage of the young demonstrator, and also the democratic potential of new digital technologies of image transfer (Bode and Wombell 1991: 1-2). The image was the “World Press Photo of the Year”, lauded for how it “brought home the unequal struggle of Tiananmen Square to a worldwide audience” (World Press Photo 1990: 6-7). The Chinese communist party, on the other hand, used the same photograph (as well as others by Western journalists) to support an opposing view of the event. In their interpretation, the photographs showed the *soldiers* as revolutionary martyrs in the ongoing struggle to create a new China, and whose actions saved the nation by restoring order. On Chinese television, documentaries highlighted violence against the soldiers and presented the lone protester’s confrontation with the line of tanks “as ‘proof’ of the enormous restraint that the military showed under stress” (Wasserstrom 1994: 297). The strong emotional response to this image supported diametrically opposing interpretations, a clear example

of how the photograph's "truth" signifies differently according to the cultural and political discourses through which its power is articulated.

This emotional response together with the persistent belief in the self-evident veracity of the news image can explain the effect of the photograph when circulated through the news media. While research has shown that images alone do not change government policy, they can set in motion circumstances and debates that challenge established routines of policy deliberation and formation (Perlmutter 1998, Andén-Papadopoulos 2000). As we saw when the photographs of torture at the Abu Ghraib prison became public in early 2006, sensational photographs can raise issues that have been reported repeatedly in the press, seemingly without notable effect. Yet, spurred by the visual immediacy of the photograph and the instantaneousness of the media, discourses quickly form, raising questions of responsibility, accountability and demands for action. Add to this the deeply rooted belief that the emotional response to an image transcends difference. News photographs become iconic as they circulate and reverberate in the belief that everyone who sees them is moved to a similar, even identical response.

To move now to the other end of the spectrum, and the pictures drawn as caricatures in the daily press, we find a different appeal and form of address. Whereas photographs are in an important sense understood in their raw form as un-authored representations of actual events, caricatures are drawn with the intention of conveying an opinion, commenting on or even mocking a person or position. Whereas photographs are supposed to be neutral, in that they should not slant the news toward a particular editorial position, caricatures are seen as standing for a point of view or position on an issue. The caricature draws on techniques that convey a sense of urgency, using graphic cues of contrast and dynamism, exaggerated poses and expressions and other techniques at the artist's disposal (Möller 2008, McCloud 2006). The skill of the artist, including the ability to present with graphic precision a specific point, are intrinsic to the image and its message. The caricature is therefore seen as an authored work. Because the artist's work is understood as a form of self expression, the caricaturist is understood to be producing work that stands for who he or she is as a person, and as an individual. The artist's integrity is established in an important sense through his or her independence from the norms and ideals of journalism as an institution. The caricature addresses its public therefore as a duality –as a form of self-expression by an individual artist, while simultaneously framed within the institutional norms of editorial opinion in the press.

The caricaturist's role as an artist positions the editorial cartoon as both art and journalism. Discursively it moves between these two fields, as has been seen throughout the controversy over the publication of the Mohammed cartoons. First published in newspapers, and therefore located within the journalistic field, the cartoons quickly became caught in a highly ambiguous position traversing the minefield where journalism and art overlap. As the work of artists, the cartoons could be seen as expressing the artists' individual freedom and responsibility to challenge social conventions and power structures. As a

journalistic form they were understood as expressing the newspaper's editorial position, framed by the institutional norm of press freedom. These positions became conflated, which had consequences in discourses about the cartoons as information about their existence and who made them began to circulate transnationally.⁶

Because the caricature is also intended as political critique and draws attention to social injustice and abuses of power, its presence in the press stands as an important measure of press freedom. Through the editorial cartoon, newspapers (and their caricaturists) participate actively in political debate, even at the cost of those in power. There have been cases throughout history of governments falling and politicians resigning following visual satirical attacks that portray their corrupt or scandalous practices. There have also been examples, perhaps even more numerous, of caricaturists who have been silenced and forced into exile because of their overt criticism of powerful figures and institutions. The boundaries around what (and who) is accepted as legitimate objects for criticism varies between different political and press systems. Within each system, however, there exists an ideal of the caricature and its artist as important to the spirit of free and open debate. At a seminar on the topic "Cartoons – Importance in Journalism" held at the Press Institute of Pakistan in September 2004, the Minister of Education, Imram Masood, was quoted as saying "the present government takes the criticism in cartoons in a positive manner" and joked that he had the prominent cartoonist Javed Iqbal to thank for his own government post (*Daily Times* 2004). This is an example of the widespread agreement that caricaturists have a responsibility to actively engage with and influence the political and social situations in which they operate. This depends upon the public's knowledge of the situation in order to understand the caricature, a factor that, as previously noted, limits the ways these images are understood across cultural boundaries.

A Pakistani journalist, Shahina Maqbool, asked leading cartoonists in Pakistan to comment on the Mohammed cartoons for an article on the international pages of *The News* (Maqbool 2006). Maqbool begins with a description of editorial cartoons that fits the genre in any national press context: they are "used to exaggerate the physical features, dress or manners of an individual to produce a ludicrous effect. By practice, this medium is used to ridicule political or social situations and institutions, or actions by various groups or classes of a society. This is usually done with a satirical rather than humorous intent in order to encourage political or social change." The Pakistani cartoonists generally saw their Danish counterparts as abusing the genre. They found the Mohammed cartoons to be unskilled and amateurish, even "non-professional." Akhtar Shah, one of the best known of these artists whose own work regularly criticizes the military's abuses of power in Pakistan, called them "third-rate cartoons portraying a bigoted approach." Others found them to be in "bad taste" and accused the Danish cartoonists of foregoing satire completely, and relying simply on abuse. The Lahore-based cartoonist, Javed Iqbal, reflected on ethics and cultural difference from the perspective of his long career in the Pakistani

press: "Every cartoonist has to follow a code of ethics. I, for one, would never discuss religion. Cartoons on sex and religion are prohibited in our culture. In the west, however, their best cartoons are on these two subjects" (as cited in Maqbol 2006). Several described the irony of being called "fanatics" (referring to what they see as the Western view of Muslims) by a group who themselves "incite hatred" and "inflame sentiments" in their work.

Within a culture, however, the cartoon is expected to be understood and respected as a form of critique, even by those it is directed against, a factor that was used to defend the publication of the cartoons in Denmark. Flemming Rose, culture editor of *Jyllands-Posten*, argued that the cartoonists treated Islam in the same way they treated any other religion in the country, "And by treating Muslims in Denmark as equals they made a point: We are integrating you into the Danish tradition of satire because you are part of our society, not strangers" (Rose 2006). By the time this defense was made (in an article in the *Washington Post*), the knowledge of the cartoons had long since moved beyond the cultural boundaries of Denmark. The Mohammed cartoons, as they were initially published, appeared to violate the political cartoon's conventions by directing their critique toward a marginalized religious and social group. As the discussion – and its spin – evolved however, another reading emerged within the Danish discourse, arguing that the cartoons be seen as a challenge to the dominant cultural perspective of what is politically correct. In this sense the cartoons can be legitimated as a critique directed against the dominating discourse of what may be criticized.

The Cartoons in Transnational Image Flows

In many respects the cartoon controversy is a media spectacle (Kellner 2003), drawn out over three years, and with continuing spin-offs in other events across the globe. It is a phenomenon of a transnational media culture, concerned with basic values, dramatizing controversy and struggles over these values and modes of conflict resolution (Kellner 2003: 2).⁷ Drawing on Debord's now classic *Society of the Spectacle*. Kellner describes the media spectacle as based in vision, transforming real events into simple images that hypnotize and motivate behavior. Writing in 1967, Debord claimed: "Since the spectacle's job is to cause a world that is no longer directly perceptible to be *seen* via different specialized mediations, it is inevitable that it should elevate the human sense of sight to the special place once occupied by touch; the most abstract of the senses, and the most easily deceived, sight is naturally the most readily adaptable to present-day society's generalized abstraction" (Debord 1967/1995: 17). Drawing an important distinction, he noted that, "the spectacle is not a collection of images; rather it is a social relationship between people that is mediated by images" (Debord 1967/1995: 12).

What happens when we apply this notion of social relationships mediated on a global scale, using the Mohammed cartoon controversy as a case? Clearly,

one aspect of prior globalization theory that does not hold for the Mohammed cartoons is the *homogenization* of cultures, unless we understand that concept in the broadest of terms as drawing attention to the same issue, and including (following Beck) “the question of how, and to what extent, people and cultures around the world relate to one another in their differences” (Beck 2000: 20). The Pakistani cartoonists quoted above offer a clear example of this. In her useful review of early “pioneers” of globalization theory, Rantanen points out the *intensification* of worldwide social relations (from Giddens) as a critical aspect of what occurs as people become aware of local happenings taking place on the other side of the globe. The constraints of geography recede, to some extent physically, and to a more significant extent in people’s consciousness. The intensified awareness of the world as a whole and the interconnectedness of events across the globe is a *reflexive* consciousness. It places the self and one’s own culture in relation to those events, however geographically distant they may be (Rantanen 2005: 5-8).

The consequences of these globally mediated and mediatized social relationships are difficult, if not impossible to predict. Distinctions have been drawn between technological and cultural globalization, intertwined processes where media can play conflicting roles. Technological advances have brought about the spread of images (as well as other forms of information) to an extent that is consistent with Debord’s forty-year-old vision of the spectacle. At the same time cultural globalization has problematized the previous relationship between geography and identity (Roosvall 2008, Thörn 2004). Images from other cultures circulate freely, while the question of how to interpret them (i.e. what they mean) remains anchored in specific cultural settings that are far less mobile.⁸ The different interpretations of the iconic photograph of the lone protester from Tiananmen Square, one of the earliest to be distributed worldwide via telephone provides a case in point. Elsewhere we have considered the ways that the unfolding events in the cartoon controversy were interpreted through the frameworks of specific national discourses, involving such factors as colonial histories, previous events and debates, or current events that overshadowed the cartoon controversy in a particular country (Kunelius, Eide et al. 2007). Our surveys of the press from different countries include examples where technological and cultural globalization appeared to coincide and complement each other, and many where they were clearly out of synch.

Throughout the controversy the most common images – far more frequent than the cartoons themselves – were news photographs of events in response to the cartoons. There is a remarkable similarity to these photographs across all the newspapers we looked at. The events included protest demonstrations held by groups in England, Pakistan, Denmark and elsewhere, the burning of Danish flags, the embassies in flames and street scenes showing the ensuing riots, and empty shelves in grocery stores when the boycott of Danish goods was in effect. This suggests a common journalistic paradigm for the selection of news photographs, and strong agreement over the kinds of events that qualify as news. Dramatic scenes of events that include violence or of people

expressing feelings of anger or grief are used alongside text that presents facts and analysis, adding an emotional appeal to the news page.

Many of the photographs seem to represent media events, organized to attract transnational journalistic coverage. Protest signs are in English, for example, even in countries where English is not the first language. Danish flags appear in locations where they would not ordinarily be readily available. Protestors are grouped to face the cameras and many gestures can be interpreted as responses to the presence of press photographers. Similar images have been found by researchers who examined television news of the controversy: there, too the coverage emphasized violent events and “over-used violent images” (Codina and Rodríguez-Virgili 2007: 40).

The fact that we can easily recognize these images as a visual discourse of news is evidence of a transnational culture of professional journalism, supported by the technologies required to gather and distribute news products transnationally. In these respects, the news photograph is a global phenomenon, both culturally and technologically. The circulation of these images through transnational news bureaus and their publication in the press of widely dispersed countries is an example of technological and cultural globalization developing in tandem.

There are nevertheless methods consistently used to re-frame the image within particular journalistic cultures of different nations. The captions and headlines accompanying the photographs on the news pages of the English-language press in Pakistan for example consistently referred to the Danish cartoons as “blasphemous cartoons” and “blasphemous caricatures”. Since the penal code in Pakistan mandates the death sentence for the crime of blasphemy, this is relevant information to include in a caption. But it is also an example of information that carries radically different meanings in different cultural contexts. A secularized Western European reader could easily see this as an example of non-objective journalism, mixing opinion about the cartoons into the news caption describing the event. Photographs of peaceful demonstrations and non-violent manifestations were more frequent in the Pakistani press than in the newspapers of Denmark and Sweden that we looked at. But even the photographs of non-violent demonstrations that were widely circulated, often portraying large groups of angry dark-skinned men shaking their fists in the air, are seen as carrying a *potential* for violence that is read as a threat in the press of Western Europe. Circulated transnationally, through polarized cultural contexts that read them in opposite ways – as representing defenders of the faith or as a terrorist threat – these photographs are an example of technological globalization that underscores cultural difference.

How did the cartoons themselves circulate in the press? Most often they are found, not as images but described in texts. Berkowitz and Eko cite an editorial in the *New York Times* defending this practice as “a reasonable choice for news organizations that usually refrain from gratuitous assaults on religious symbols, especially since the cartoons are so easy to describe in words” (Berkowitz and Eko 2008: 91).⁹ Some European newspapers published the cartoons themselves on news pages, but it was also common to find them on

culture pages. Sometimes they were published very small, as if to diminish their effect. They also appeared in photographs, for example in the background of a portrait, as people looked at them in newspapers or as reprinted in other contexts. This second-hand representation of the cartoons is consistent with a technique of “visual quoting” quite common within journalism. In the western order journalistic discourse, the picture of the (problematic, controversial, etc.) picture can be seen as a form of the “strategic ritual” of objectivity (Tuchman 1978, Kunelius and Eide 2007). By “citing” the image, full responsibility for its publication is circumvented, a strategy that testifies to the sensitivity of the issue. It is a way that journalism takes “art” into the news pages, while at the same time disempowering the image.¹⁰

The cartoon controversy also was the subject for commentary and analysis in the press of many countries we looked at. Articles on opinion pages and in culture sections often were accompanied by images that represented some aspect of the controversy. In a surprising number of cases, news photographs of one of the violent incidents was used, showing again an embassy in flames, an angry crowd carrying signs or burning a Danish flag. One may understand this editorial practice as a so-called “eye-catcher”, a dramatic image that draws readers’ attention and makes a long body of text more attractive. But it is also placed as an icon in relationship to a text where journalism reflects and comments on its own practice (Becker 1996). This reflexive use of dramatic news photographs is a common strategy when journalism as an institution is being challenged. The news photograph becomes a metapicture in a metajournalistic discourse. Together with the editorial commentary it can be seen as an example of “paradigm work”, dealing with the anomalies that inevitably arise, in this case involving a discussion on the limits of press freedom (Bennett, Grennet and Haltom 1985, Berkowitz 2000, Berkowitz and Eko 2007).

Making Images in the Shadow of the Cartoons

In his work on the relationship between representation and discourse, Mitchell offers an inventory of the metapicture and its various functions (Mitchell 1994). Certain images exhibit the capacity to comment on themselves and on practices of visual representation. The function of these metapictures in their various forms, Mitchell argues, is “to explain what pictures are – to stage, as it were, the ‘self-knowledge’ of pictures” (Mitchell 1994: 57). These “pictures about picturing” appear throughout the controversy over the Mohammed cartoons, and in their reflexive capacity, offer keys to understanding the power of images in this conflict.

The news photographs that visually cite the cartoons, as mentioned above, are metapictures that serve to contain or domesticate the power of these provocative drawings within the paradigm of news reporting. Dramatic photographs of news events that accompany analysis and commentary are also metapictures, employing an eye-catching emotional appeal to draw attention to a significant

topic – in this case often journalism itself and its role and responsibility in democratic society.

Turning to the cartoons themselves we find the issue of freedom of speech, or more accurately in this context, freedom of expression, being pictured, even before the conflicts erupted around the cartoons. Several of the original caricatures refer in various ways to the invitation from *Jyllands-Posten* to draw Mohammed, and thus are metapictures in yet another sense than the news photographs described above.¹¹ One shows a cartoonist looking fearfully over his shoulder as he sits at his easel sweating over the picture of Mohammed that is taking form. Another shows a turbaned cartoonist holding up his Mohammed sketch as he gets hit on the head by a ball labeled “PR stunt”. A third shows a Danish schoolboy named Mohammed writing in Arabic on the blackboard, “Jyllands-Postens journalists are a bunch of reactionary provocateurs.” These cartoons don’t show the figure or face of Mohammed, but rather the problematic act of *picturing* the Prophet, including its possibly dangerous consequences. These cartoons address in visual terms the discourse over what is allowed to be represented visually, directed first at the question of how to picture Mohammed in a specific cultural (Danish) context. In doing so, however, these images also become part of the process of reflecting on the work of visual representation, directed at the medium and its determining conditions – the institutional setting, its historical and cultural position including its power, and what may and may not be said, or pictured, given those conditions.

I introduced this chapter with an image paraphrasing Magritte’s familiar painting of the pipe that is not a pipe, yet another form the metapicture can take. Mitchell describes Magritte’s original as “a picture about the gap between words and pictures” (Mitchell 1994: 65). Lars Mjølén’s picture of the pipe that is not Mohammed opens that gap even further. At one level, by linking the Mohammed cartoons to Magritte’s painting, it places them within the discourse of art, where provocation is expected, even demanded, despite the problems it raises. Mjølén’s painting performs its own provocation, in turn, as a response to the taboo against picturing the Prophet Mohammed. In this sense it refers to the broader circle of events that the controversy has generated. Cartoonists and journalists have commented on a sense of restraint, even self-censorship, in the wake of the cartoon controversy.¹² There have been numerous examples of images that have been withdrawn and cultural events that have been cancelled in the face of possible protests from Muslim organizations. In some cases the event is then re-instated (Mozart’s opera *Idomeneo* as performed by Deutsche Opera Berlin in autumn 2006 is an example), giving rise to speculation that the withdrawal was a strategy to generate more interest and support. Regardless of whether it is prudence, respect, fear or publicity strategies that lie behind these actions, they are all significant responses to the controversy surrounding the cartoons and therefore must be seen as contributing to a continually expanding global discourse about the power of visual representation. Each such event is about picturing Mohammed, whether or not the Prophet appears.

Against the background of these ongoing events, the picture of the pipe that is not Mohammed is also a metapicture that reveals the relation between discourse and representation. As Foucault (1973) again reminds us, language and vision are incompatible; we cannot explain in words the meaning, power, influence of images. The Mohammed cartoons are caught in a dialectical field of conflicting forces, where their referent continually shifts, as does the authority over who speaks for and through them. The struggle for authority over the seen image here is extended to the authority over the image as an idea, and the image that is *not* seen—since many people who have heard or read about the cartoons, have never seen them. The idea of the image of Mohammed is continually reasserted, exerting discursive power, even when it is not visually present. We must remember, too that the actors in this globalized discourse, are continually reminded that their words and images reverberate in other social, cultural and political settings. This self-knowledge, the reflexive consciousness that is increasingly difficult to circumvent in today's mediatized environment, may well be the most significant impact of the cartoon controversy on contemporary life and thought.

So where does that leave journalism? The events surrounding the Mohammed caricatures have been amply pictured in the press, as part of the transnational flow of news images. Yet the caricatures themselves have been difficult to contain within the journalistic discourse. To some extent, this is because they fall outside of the standard discourse of news. As art and caricature, they are meant to provoke. Yet the news events that they have given rise to, in part brought about by communications strategies and technologies in which journalism itself is implicated, require that the cartoons be explained and their power accounted for within a paradigm of news. Thus we find continued attempts to adapt them to accepted forms of journalism – as background to a news event, as a visual quote, confined to the culture pages, as a topic for analysis and commentary, as the work of artists (not journalists), and ultimately as a conflict between cultures and systems of belief, including beliefs about press freedom. It's all about journalism, in other words. And instead of understanding the power of images, we are left with a conflict which despite its longevity and complexity, is contained with what continues to be the dominant paradigm for reporting the news, a paradigm of conflict.

* The oil painting by Lars Mjøen was made for the prestigious Autumn Art Exhibition in Oslo 2007, as a satirical comment to the threatening Muslim reactions to the Mohammed caricatures. It was not accepted, but later on displayed at another show (Stipendutstillingen). A photo of it was printed in Norway's largest newspaper VG, together with an article by the artist, stating that the freedom of expression is fundamental, and that in the future one might have to conceal this freedom in western cultural riddles, in order to secure what has been achieved through hundreds of years of struggle. Lars Mjøen is widely known in Norway after 30 years of satire and comedy in radio, TV and newspapers, and satirical stunts in various media, like the Magritte/Mohammed-painting. Lars Mjøen has given authorization to publish the oil painting.

Notes

1. Many of the ideas and examples in this chapter were developed in the context of a Ph.D. seminar in the Department of Journalism, Media and Communication at Stockholm University. I am grateful to the seminar participants – Robert Kautsky, Gunilla Muhr, James Pamment and Andreas Widholm – for their contributions.
2. Based primarily on the ways the cartoon controversy was covered in the countries included in Kunelius, Eide et al. 2007.
3. Research has shown that photojournalists and editors in the Anglo Saxon and European press permit a wider range of practices for altering images that fall under genres of illustration than for news photographs (Reaves 1995, Mäenpää 2008).
4. Note that I refer here to the visual representation itself, and not to the person who has created it. Photographers' and cartoonists' individual opinions can vary independently of the news organization that employs them or publishes their work. Once the cartoonist is seen as an *artist*, however, this position changes, for an artist is seen as engaged in self expression. I return to this point below.
5. In August 2006 the Reuters agency suspended a photographer after accusations that he had digitally altered the clouds of smoke over Beirut following an air attack on the city. The agency issued an apology, stating that "photo editing software was improperly used on this image" and withdrew it from its archives.
6. One such consequence are the death threats leveled against specific artists, whereas photographers have been exempt from these.
7. Of which media research, including the present work, can be seen as examples.
8. For more discussion on this point, see Hahn, Chapter 11 in this volume.
9. This so-called "ease" of verbal description rests on an editorial decision that neatly circumvents the power of the image by assuming it can be translated into words. See, again, Foucault (1973).
10. The availability of the cartoons on the web is of course related to the issue of a technologically-driven globalization in conflict with cultural identities that are anchored in specific religious beliefs and that are also spread through a global diaspora. A full analysis of this aspect of the cartoon controversy is beyond the scope of this chapter, although it is touched upon in the conclusion.
11. Descriptions of all the cartoons can be found in Chapter 2 of this volume.
12. A debate article on this issue by a group of journalists and publicists appeared in the Swedish newspaper *Expressen* on 29 September 2006, followed by an article in *Dagens Nyheter* the next day.

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When Foreign News Remains Foreign

Cartoon Controversies in the US and Argentine Press

Stephanie Craft & Silvio Waisbord

The cartoon controversy was a quintessential “global news event” to which international and national news organizations paid considerable attention for several weeks in 2006. It was supposedly not a “global news event” in the mold of “media events” (Katz and Dayan 1992) which are carefully designed to get wide media coverage. Rather, the controversy which followed the publication of the cartoons turned into a serendipitous “global news event” beyond the original, stated intentions of the Danish newspaper where it all began.

In this article, we analyze coverage of the cartoon controversy in leading newspapers in Argentina and the United States. Our theoretical interest is to understand how journalistic cultures affect the frames used in the coverage of global news events. A comparison of the coverage allows us to assess the impact of both journalistic and political factors in the coverage of global news. Journalistic cultures in Argentina and the United States present significant differences. While objectivity, facticity and fairness remain central principles in the professional ideology of US journalism, these ideals do not command similar allegiance among Argentine journalists (Waisbord 2000). Culturally and politically, however the United States and Argentina share common characteristics relevant to the cartoon controversy. Both are multicultural democracies with predominantly Christian populations; and both have sizable Muslim minorities.

Comparative research allows us to explore the role of journalists as gatekeepers of global information flows. Our argument is that conventional journalistic values determine the newsworthiness of remote events, while common frames determine whether international news is seen as having global and/or local relevance. Previous research suggests that the proximity of news events, both geographically and culturally, plays a role in the framing of international news (Nossek 2004), as does the presence or absence of national sources and actors in the news event (Shehata 2007). Moreover, journalists “domesticate” international news through selecting frames that resonate with national audiences and report on local events that fit the dominant narrative (Clausen 2003; Gurevitch, Levy and Roeh 1993).

Despite the many issues relevant for journalism and contemporary politics in Argentina and the United States embedded in the cartoon controversy, we find that journalists did not domesticate the story. News values such as conflict and drama drove journalistic interest, and the coverage was framed in terms of broader conflicts that would resonate with Argentine and US audiences. Still, the story never became fully “local”. The lack of local or national news events that would fit with conventional news values (such as protests or the involvement of national actors) determined that the cartoon controversy remained “international news”, and the presence of a “Europeans versus Muslims” frame seems to have overridden the free speech frame that was most likely to produce domestication. The ability of journalism to determine whose story is international news puts in evidence the continuous role of journalism in drawing boundaries between the national and the global.

Materials and Method

To investigate US news coverage of the cartoon controversy, the study examined six newspapers: *The New York Times* (average daily circulation: 1,142,464), *USA Today* (average daily circulation: 2,272,815), *The Washington Post* (average daily circulation: 724,242), *The Los Angeles Times* (average daily circulation: 851,832), *The Philadelphia Inquirer* (average daily circulation: 366,929), and *The Detroit Free Press* (highest daily circulation: 397,754).¹ The first four are aimed at a national audience. The others are regional in scope but have particular relevance to the study: *The Philadelphia Inquirer* was the only major US newspaper to publish any of the cartoons; Detroit has the largest population of Muslim Arabs in the United States.²

Using the search terms “Muhammad” and “cartoon” and the time frame of January 15 to March 15, 2006, editorials, news stories, news analysis articles, and letters to the editor published in the six newspapers about the controversy were retrieved from the Lexis-Nexis academic database. A total of 147 items from the newspapers was retrieved (see Table 1). Seventy-four (50 percent) of the articles analyzed were news stories, 40 (27 percent) were editorials (written by the newspapers’ editorial staff and appearing without a byline) and the remaining 34 (23 percent) were op-ed/analysis articles with a byline or letters to the editor. About two-third of the articles were published in *The New York Times* and *The Washington Post*. Muslim writers, including many whose titles indicated positions of responsibility with Muslim organizations, were well represented among the letters to the editor. Those who wrote on the cartoon controversy for the Op-Ed page were highly educated artists, writers, media professionals and academics, including at least eight Muslim writers and academics. Muslim writers also were well represented in the Letters to the Editor. Neither religious clergy nor politicians were among those who wrote editorials or Op-Ed columns in the newspapers we examined.

Table 1. Editorials, News Stories, Letters and News Analysis Items by Newspaper, United States

	New York Times	Washington Post	USA Today	Detroit Free Press	Los Angeles Times	Philadelphia Inquirer	Total
News stories	27	22	3	7	9	5	74
Editorials	11	14	9	1	1	4	40
Letters, op-ed, analysis	20	5		2	7		34
Total	58	41	12	10	17	9	147

For the Argentine case, the analysis focused on the editions of three influential newspapers based in the city of Buenos Aires: *Clarín*, *La Nación* and *Página/12*. *Clarín* is the newspaper with the largest circulation in the Spanish-speaking world (average print circulation: 349,000), and is widely seen as the most influential newspaper in the country. It is the flagship of the most powerful media corporation with interests in other newspapers, broadcasting stations, newsprint production, and other business properties. Historically, *Clarín* has held middle-of-the-road editorial positions, mixing highbrow commentary with popular reporting. Founded in 1870, *La Nación* is one the oldest newspapers in Argentina (average print circulation: 146,000), and it has historically represented conservative and anti-populist positions. *Página/12* is a left-center newspaper whose readership comes mostly from the political elite and intellectuals.³

A total of 57 items from the three newspapers was retrieved (see Table 2). The percentage of news stories and opinion pieces (49 percent each) was equally distributed. Only one editorial was found among our data. Forty articles (70 percent) originated from international news agencies or carried foreign bylines and the remaining 17 (30 percent) were filed by local reporters or Argentine correspondents. About half of the articles were published in *La Nación*, and the other fifty percent was similarly divided between *Clarín* and *Página/12*. The three papers largely relied on European news services (e.g. Spain's EFE, Agence-France-Presse and Italy's ANSA) to cover the controversy. They also featured Op-Ed columns written by known writers and journalists that had been originally published in US and European newspapers (e.g. *The New York Times*, *The Independent*, *Corriere della Sera*, and *El País*). They also published Op-Ed pieces by local columnists and a handful of articles by their European-based correspondents.

Table 2. Editorials, News Stories, Letters and News Analysis Items by Newspaper, Argentina

	Clarín	La Nación	Página/12	Total
News stories	6	13	9	28
Editorials		1		1
Letters, op-ed, analysis	8	14	6	28
Total	14	28	15	57

The “Conflict” Frame

In both the US and the Argentine press, the amount of coverage of the controversy spiked between January and March 2006. Conflict was not only the focus of the coverage, but it was also the overriding frame. Dramatic and violent events drove news coverage. Attention focused on the violent protests against the publication of the cartoons in the Muslim world as well as the diplomatic actions in the aftermath of the attacks against Scandinavian and other Western embassies in many countries.

Two frames – both grounded in conflict – dominated and shaped the news coverage and editorial reaction: A freedom of speech frame pitted absolutist and social responsibility positions on free speech against each other. Elaborations of this frame often equated socially responsible speech with religious tolerance, on one side, or with submission or “appeasement” on the other. A “clash of civilizations” frame pitted “the West” against “the Muslim world”, portraying the former as rational and enlightened and the latter as emotional and ignorant. This frame, which on its face is quite broad, was circumscribed in the news and editorials so that “Europe” specifically, and not the West more generally, was the key combatant in the “clash”.⁴

The domestication of foreign news is a framing process that involves “recognizing, defining, selecting and organizing information as news for audiences and actors in a certain national context” (Clausen 2003: 8). Domestication goes beyond the criteria or mechanisms that define global events as global *news*. Indeed, conflict is perhaps the most common criterion for determining the newsworthiness of global events. But the existence of conflict alone cannot ensure more than brief attention, as “coverage of disruption moves from incident to incident” (Stevenson, Zhang and Kaplan 2003: 5). Domestication occurs when the global becomes local. In this case, journalists’ conflict framing worked to make the cartoon controversy intelligible to local audiences in both Argentina and the United States and therefore offered a prime opportunity for domestication of the story. For example, free speech is a transcendent value in the United States, so framing that invokes it is likely to resonate with US audiences. In what follows, we describe and discuss these conflict frames and their implications.

The Debate between “Absolutist” and “Social Responsibility” Positions about Free Speech

In both the Argentine and the US press, news coverage offered a similar template to understand the controversy. The controversy was framed as a debate between two opposite and irreconcilable positions: freedom of speech as an absolute right and freedom of speech limited by social responsibility. The collision between free expression and religious tolerance was embedded in these two positions as writers attempted to determine where tolerance ends and submission begins. In neither country did the newspapers favor one position

over the other, but rather, they presented a somewhat balanced coverage of both positions.

The absolutist position holds that free speech is an inalienable right that should prevail under all circumstances. Its basic premise is that “nothing is sacred” and thus out of reach of public discussion. No issues should be cordoned off from public inspection. All forms of expression, including ridicule and offensive speech, are part of democratic speech. It frames freedom of speech as a quintessential, treasured Western value to be cherished above any religious or political dogma. No alternative or consideration should stand in its way. A position imbued by classic Enlightenment principles of unfettered speech, the absolutist argument brought together individuals who represented a myriad of political positions. In contrast, the “social responsibility” position suggests that specific factors warrant limits to free speech. This position does not understand “responsible speech” as speech that promotes public service as stated, for example, by the Hutchins Commission in the United States. “Responsible speech” stands for speech that contributes to the common good by refraining from criticizing people’s sacred values (namely in this case, religious beliefs) out of tolerance for diversity or strategic considerations. From this perspective, “socially responsible” speech is the alternative to offensive speech that gratuitously attacks others rather than the opposite of business, profit-oriented speech as formulated in the famous Hutchins Report. It is speech that is sensitive to cultural differences and political context in a multicultural and tension-ridden world.

Advocates of the absolutist position in the US press employed the interpretation of the conflict espoused in a majority of the Danish press and repeated in coverage throughout Europe – namely, (a) that publication of the cartoons by *Jyllands-Posten* was intended to gauge and challenge self-censorship in Europe, and (b) that the re-publication of these drawings by other European newspapers was meant to express solidarity for press freedom (see Hervik, Chapter 4, in this volume). In adopting this general frame, US free speech absolutists took as given that the controversy was, at its core, a freedom of expression controversy in which speech was threatened by those who did not understand or value such freedom or other classic liberal values. A letter to the *Detroit Free Press* exhibiting such absolutism argues that, even though “Americans need to become more sensitive to what offends others, especially people of different cultures ... freedom of speech and expression is a right that cannot be constrained to please any one group of people” (Szysko, *Detroit Free Press*, February 10, 2006). An opinion writer for the *Washington Post* framed the issue in even broader terms:

People on both sides want to picture it as a fundamental conflict of values, between absolute religious beliefs and absolute political principles, between God’s word (as interpreted by man) and the freedoms enshrined in Western democracy. If that’s how the conflict is presented to people in the West, then they, indeed, have little choice: Of course freedom of the press, even the freedom, as one French newspaper put it, “to caricature God”, cannot be compromised (Kennicott, *Washington Post*, February 2, 2006).

Maximalist “free speech” positions in the Argentine press made arguments along similar lines. They included an ideologically eclectic group of writers from several continents. Former presidential candidate and Peruvian novelist Mario Vargas Llosa, known for his free-market and anti-left positions, showed concern about the silence of moderate positions that were cowed by religious fanatics. He asks rhetorically, did they not express rejection of [religious] barbarism in “the Europe of Voltaire, of the Enlightenment, that established the right to criticism, to be irreverent, against governments and gods as a basic principle of civilization, the right to free expression and coexistence of diverse beliefs, customs and ideas in an open society?” While he applauded right-wing newspapers for publishing the cartoons, he accused leftist publications of refraining from printing them out of “political correctness”. Vargas Llosa concluded: “It makes me want to cry when one compares today’s European Left to the Left that was in the vanguard of the struggle to achieve freedom for expression and criticism, which today is under criticism by fanatics.”

From a different ideological standpoint, Spanish philosopher Fernando Savater also endorsed unrestricted free speech:

One develops respect for the other when one is able to poke fun or make criticisms, even when they are in bad taste, because one considers him a civilized human being who would not kill him for that. ... Citing Raoul Vaneigem who was influential during the revolts in May 1968 in France, I believe that: Nothing is sacred. Everyone has the right to criticize, to poke fun, to ridicule all religions, all ideologies, all conceptual systems, all thoughts (*Clarín*, February 19, 2006).

Also, leftist Argentine writer Osvaldo Bayer interpreted the reaction to the cartoons in Muslim countries as evidence of “the forward march of hate” based on religious precepts. Bayer wrote, “Rather than protesting against one or twelve cartoons of dubious quality and influence, they [Muslims] need to terminate with anti-ethical principles that the West, thanks to rational thinkers such as Voltaire and courageous women, put an end to forever.”

For free speech absolutists, tolerance consists of the willingness and ability to accept insults, a position that faults as “misguided” anyone who takes an insult to heart or worries about others whom some speech may offend. The shortcomings of free speech are resolved with more speech. Free speech is the best antidote against religious and political dogmas.

Framing Freedom of Speech as Limited by Social Responsibility

In the social responsibility position, this unflinching notion of tolerance gives way to the view that free speech is appropriately limited by responsibility. This is a more anticipatory conception of tolerance than that which demands

forbearance in the face of insult. This view was common in US coverage, where there was widespread agreement both that *Jyllands-Posten* had the right to publish the cartoons and that the paper had been irresponsible to exercise its right to do so. Many opinion and letter writers, particularly Muslim writers, were anticipating the offense the cartoons would cause and acting to avoid or limit it as the responsible course of action. In their view, freedom ended where other responsibilities began. The chairman of the American Islamic Association illustrated this point in a letter to *The New York Times*, saying, "In my view, freedom of speech in a public arena carries with it a huge responsibility not to malign people's deeply held religious belief systems" (Ahmad, *The New York Times*, February 7, 2006). Tolerance here means tolerating limits to offensive speech, not the tolerance of offensive speech itself.

The contrast between free speech and sensitivity to religion appeared not only in the opposing viewpoints of writers but even within the comments of a single person. For example, Danish Prime Minister Anders Fogh Rasmussen was widely quoted attempting to balance the considerations of each position. One of Rasmussen's statements appeared in *The New York Times*:

I want to emphasize that in Denmark we attach fundamental importance to the freedom of expression, which is a vital and indispensable part of a democratic society. This being said, I would like to stress as my personal opinion that I deeply respect the religious feelings of other people. Consequently, I would never myself have chosen to depict religious symbols in this way" (Cowell, *The New York Times*, February 1, 2006).

Proponents of the absolutist position accused those holding social responsibility views of hypocrisy, and vice versa. Indeed claims of a "double standard" were common. A guest editorial writer for *The Los Angeles Times*, a Muslim professor of biochemistry, said:

[I]t seems as if Muslims do not believe in freedom. Those of us living in the West say that we cherish the liberty to practice our religion and express our views, even if our actions may offend the sensitivities of our non-Muslim neighbors. Yet when others express views that are offensive to Muslims, there is no tolerance (Momand, *The Los Angeles Times*, February 9, 2006).

Other letters remarked on offenses to Christians, such as artwork featuring a crucifix submerged in urine, and to Jews, particularly the publication of anti-Semitic cartoons in Arab newspapers. When Muslims were the subjects of the double standard claim, tolerance often took on a more extreme character – not as the opposite of intolerance but as a synonym for submission. As "submission", tolerance could not be tolerated. "Such are the fruits of appeasement", wrote Kathleen Parker in *USA Today*.

In the Argentine press, positions in favor of "socially responsible" speech made similar points. Two different arguments were made about the need for

speech to be socially responsible. On the one hand, leftist writers such as Portuguese Jose Saramago and German Günter Grass questioned “free speech” absolutism on the grounds that it is not appropriate in the contemporary world. In a context of growing tensions fueled by the explosive combination of right-wing Western policies (specifically, the U.S.-led invasion of Afghanistan and Iraq) and right-wing political terrorism wrapped in an Islamic discourse, the defense of unrestricted free speech is politically wrong and philosophically hollow. Poking fun at Islamic tenets is either a gross political mistake for it ignores the sensitivity of the current situation, or a malicious act, an unnecessary provocation, a calculated political gamble perpetrated by a right-wing newspaper with the complicity of like-minded politicians. They find it suspicious that right-wing forces and media who regularly refrain from criticizing powerful interests in the West embraced “free speech” with such fervor during the controversy. The double-standard of “free speech” absolutists on the right made them question their motives during the controversy.

On the other hand, religious leaders from different denominations criticized absolutist free speech in the name of religious tolerance. From the Vatican to local and international Muslim leaders, they argued that the preservation of peace-building and acceptance of religious diversity should be the guiding principle. Free speech should not be a license to offend religious sensibilities in a world of plural faiths. A *Clarín* (February 5, 2006) story quoted the Vatican spokesperson who stated:

The right to free thinking and expression...established by the Human Rights Declaration, does not imply the right to offend the religious sentiments of believers...Some forms of exasperated protest or ridicule show lack of human sensitivity and are an unacceptable provocation.

Similar reasoning was found in an Op-Ed piece by the General Secretary of the Islamic Center of the Argentine Republic published in *La Nación* (February 3, 2006):

Our concern is...with expressions, sometimes humorous as in this case, that may hurt sensibilities and cause an unwanted effect in large portions of the world's population...In the modern world, it is necessary to establish a dialogue based on respect as a necessary tool to build goodwill, and to improve our sensitivity towards the culture of the other.

The “Clash of Civilizations”

Another consistently used conflict frame was the “clash of civilizations”, in which liberal European values are pitted against intolerant Muslim values (Patterson 2007). Violent reaction to the publication of the cartoons served as evidence of Muslim intolerance and ignorance as well as of the West's superior

understanding. Each side in the clash is portrayed in the most general terms, essentially ignoring individual nations, politicians or other actors. The battle is between “us” and “them”, the modern world and Islam.

David Brooks, a conservative columnist for *The New York Times*, employed a number of such contrasts to argue this point:

Our mind-set is progressive and rational. Your mind-set is pre-Enlightenment and mythological. In our worldview, history doesn't move forward through gradual understanding. In your worldview, history is resolved during the apocalyptic conflict between the supernaturally pure jihadist and the supernaturally evil Jew. (Brooks, *The New York Times*, February 9, 2006).

The analysis suggests that the “conflict” frame was dominant in both the US and Argentine press. The cartoon controversy was interpreted as evidence of a global conflict between opposing conceptions of free speech. The political conflict, not the publication of the cartoons, was newsworthy. The coverage was episodic, and it focused on the violent protests in several Muslim countries, economic boycotts, and diplomatic tensions. The controversy was news as long as dramatic events that could be framed as evidence of the conflict were happening. Once street protests faded out and the level of diplomatic tensions diminished, unsurprisingly, coverage disappeared. It would be unwise to draw broad generalizations from one case, but the focus of the story gives credence to the notion that conflict news, in local or faraway places, fit professional conventions of newsworthiness in many national journalistic cultures.

Neither the Argentine nor the US press attempted to localize the story. In both cases, the story was covered as a foreign story with little local or national significance. Neither news stories nor opinion pieces made reference to the relevance of the controversy or the embedded issues (such as the question of freedom of speech in a multicultural world or the conflict between opposing conceptions of speech) to Argentina or the United States. The controversy was limited to Europe and Muslim countries.

Additionally, the news and editorials in our study lacked historical and political context. With few exceptions, the writers presented episodic coverage, focused on the current controversy, going back no further than the autumn preceding the violent reactions that erupted early in 2006. Many of the editorialists in our study either did not know or did not consider pertinent the context of growing anti-immigration sentiment in Denmark. Nor did they provide a context for the politics of the Danish newspaper. Only some editorialists saw both the publication of the cartoons and the violent responses to them as calculated moves to achieve specific political ends.

Nor did the coverage contextualize the politics of the reactions to the publication of the cartoons. Opinions and editorial did make references to the political gains of the controversy. For example, a *Washington Post* editorial called attention to the political uses to which the controversy was being put by “extremists and political opportunists across the Muslim world” who

hoped to use it to boost their own causes. The news coverage, however, did not describe the political context of the protests. News stories were filled with portrayals of violence, but they said little about how the protests originated. A *Página/12* article titled “A Danish Powder keg” (February 4, 2006) was typical for it described a seemingly out-of-control violence by stringing together violent episodes scattered in the Muslim world. No reference was made to what happened between September 2005 and early 2006 when protests erupted in several countries. No information was offered on whether the demonstrations had been organized and coordinated across countries, how they linked to local politics, who was behind them. The coverage implicitly assumed that the mere publication was sufficient to trigger mob violence.

In the United States, the news articles framed the conflict as a European problem, generalizing the conflict beyond Denmark to the rest of Europe, while detaching other Western countries (the United States, Canada and Australia) from it. A front-page story in *The Washington Post* offered one example: “In another day of confrontation between the largely secular nations of Europe and Muslim countries where religion remains a strong force in daily life, Islamic activists threatened more widespread protests and boycotts of European businesses” (Moore and Ambah, *The Washington Post*, February 2, 2006). Along similar lines, observers presented the conflict in Denmark as a product of the internal schism between the growing Danish immigrant population and the increasingly popular right wing party. A writer for *The New York Times* observed, “this [controversy] did not take place in a political vacuum. Hostile feelings have been growing between Denmark’s immigrants and a government supported by the right-wing Danish People’s Party, which has pushed anti-immigrant policies” (Smith, *The New York Times*, February 5, 2006). This frame, like the more general Europe vs. Muslim frame, distanced the United States from the story. The few exceptions here were, interestingly, found in letters to the editor. These non-journalist writers seemed to make the local connections that news coverage did not.

Likewise, articles in the Argentine press remained exclusively focused on the controversy as an issue affecting Europe and Muslims. News coverage kept the debate at a prudent distance by offering roughly equal time to positions that gave opinions about someone else’s conflict. It presented the issues as if they were only relevant to Europe and Islamic societies. Even the opinion pieces by local columnists remained focused on the controversy as a “foreign story”.

By limiting the controversy to Europe and Muslim countries, the coverage eschewed any possible interpretation about the controversy as exemplifying another round in a global conflict between civilizations. Although some commentators made references to “the clash of civilizations” as an adequate or wrongheaded trope to interpret the controversy, the analysis was still focused on European and Muslim countries. For a supposedly “global conflict” between cultures, journalists drew clear national boundaries about whose conflict it was.

Should we be surprised about the absence of domestication? Why did the coverage remain above the fray as if neither journalism nor Argentina nor the

US had any interests in the conflict? Why would Argentine and US journalists not choose a local angle? What could have prompted Argentine and US journalists to choose a local angle?

The controversy had professional and political dimensions that, in principle, were relevant to US and Argentine journalists. Obviously, journalism was at the heart of the story. Not only had a Danish newspaper triggered the controversy, but also its decision was based on the expectation that the caricatures would be inflammatory. A mix of professional and partisan calculations had prompted an editorial decision that resulted in far-reaching consequences. Journalism remained at the center throughout the controversy. Subsequently, many European newspapers were in the spotlight, as they had to make a crucial decision – publishing the cartoons – that would tacitly endorse or reject the decision of *Jyllands-Posten*. News organizations were forced to take a stand, weighing political and professional considerations in making the decision. U.S. and Argentine editors were no exception. While news organizations make editorial judgments constantly, they had to make a call in unique circumstances: making a decision as “the whole world was watching.” It was not just another decision away from public scrutiny. No matter what they decided, their final calls were inevitably bound to be part of the story, a clear position in the controversy, a matter of public commentary.

Although journalism was central to the story, detachment was dominant in both the US and Argentine press. It served to separate “journalism” from a story that was, in some essential way, about journalism. Newspapers were seen as defending their decisions on strictly journalistic grounds, such as news value, without acknowledging the broader free speech debate that had unfolded. *Washington Post* executive editor Len Downie said that the paper’s decision not to publish was based on “journalistic judgment, not courage” (Howell, February 12, 2006). The editor of *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, whose offices were picketed after the paper reprinted some of the cartoons, also used professional values to defend the decision. “We ran the cartoon for a purpose, and it was the same purpose newspapers fulfill, or ought to fulfill, in every circumstance, which is giving people the information they need” (Grogan, *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, February 14, 2006).

Downie’s mention of “courage” represents a rare instance in which journalists were identified as key actors in the controversy and the story was localized to some small extent. Newspapers were characterized as brave or cowardly, based on some combination of the writer’s beliefs about freedom and tolerance, and whether the newspaper had published the cartoons. A letter to the editor complimenting the decision of the vast majority of U.S. newspapers not to publish the cartoons offers one example:

I am a Texas Muslim and condemn the cartoon depictions of our holy prophet, Mohammed. People of all religions should feel welcome and safe to practice their religion in the peaceful manner for which it was intended. For this, I am proud and would like to applaud the responsible and conscientious

conduct upheld by our newspapers on this side of the Atlantic (Rana, *USA Today*, February 10, 2006).

While attention to local journalistic decisions about the cartoons was meager in the US press, the Argentine press completely ignored them. None of the articles examined even made an oblique reference to the decision-making process and the judgment of local editors. Not even *Página/12*'s printing of a small reproduction of the cartoon portraying Prophet Mohammed carrying a bomb in his turban was an issue mentioned in news stories and Op-Ed pieces.

Nor did journalists localize the story even though it had numerous political dimensions that are relevant to multicultural democracies such as the United States and Argentina. The story was about key contemporary political issues such as free speech in a multicultural society, whether tolerance and absolute free speech are necessarily opposite, and the political articulation of anti-immigrant sentiments. These issues are certainly relevant to both the United States and Argentina, two countries historically populated by several waves of immigrants from different faiths. Although Christians are in the majority (Roman Catholic in Argentina, Protestants in the United States), both countries feature sizable numbers of Muslims, Jews and other religious minorities who have a visible presence in politics, economics, and culture.

Discussion

We are skeptical about the possibility that allegiance to objectivity explains why the US and the Argentine press chose to refrain from domesticating the controversy. Impartiality was an appropriate professional position to present the story as if it only affected others. In line with Nossek's (2004) argument about why journalists shift frameworks in the coverage of local and foreign terrorist attacks, we suggest that journalists took a "professional", impartial role to distance themselves from the controversy. The controversy was considered someone else's conflict. Had they believed that the events affected them, perhaps they would have sacrificed impartiality and assumed a more committed position, as journalists do when, as Nossek perceptively suggests, they believe that specific terrorist attacks affect them as members of a national community (also see Ruigrok and van Artevelde 2007). Instead, journalists seemed unable "to bring the story home", to frame it as a controversy that directly or tangentially related to important political and journalistic issues in Argentina and the United States. In fact, the adoption of the same free speech and civilization clash frames common in European press coverage may have encouraged more distance rather than less in coverage of the story. Having those already familiar frames at hand meant that US and Argentine journalists did not need to do the translation work that developing frames for their own audiences would have demanded, but could still point to those frames as the characterizations "they" – the Europeans or Muslim world – were making.

Adding the Europe vs. the Muslim world frame, as they tended to do, further ensured the detachment.

The absence of obvious local news pegs facilitated the positioning of Argentine and US journalists as impartial observers. There were neither angry demonstrations against the caricatures nor divisive pronouncements made by public officials, two central news events in the coverage of the story in Europe and Muslim countries. No Muslims leaders organized massive demonstrations in US or Argentine cities. No public officials made public statements that clearly sided with one of the positions in the conflict. No diplomats had to respond to vandalized embassy buildings or burnt flags. Neither Argentine nor US business were affected by the boycotts decreed by Muslim consumers. Had there been massive demonstrations or partisan pronouncements by mainstream political figures, then, journalists would have had available facts to localize the story.

Offering an explanation for why these events did not happen falls outside the goals of this article. One can only speculate about possible reasons. Neopopulist politics representing anti-immigrant, anti-Muslim sentiments are not in the political mainstream in Argentina and the United States as they are in contemporary Europe. Nor do key themes underlying the conflict such as whether new immigrants should preserve their culture or embrace the dominant culture of the host country have the same resonance and political urgency on both sides of the Atlantic. The question about the interaction between “host” and “immigrant” cultures, a sore point of discussion in today’s Europe, plays out differently in Argentina and the United States. Also, it is worth considering whether after September 11th and after the US-led invasion of Iraq, key actors (politicians, religious leaders) in the United States carefully avoid making controversial statements that might rekindle simmering tensions. Rather than taking part in a controversy that to some commentators was another battleground of a “clash of civilizations”, US leaders prudently distanced themselves. Argentina, in contrast, has remained largely outside post-September 11th politics involving the fractured and complex relations between the United States (and the West in general) and the Arab world.

The absence of localization of the cartoon controversy stands in contrast to the coverage of international news stories that highlight the local implications of distant events. Domestication of foreign news was visible, for example, in the news coverage of the attacks of September 11th and the US-led invasion of Iraq in countries that were not involved (Rolston and McLaughlin 2004; Allan and Zelizer 2002). The possibility that foreign news might be domesticated raises questions about the notion that the globalization of news promotes homogeneous content, a well-known argument in the literature on international news coverage. The dominant role of global news agencies in the production and distribution of news explains common content in international news around the world (Paterson 1998). Our study suggests, however, that access to the same copy delivered by international news agencies does not produce homogenized news. The existence of a globalized economic and technological infrastructure does not translate into the same news stories. Information coming from global

news agencies is not necessarily pasted into news holes. Local journalists are not necessarily mere conveyors of information produced elsewhere. They remain “information brokers” deciding what is covered and how. They determine whether a given story has international and/or local significance and assign differential news value to both local and global events. Without local and national newsworthy events that fit the dominant narrative, it is hard to envision that journalists would be inclined to localize international stories.

Conclusion

The selective patterns of localization of foreign news introduce an issue that is central to current debates about news in a global public sphere. The recent acceleration of media globalization has intensified the decoupling of media and place (Chalaby 2003), and facilitated the consolidation of a global public sphere (Volkmer 2003). Among other types of transnational media content, cross-border news contributes to bringing awareness about events beyond local and national borders. John Keane has argued that “thanks to media narratives that address audience and probe the wider world in intimate...tones, the members of the global civil society become a bit less parochial, a bit more cosmopolitan (2003: 170). Our study suggests that although “global news events” such as the cartoon controversy bring dispersed parts of the world in contact, it remains questionable whether such occasions are moments for cosmopolitan participation in public spaces that transcend the national. Because global news might be covered as stories that are relevant to “others” as members of other national communities rather than to “us” as global citizens, it is not obvious that global news events usher in a cosmopolitan consciousness. Presented as remote happenings that affect and express the concerns of others, they may reinforce sentiments of national difference rather than global communion. What needs to be kept in mind is that cosmopolitanism is a multidimensional concept. It refers to a condition of living in an interconnected world, a specific worldview transcending local and national identities, a political project towards the formation and strengthening of transnational institutions, and the recognition of forms of identification beyond national identities (Vertovec 2000). Journalism and media studies have particularly remarked upon the significance of the media for raising awareness about the condition of living in a globalized world, and nurturing transnational and post-national views. In a media-saturated world, the media are central sites for confronting diversity and developing sentiments of identity and solidarity for others outside national boundaries (Moeller 1999; Silverstone 2006).

Doubtless, the copious amounts of news flowing across borders on any given day are a prime example of how globalized flows of information put audiences in contact with others beyond national boundaries. It is not self-evident however that awareness about events elsewhere promotes transnational perspectives. Just because international news stories bring “the world” close to home, they are not similarly presented as universally relevant. Some stories are presented

as faraway news without local relevance; other stories, instead, are explicitly linked to local events and concerns. The choice of “global” vs. “local” angles lies with political actors – and with journalism, whose gatekeepers manage the flow and relevance of global information through selecting stories, facts, and frames. That choice is not insignificant, for it determines whether journalists believe that an international story is only relevant to “others”, or has ramifications and implications for citizens beyond national boundaries. Journalism draws cultural boundaries through the reporting of international stories by indicating what stories belong to others as members of distinct national or regional communities and what stories are relevant to everybody as cosmopolitan citizens. Due to the lack of local news events that fit the conflict narrative in place or the reluctance of journalists to engage in a politically sensitive issue that could bring troubling repercussion, neither the Argentine nor the US press localized a controversy pregnant with significant implications for multicultural societies.

Our analysis confirms that we have sound explanations for what factors typically determine the content of foreign news. Numerous studies have extensively shown that geographical proximity, economic and political relevance, conflict and deviance, and cultural affinity typically determine international news as well as news judgments in journalism across the world (Shoemaker and Cohen, 2006). Coverage of the cartoon controversy confirms the influence of those factors. Although Denmark is hardly a country that attracts continuous attention, the controversy was located in the core of Europe, especially as the conflict engulfed the majority of European countries. Also, violent protests fit standard Orientalist stereotypes in the Western press and spawned images of rampage, of burning flags and Scandinavian embassies under siege that provide irresistible news visuals and copy. However, we lack parsimonious explanations to understand what drives domestication of foreign news. When and why do journalists localize stories? What local news events push localization? Future studies are needed to examine these questions, and thus determine the causes of domestication.

Notes

1. Circulation figures are from January 2006, as reported to the Audit Bureau of Circulations. *The Detroit Free Press* had been in a joint operating agreement with *The Detroit News*; this circulation figure, from May 2006, is for the *Free Press* only. Unlike the others, it is the highest daily circulation, not an average.
2. See Belsie 2002.
3. Circulation figures are from the 2003 report of the Argentine National Institute of Census and Statistics (2003). The report does not include circulation numbers for Página/12.
4. These frames in the US press were previously identified and discussed in Stephanie Craft and Tayo Oyedemi (2007). United States: Journalism as a prism of culture clash, in Risto Kunelius, Elisabeth Eide, Oliver Hahn and Roland Schroeder (eds.), *Reading the Mohammed Cartoons Controversy: An International Analysis of Press Discourses on Free Speech and Political Spin*, 177-186. Bochum, Freiburg/Brsg.: projekt verlag. Some of the excerpts from news and editorial content used to illustrate those frames also are employed as examples in the present study.

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III. Crossing Boundaries

Chapter 9

The Loop of Labelling

Orientalism, Occidentalism and the Cartoon Crisis

Elisabeth Eide

A call for respect and understanding: How can we stop the loop of labelling?
Headline, *Akhbar Al-Alyoum*, Egypt, March 11, 2006

But we are all swimming in those waters, Westerners and Muslims and others alike. And since the waters are part of the ocean of history, trying to plow or divide them with barriers is futile. These are tense times, but it is better to think in terms of powerful and powerless communities, the secular politics of reason and ignorance, and universal principles of justice and injustice, than to wander off in search of vast abstractions that may give momentary satisfaction but little self-knowledge or informed analysis.

Edward Said 2001

The above citation of Edward Said is an excerpt from one of his later articles on Huntington's predictions about a "clash of civilizations", written barely six weeks after September 11, 2001. The media coverage of the cartoon controversy (during 2006 and since) was often accompanied by references to titles such as Huntington's¹, and some media became rather supportive of his claim as the crisis developed.

This chapter first sets out to explore how scholarship related to the *Orientalism Critique*, as well as its somewhat younger adversary, *Occidentalism*², may shed some light on the press coverage of the caricature³ controversy, and thus also attempts to analyze the relevance of these concepts and theories for studies of transnational media representation. Central questions are whether, in the wake of the controversy, one would find polarized expressions in the media corresponding to the stereotyped representations associated with Orientalism and Occidentalism, and also whether alternative, less polarized representations may be found.

The chapter is based on examples of material provided from the country to country studies in the initial report from the cartoon controversy research group (Kunelius, Eide et al. 2007⁴) focus on examples which explicitly address imagined entities like "The West", "Europe", "The East", "Islam" or "Muslims".

Some experiences from Indonesia⁵ have also been added. Thus a variety of approaches have been mapped, ranging from textual excerpts of an essentializing nature to more ambiguous texts.

Absolute Alterity

The role of a (news) medium requires openness to the foreigner. This is largely missing in the colonial discourse, writes Norwegian anthropologist Tord Larsen. Critics of colonial discourses claim that the language employed serves to tame and transform *being different* by resorting to two illegitimate projects of recognition. Inspired by Roland Barthes (1991 [1975]⁶) Larsen suggests that either we “consume the primitive by reconstructing him as a version of ourselves” – and thereby he is no longer a foreigner, but becomes part of “us” via our homogenizing intellectual digestion. *Or:*

he is represented as an unrecognized foreignness – an absolute alterity as it is called – and then, at best, he becomes a European turned upside down, an inversion that only serves the purpose of contrasting with the European self-apprehension. Either we annihilate the non-European by absorbing him, or we make our own existence more distinct by using him as a contrast, an aberration fit to define our own normality (Larsen 1999: 92 [my translation]).

In the heat of the caricature controversy Larsen’s predictions may have proven right.

The crisis apparently gave a boost to polarization between those who, out of principle, supported not only the right to publish, but also the actual act of publication (of caricatures which by many were seen as insulting and blasphemous) – and those who would object to both the act itself and the right to insult religious icons in this way. The negative reactions to the caricatures – as was to be expected – were particularly strong in the “Orient”, i.e. the Islamic world, and among Muslims living in Europe and North America.

A No-Win Situation?

At a general level, if Larsen is right, the persistence of the colonial discourse invites the [non-western] foreigner into a no-win situation the moment (s)he sets foot in Europe. Either (s)he accepts the formula of assimilation and is thereby reduced to a version of the majority, or (s)he is represented as a total stranger who may assist the majority (the allegedly normal) in understanding themselves – by drawing a distinct line of demarcation. But is there no in-between? Anthropologist Michel-Rolph Trouillot suggested almost two decades ago that on sheer empirical grounds, the differences between Western and non-Western societies are more blurred than ever before (1991). The caricature issue demonstrates that at times a larger “we” inhabited by people from various

religions and beliefs found its ways into the media.

The discursive frames of the process of media representation may vary, but they are often associated with binary opposites like the ones represented in the Orientalism critique: The “rational West” versus the “emotional East”; democratic vs. despotic; modern vs. backward etc. The critique, as initiated by Edward Said (1978, 1981, and 1994) claimed that the West has created a dichotomy between the reality of the East and the romantic notion of the “Orient”. In this discourse, the Middle East and large parts of Asia are often viewed through lenses of prejudice and simplification, and judged to be backward and unaware of their own history and culture. These simplified and often distorted representations are seen as related to political hegemony, not in the direct sense, but by means of the way Orientalist representations may legitimize interference in more supposedly backward societies, since they are not deemed fit to rule (or represent) themselves.

An analysis of the twelve original caricatures may add something to this understanding, since at least some of them may be read to contain Orientalist representation and others may reveal interesting self representation and reflection (see Alhassan, Chapter 3, in this volume). Here I want to point out that the caricature representing a merger of terrorism and Islam⁷ was the one that provoked the sentiments of many Muslims the most – and confirm that the *context* in which the caricatures were displayed was an important issue when it came to reactions to their publication (see Hervik, Chapter 4, in this volume). This holds true whether the cartoons were treated as a (news) piece of information; whether they were produced as a facsimile accompanied by critical comment; or whether they were deemed more provocative and aimed to address a conflict-laden situation and in particular one of the groups engaged in this situation.

Seen from Elsewhere

The Orientalism critique⁸ has had an impact on academic research for thirty years and has stimulated a vast number of studies adapting and developing critically the theoretical approaches of Said. By contrast, the concept of Occidentalism in media research is younger but seems at least as open to interpretation and academic experiment as its big brother.

According to Egyptian scholar Hassan Hanafi *Occidentalism* “analyses European consciousness, and gives the Orient a new sense of itself”, furthermore Occidentalism is “the study of the West from a non-Western point of view” (Hanafi 2005). If this definition stood alone, it might have been looked upon as the academic counterpart of the original, traditional (pre-Said’s critique) Orientalism, i.e. studies of the Orient. Hanafi adds, however, that it is also

[...] a discipline developed in the Third World countries to complete the process of decolonization. Military, economic and political decolonization

will be incomplete without scientific, ideological and cultural decolonization. As long as colonized countries remain objects of study, decolonization will be incomplete. The object must be allowed to become subject, the observed to become observer (ibid.)

Thus, Hanafi seems to see Occidentalism as a necessary process of liberation, a counter-representation, through which academics and other “representing intellectuals” based in the former colonies or in Diasporas talk back at their observers from an upgraded status of observer.

Anthropologist James G. Carrier emphasises the dialectics between the opposites, *Orient* and *Occident* and writes that when defining what the *Orient* is like, out of necessity, anthropologists and other researchers define it in relation to something else. The *Orient* only took meaning in the context of another term, “the West” (Occident), and in the process (also) the West was subject to “essentializing simplifications” (Carrier 1995: 3). Another sort of Occidentalism according to Carrier occurs: “In studies of the ways that people outside the West imagine themselves, for their self-image often develops in contrast to their stylized image of the West”, in other words they define the West in an essentialist manner (Carrier 1995: 6, see also Schipper 1999). The “stylized image of the West” may be one general suggestion for a conceptual counterpart to Orientalism. But the representations and counter-representations do not necessarily occur in a symmetrical manner. “In this larger, inter-social arena, Westerners have been more powerful and hence better able than people elsewhere to construct and impose images of alien societies as they see fit (Carrier 1995: 10). He quotes Laura Nader (1989) who finds that; “various commentators in the Middle East construct and present images of the West that portray women there as devalued sex objects, exploited by flourishing pornography industry, and constantly threatened by molesting, rape, incest, and family violence.” She sees these representations as paired with self-representation of the Orient (Islamic societies) where women are valued and where they can be secure (Carrier 1995: 9). Meanwhile some Western commentators portray Middle Eastern women as “veiled and forced into submission through a double sexual standard, and as victims of everything from arranged marriage and polygyny to clitoridectomy” (ibid.). Also Said in his Orientalism critique emphasised how the Orientalism scholars highlight oppression of women in the Orient, Magnus Berg in his work on “popular Orientalism” (Berg 2000) makes the same point.

Official and Anti-official Occidentalism?

Xiaomei Chen explores the occidentalism, with experiences from China, and suggests two different streams; *official* and *anti-official* Occidentalism. The first one, used rhetorically by the Chinese leaders from Mao Zedong onwards, was according to Chen mainly applied for internal oppressive purposes, painting a

one-sided negative picture of the West. The other is based among critics of this leadership and thus the anti-official Occidentalism then came to imply

[...] a powerful anti-official discourse using the Western Other as a metaphor for political liberation against ideological oppression within a totalitarian society. [...] I argue that what might rightly be considered as a global, “central” discourse of Occidentalism in their account can also sometimes be used as a locally marginal or peripheral discourse against the centrality of the internal dominant power in a particular culture. Under these special circumstances, therefore, arguing absolutely against cultural imperialism in the international arena can be politically dangerous since it inevitably, if unintentionally, supports the status quo of a ruling ideology, such as the one in contemporary China, that sees in the Western Other a potentially powerful alliance with an anti-official force at home. (Chen 1995: 8)

Chen’s argument – that Occidentalism does not have to be solely negative representation, is also relevant for other totalitarian states. As seen during the cartoon crisis, several political leaders in states where Islam is the dominant religion were very outspoken against the Danish cartoons. This in turn may have helped to divert the attention of internal opposition from other burning issues, since this was a cause where Muslims in general were called to unite. “Freedom of expression”, then, although guaranteed in most constitutions (among them in Article 19 in the Pakistani constitution), may within this logic be labelled a “Western issue”.

Counter-discourse? Oppositional?

The Daily Times, a liberal English-language newspaper in Pakistan, argued in line with this leadership position, albeit with ambiguity, and this argument – hinting at secular fundamentalism and European double standards – was frequently found in the Pakistani press during the cartoon conflict.

[T]he decision to publish the cartoons is indefensible and the employment of freedom-of-expression argument is the worst excuse that can be used to justify it. Let’s consider. *Europe* has evolved along a certain trajectory that has seen the influence of religion wane to the point of *becoming non-existent*. There is a general acceptance that Christianity can be caricatured even though Christian groups that still put some premium on religion continue to protest such acts. However, even as religion has been displaced, in its place we have theologies like the *French Jacobin secularism* and political correctness. [...] This shows that the issue of freedom of expression is more complex than the way the European newspapers printing the highly offending cartoons have posited. (editorial *The Daily Times* February 4, 2006)

The *Jacobin* metaphor refers to the French ban on hijab in schools and also to political brutality. The editorial posits *The Daily Times* as harbouring a more diverse understanding of one of the core “western” values, freedom of expression. It also sidelines secularism with other fundamentalisms and confirms the Occidental view of Europe as a totally secular entity.

The monthly magazines *Herald* and *Newsline* were the most liberal and outspoken publications covering the cartoon issue in Pakistan. In the first one, the main commentator actually defended *Jyllands-Posten*’s publication of the cartoons by referring to the political context in Europe:

By printing the cartoons, *Jyllands-Posten* has exposed the violence of radical Islamists and highlighted Europe’s increasing willingness to curtail certain freedoms. [...] Without the right to offend, the world would be bereft of important satirical and dissenting voices. (*Herald*, March issue 2006)

This comment sees “Europe” as not too free, and thus sides with the critics of self-censorship in “Europe”. In Chen’s terminology, this approach would be labelled “anti-official Occidentalism”, as it challenged the official view in Pakistan on the issue. On the other hand, one can not label the bulk of the Pakistani press as “official”, although they in this case shared their condemnation of the cartoons with the government. The question is, then, whether it is meaningful to speak of different strands of Occidentalism as *official* and *non-official*. It may be more adequate to see the concept Occidentalism (as well as Orientalism) as a dominant discourse, a discourse often related to the powerful. Representations challenging this dominance might eventually be called *Oppositional Occidentalism*.

Images and Self-images

Carrier suggests Occidentalism as both image and self-image. That is, when describing the “distant Other”, one simultaneously makes an act of demarcation that entails a degree of narrowing self representation – one stereotype generates the other, as it were. On the other hand, defending a group or nation by simplistic demarcation is a universal feature. “Eastern” representation of the “West” may then follow the same pattern as traditionally Orientalism. Occidentalism, then, may be seen both as a self-simplification of the West, as a counter-discursive response to Orientalist othering (a reversed othering of the West) or just as a simplistic way of representing the West.

The term *othering* is said to have been first used by Gayatri Spivak “for the process by which imperial discourse creates its ‘others’” (Ashcroft and al. 1998: 171); in other words *othering* may be seen as a kind of authoritarian practice in speech, deed and writing producing polarization between Selves and Others. But journalistic practice entails continuously constructing its “others”, and while this profession in itself has strong authoritarian aspects to it, it may be wise to leave the door open for alternative practices, in which the

journalist tries to understand the world from the view point of the Other, and thus at times produces reflexive texts avoiding the temptations of polarization and simplification. Whether this should be labelled “symmetrical othering” or “reflexive othering” (Eide 2002) or new concepts should be found, is an issue yet to be explored, but I suggest here the term “oppositional” or “reflexive” *representation* for discourses challenging the traditional binary and hierarchical representations.

The question of whose definitions are the more powerful on an international scale today may be studied in the light of the prevailing news flows and transnational media representations. On both sides of this spectrum, one finds representation and self representation as demonstrated in a simple way below; and both may be subject to essentialism and simplification – not least in the media where the “hidden formats of coercion” (Bourdieu 1998: 113) leave limited space for nuance and reflexivity.

Figure 1. Orientalism and Occidentalism

	Orientalism	Occidentalism
Othering processes	Representation of the <i>other</i> , the “Orient(al)”: irrational, belligerent/despotic, illiberal, over-sensual, static. OR: oppositional, (counter-discursive) representation.	Representation of the <i>other</i> , the “West(erner)”: amoral, insensitive, extremely secular, promiscuous. OR: oppositional, counter-discursive representation
Self representation/image	Orientalizing the self (internalization)	Occidentalizing the Self, the “Westerner” ⁹

The “West” (as self-image) constructed in studies of “the Eastern Other” may often occur as a tacitly presupposed version of (a prototype of) the WASP(m)¹⁰ sharing the same values, (implying the subtraction of diversity through the routines of media simplification). As a result, the images constructed of the ‘We/They’ relations will be polarized. The reverse also occurs, as when certain commentators in Muslim countries during the cartoon crisis claimed that “all Muslims” were equally offended by the caricatures.

Thus, during the controversy, notions like “the West” and “Europe” were frequently applied (both by western and non-western media) as if they represented some kind of unified entities with shared views and values, while simultaneously the concepts like “Islam” and “Muslims” seem to have replaced the older “Orient” in discourses of this controversy, sometimes specified to “Islamism” or “radical Islam”, albeit most often without proper definitions or demarcation lines.

One may also take into account the ways in which representation from “outside” may influence self-images, especially among vulnerable groups, as Jean Paul Sartre writes in his studies of the French-Jewish experiences:

Since the Jew knows he is being seen, he forestalls others and tries to see himself with their eyes. This objectivity towards oneself is again a sign of

inauthenticity: when he sees himself with the dispassion of an other, he actually feels separated from himself, he is an other, a sheer witness (Sartre 1963 [1946]: 64).

The consciousness of being seen in the way Sartre describes such perception, may lead to a process of making the self an object, an *other*, an internalization of the majority view of the self, that is, assessing the self as of lesser value, as significantly different.

Diasporic Importance

Sartre wrote this in the early aftermath of World War II, which soon developed into the era of the Cold War with its ideology of fundamental dividing lines between the perceived East and West. From the 1990's, after the fall of communism, the meaning of "East" changed. But as Stuart Hall (1999) has put it, the West is now everywhere, and so is the East, thus it is more difficult than ever to pretend that we are living in monocultures.

Throughout the caricature crisis, journalists and commentators referred to the Diaspora¹¹ – most commonly the approximately twenty million Muslims living in Europe or the minorities living in Canada/USA – as part of an argument in the debate on the caricatures and their degree of insult. The fact that most Muslims, both in Europe and elsewhere, did *not* take to the streets or raise extreme slogans against the caricatures, seems to be disregarded by many media institutions (Moniquet 2006). On the other hand, in some countries the moderate attitudes of "our Muslims" was seen as evidence of integration, for example in France and Israel (Boe et al. 2007; Nossek 2007). Some commentators (mainly in Western publications) did represent the presence of a growing number of non-western minorities as a threat to "Western values". In the first case the representation of a more complex "West" (an alternative "we") in itself offered a deviation from simplification but within a second discourse the diasporic millions might be represented as a Trojan horse – "the threatening East in the West", and thus a more monolithic image of the "'real West' is preserved; the "East in the West" thus deriving connotations of not belonging, partly also due to "Easteners" less enlightened position.

Revolt against Rationalism?

Recently, Occidentalism has been branded as a form of counter-Enlightenment, a negative response to industrialization, rationalism, secularism, and individualism (Buruma and Margalit 2004¹²). In other words, Occidentalism is seen as "anti-westernism"¹³ and thus opposed to modernity. In this light it is:

[...] the expression of bitter resentment toward an offensive display of superiority by the West, based on the alleged superiority of reason. More corrosive even than military imperialism is the imperialism of the mind imposed by

spreading the Western belief in scientism, the faith in science as the only way to gain knowledge. (Buruma and Margalit 2004: 95)

The four most important elements of Occidentalism mentioned by Buruma and Margalit are hostility to the city, revulsion for the material life, abhorrence of the Western mind and hatred of the infidel (ibid.: 11). Occidentalism has its roots both inside Europe (as in German romanticist reaction to the Enlightenment) and in the Middle East (as from the Muslim Brotherhood, its followers and predecessors). At times it takes the shape of confrontationalism and thus invigorates the political struggle.

The “revolt against rationalism” is emphasised, and Buruma and Margalit have reiterated that one can today better speak of Occidentalism when the revolt against the West becomes a form of pure destruction, when the West is depicted as less than human, when rebellion means murder (ibid.). In other words, when trying to clarify the term, the authors seem to limit Occidentalism to a certain brand of “jihadi justification”, thus excluding various other ways in which Eastern representation of the West may take place. Their definition also seems less subtle in its suggestion of relations between representation and hegemony than the Orientalism critique. Buruma and Margalit claim that wherever it occurs, Occidentalism is fed by a sense of humiliation or defeat (ibid.). While it is easy to recognise these factors, the question remains: may one not assume Occidentalism “counter-discursive” expressions, being fed by a feeling of *superiority* (or symmetry, for that matter) towards an imagined West and thus the Orient’s ‘representing intellectuals’ harbouring a wider repertoire than the one mentioned above by Buruma and Margalit? It is noteworthy that Buruma and Margalit’s definition deals more directly with emotional response than does the Orientalism critique, since they claim the latter originated as a critique of scholarship and literature more than of political movements.

It could be argued that the outline of Occidentalism proposed by Buruma and Margalit is influenced by the traditional Orientalist view of the “Orient”. The somewhat emotion-leaning definition seems to fit well with the media’s concentrated focus (fuelled by the media’s general priorities of heated and therefore entertaining and dramatic conflicts) on emotional street response to the caricatures, the heavy concentration on rage and brutality, while dwelling less on analytic and rational responses to the crisis in the “Orient”.

A Broader Approach

Leen Boer suggests that Buruma and Margalit’s version of Occidentalism may be a construction from within their own culture, and criticises them for putting too little emphasis on colonialist humiliation and victimization (Boer 2004). Ziauddin Sardar writes that Occidentalism, as constructed by Buruma and Margalit, “cannot be equated with Orientalism”, since Orientalism has a very long history and “is a discourse – a coherent structure of knowledge through which

the west has understood and represented the ‘Orient’” and through which the west produces self-confirming accounts of the non-west” (Sardar 2004). Buruma and Margalit have demonstrated that these more or less hostile representations of the “West” and modernity are not new phenomena, although it may be hard to unify their various examples (from Japan, from Germany, Russia and Egypt) into one coherent discursive tradition.

Sardar also questions Buruma and Margalit’s Occidentalism as “hatred of the western material life”, and suggests that the hate may have more to do with the state of poverty prevailing in the former colonies. Thus he also indirectly rejects Huntington’s thesis that the fundamental source of conflict in the world will primarily be cultural, not ideological or economic (Huntington 1993). But Sardar admits that Occidentalism “seems poised to become the dominant discourse of the future, and underlines the need to understand and theorize about it” (ibid.).

For the endeavour of exploring media representations of the “non-west” (especially the Muslim world and diaspora) in the “west” – and the opposite, a somewhat broader approach than the one suggested by Buruma and Margalit seems reasonable. Occidentalism, then, may perhaps be carefully interpreted as varieties of a dominant discourse in some parts of the world, a discourse essentializing and simplifying “the West” as (a hostile) *other*. These expressions are often imbued with critique of modernity. Said may have subscribed to such a notion as he writes: “The opposite [to appeals of the ‘yellow peril’ etc.] is true in the practice throughout Asia and Africa of Occidentalism, turning “the West” into a monolithic category that is supposed to express hostility to non-white, non-European, and non-Christian civilizations. (Said 2003: 70) Or as Simon Tate suggests: “Occidentalism is a discourse producing stylised images and essentialized representations of the West” (Tate 2005). This may in my view take place from a defensive position of “defeat and humiliation”, but also at times from a perceived position of ambition, a feeling of supremacy – and of rejection.

Imposing Muslims? Press Variety

The caricature controversy in Denmark, its country of origin, is said to have risen from a critique of Danish self-censorship¹⁴ – rather than as an attempt to offend resident Muslims. Still, the category “Muslims” very often appeared in the press. A Danish commentator in Jyllands-Posten wrote ironically that Denmark had better

[...] get rid of the scientific study of history and most of the human sciences as well as most aspects of exact sciences that oppose the holy writings of Islam. The curriculum of primary school has to be adjusted to fit to Islamic instructions in centres of knowledge. Artists will need to look over their shoulder, before they engage in naughtiness. Because buried within the

Muslim culture there is a tradition of cutting the throats of liberal people.
(*Jyllands-Posten*, February 1, 2006)

“Muslim culture” is treated by this contributor as one unified entity, which half conceals its brutal throat-cutting essence and its potential threat to various features of modernity and enlightenment. A leading Canadian paper printed a commentary by a right-wing American neoconservative who expressed himself in a similar way concerning the West and its responsibilities:

The key issue at stake in the battle over the 12 Danish cartoons of the Muslim prophet Muhammad is this: Will the West stand up for its customs and mores, including freedom of speech, or will Muslims impose their way of life on the West? (Daniel Pipes, Director of the Middle East Forum, *The Montreal Gazette*, February 2, 2006,¹⁵)

This quote implies not only that there is a general agreement in the West when it comes to “customs”, but also that “Muslims” share one “way of life”. This “Muslim way” seems to be associated with despotism, judging by the usage of “impose”, and thus may correspond to one of Said’s observations of Orientalism.

Understanding Democracy

A columnist in a U.S. paper – one of the few newspapers that published some of the actual cartoons – expresses some of the same sentiments: “The uproar in the Islamic world over Danish cartoons lampooning the prophet Muhammad reminds us that much of that world misunderstands what democracy means” (Rubin, *Philadelphia Inquirer*, February 5, 2006). If one does not understand democracy, the alternative is invariably despotism, but here one may observe a slight touch of moderation through the notion “*much of that world*”.

A French reporter argues that “If they [Muslims living in France] are that horrified by Western values of freedom and laïcité¹⁶, why doesn’t it occur to them that they could move to Saudi Arabia?” (Renaud Girard, *Le Figaro*, February 7, 2006). To this writer, protesting against the caricatures is equated with the endorsement of the rigors of the Saudi regime, a rather far-reaching and harsh conclusion.

In France the secular tradition and the emphasised laïcité – the secular – were an important part of the arguments defending the right and the necessity to print (confirming “Western democratic values”). This sometimes excluded the view that many of these values are appreciated also among Muslims albeit not always by their respective regimes:

The Muslims of Europe should learn to reconcile their religion that embraces the public sphere with our freedom of conscience, our freedom of speech, our freedom of the press, with our personal freedom, which is also theirs.
(Jean-Claude Souléry, *La Dépêche du Midi*, February 2, 2006,)

A presupposition in the above is that European Muslims have *not* yet learned to appreciate the freedoms of the western societies, this in spite of the fact that quite a number of them are refugees from oppressive regimes in the Middle East and beyond. In the excerpt the usage of pronouns is of particular significance; since the “our” and “theirs”; on one hand confirms the binary positioning – but on the other with an opening for a larger we – that could include them, provided “they” accept “our” values in the particular way that the said values were practiced in the historical moment of the caricatures.

Ambiguous Views

A different observation of “Muslims” (as rational and tolerant) is found in an editorial in another (major) French newspaper: “It is, however, reassuring to see that the majority of Muslims in France stay calm in spite of feeling outraged or shocked. This is a sign of Reason gaining ground” (Serge Faubert, *France Soir*, February 2, 2006). But this passage may also be seen in the light of the anthropologist’s Larsen’s initial reflections. These Muslims stayed quiet since they had been injected with one of the main ideals of the Enlightenment philosophers. This is the ideal of Reason, a feature they perhaps did not originally possess, and a feature that Buruma and Margalit claim is neglected or rejected by the Occidentals as they see them.

Several comments in a popular Indonesian newspaper demonstrated concern for the variety among Europeans, but did so from another point of view:

It is evident that in Europe there are some irresponsible groups of people who are small minded and not tolerant of other people’s feelings. At the very same time, it is also clear that inter-group cultural relations in Europe cannot easily be understood by those who live outside of Europe. [...] Therefore, it is totally unfair to accuse all citizens of Denmark, all citizens of Europe, all Western people as being responsible for these stupidities. (*Kompas*, February 8, 2006¹⁷)

This text also refers to Christian reactions against the caricatures, but adds that their reaction was made known in a “calm manner”. While advocating the same calmness the writer also shows a willingness to identify with another way of thinking of the caricatures, thus blurring the “East-West” or “West vs Islam” divide.

Islam the Irrational

According to Danish researchers (Hervik and Berg 2007) a substantial part of the Danish media professionals wrote from a frame of “freedom of speech as a Danish freedom” and saw the caricatures as a defence of this freedom of speech against rigid Islamic rules”. One Danish editor (Erik Meier Larsen) expressed himself as follows:

It was exactly this self-repression, diffuse fear about speaking of Islam that *Jyllands-Posten* wanted to throw light on with its invitation to draw Mohammed. The problem is especially connected to Islam because violence stemming from claimed offences of Islam has dominated the media picture in the last couple of years. (*B.T.*, March 3, 2006)

What is particularly interesting from the above excerpt is the way in which media feed each other to nurse self-fulfilling prophesies. The editor (in his medium) first accepts the version of the whole history behind the crisis from another medium (*Jyllands-Posten*) and subsequently reinforces the relation between violence, problems and Islam by referring to media (“the media picture”) – and their construction of reality in general – for support. The violence is projected as wrong, since it is based on “claimed offences”. This in its turn reinforces the image of the “irrational Other”, acting senselessly and thus creating problems. And again it is the offended part (here, broadly, Islam) which is to blame for the media representation.

“You in the West”...

But this image is not the only one. A Norwegian reporter was visiting Iran when the controversy broke out, and she reported from the street reactions from Teheran. One of her sources is quoted as follows:

You in the Western countries believe that we live in primitive huts and travel by camel. But we are just like you. We wish to speak, act and dress the way we want to. But the West and the USA are against us. That is why people are so angry at the West, says an Iranian intellectual. (*Dagbladet*, February 2, 2006)

This is an example of what happens only rarely: An “Oriental” intellectual is interviewed, thus the focus is taken away from street riots performed by a minority in most countries (and in Iran’s case, as the journalist revealed, the government in many cases directed the demonstrators). But the quote also shows how essentialization of the Western Other may take place: The West becomes one hostile entity, as “Islam” was constructed as one violent, threatening entity in the Danish papers. The text could also be read as a reporter allowing her source to challenge her readers by addressing their stereotypes (or what he thinks of as their stereotypes) of the Orientals.

The Indonesian *Republika*, more religious-leaning than the mainstream secular-leaning *Kompas*, published comments that were closer to a “clash of philosophies”¹⁸:

The argument of freedom of expression that is repeatedly used is merely a way of concealing Western inferiority. Apart from all their material achievements, the West has this religious complex: they hate their religion. Ironically, this feeling of hatred is generalized toward all religions. (February 11, 2006).

This opinion writer characterises the hate (or lack) of religion as a “mental disorder” (ibid.), and treats the West as an entity which has degenerated since the Renaissance, when their religious faith waned. It is not easy to associate this excerpt with writing from a position of “humiliation and defeat”. Rather, in several of the comments from countries where Islam is the dominant religion one finds echoes of this view which expresses a feeling of superiority based on the perceived vitality of Islam.

Western Orientalists ...

In an interview in the same newspaper, under the headline “The Orientalists Distort the Facts” (February 25, 2006), the head of the International Council of Muslim Women Scholars is quoted as saying that “western orientalist have since the 15th century distorted the facts of Islam and the Muslim world” (ibid.). “Orientalist” is here used as a synonym for a group of westerners, and demonstrates that Said’s notion not surprisingly passes as a household name in the press of the world’s largest country with Muslim majority.

Some of the headlines in various Egyptian newspapers openly challenged “the West”: “The West dictates to us how to react to the cartoon controversy” (*Akhbar Al-Alyoum*, February 11, 2006); “There is a Western conspiracy against the Muslims. Freedom does not guarantee the right of blasphemy” (ibid.); “The Religious East and Secular West can never meet”. (*Al-Wafid*, February 15, 2006)

Here, the category *West* seems to represent despotism (“dictates”), planned provocation (“conspiracy”) and unapproachability (“never meet”), and thus the “West” is beyond the reach of attempts at dialogue. However in Egypt one also finds critique of “both camps”: “The West thinks the anger is superficial and intentional and the Muslims think of the controversy as a conspiracy theory” (*Al-lewaa al-Aslami*, February 2, 2006). This headline may be seen as an attempt to stay aloof and analyse both sides and their misconceptions.

Conspiracy theories also flourished in Pakistani newspapers, especially in the first phase of reactions (before the comments were turned inwards against violent responses), as this editorial in an Urdu newspaper:

Every enlightened Jew and Christian scholar and journalist is well aware of Muslims’ sentiments and beliefs regarding the Prophet Mohammad (PBUH¹⁹). In this context the publication of the cartoons and their defence under the pretext of freedom of expression appears to be a *well thought out strategy*. (*Nawa-e-Waqt*, February 8, 2006)

This editorial, under the headline *The Clash of Civilizations Continues*, contains a definition of freedom of expression that does not allow for insult of religion. But such an argument might in turn be used to censor other critique of religion and religious interpretations. In the text we register certain traits that may refer to the traditional Occidentalist discourse: “freedom from morals, values and regulations” – i.e. the Western world imagined as a sinful amoral region.

The above quote may also be interpreted as a counter-discursive effort appealing to people of other beliefs to act according to their own enlightened positions as responsible people toward their fellow human beings, in this case the Muslims. This implies a view of a divided West, with, on one hand, enlightened people and on the other people who are less considerate, and may be seen as a piece of journalism in which the writer again speaks not from a position of humiliation and defeat, but rather a position of superiority – or at least equality.

This position of enlightenment is echoed in a Russian newspaper, accusing some European newspapers of being “rude”:

Yes, Russia is often called a barbarian country. In fact we have a problem with culture. But no one will be as rude as some European newspapers have been. In Russia we have our common historical experience of coexistence of different peoples and nationalities (*Argumenty i Fakty*, February 15, 2006).

The initial positioning in this excerpt is a defensive one (but not one of defeat), drawing from the experience of “being labelled”. From such a position the strategy of admitting “a problem” and then making others look “even worse” makes sense, combined with trying to teach the Other (Western Europeans) a lesson of sensibility and coexistence. One needs simultaneously to realise that these attitudes were expressed in an atmosphere of censorship, where an editor was arrested and a newspaper temporarily closed due to the caricature crisis (Bakoulin 2007).

After-thought and Reflexivity

In Egypt many newspapers, regardless of their affiliation, tended to provide reports that were more rational, rather than mobilizing readers’ fury (Saleh 2007). Quite a few of the Egyptian headlines are rather reconciliatory in their expressions, for example when a religious Egyptian newspaper thoughtfully asks: “How can Muslims learn from the lesson and develop a channel with the rest?” (*Al-lewaa al-Aslami*, February 23, 2006). The “rest” is here used as a metaphor for the non-Muslim world, and thereby challenges the traditional “West and Rest” expression.

When riots occurred, the attention turned inwards: “Current Turmoil and the Means to React; Failure of Current Islamic Discourse” (*Al-lewaa al-Aslami*, March 3, 2006). Another headline in the same paper calls for an end to the “misunderstanding” between the two sides “through conferences and seminars”. Also in Pakistan, more reflexive positions occurred, more often as some of the demonstrations turned violent²⁰.

The largest English language daily in Pakistan was concerned about the image of the Muslim moderates, and feared that they would lose ground to the more extreme movements:

Governments in Muslim countries seeking to sponsor or participate in the anti-blasphemy demonstration should be careful: in their effort to take the sting out of the fundamentalists' frenzy or to prove themselves more Muslim than the latter, they might only be weakening their own position. (*Dawn*, February 16, 2006, editorial)

Here, neither "Islam" nor "Muslims" is a simple entity; there is dialogue and political rivalry, at times open fighting between political forces, who to a greater or lesser degree will use religion for political purposes.

Director General of the Pakistani Human Rights Commission in Pakistan, I. A. Rehman, made a balanced attempt to analyse the controversy in its aftermath by writing that it was "one of those exceptional cases, when something can be said for all the parties involved and much more can be said against them". Furthermore he highlighted the non-relation between religion and terrorism:

Whatever the provocation, he [one cartoonist] stumbled into a grave error when he apparently tried to trace the roots of terrorism in the Islamic belief. Muslims have only recently joined the roll of terrorists. Those senior to them belonged to other religious denominations, while some claimed to be non-believers. Their actions were not attributed to the founders of their faiths. The singling out of Muslim faith for the authorship of terrorism amounted to a dangerous provocation. (*Newsline*, March, 2006)

This is one of several Pakistani comments referring to "development", but this time it was the development of terrorism. While more often the "Orient" is represented as undeveloped and in need of mimicking the West and its positive example, here is a case in which the West is perceived to have been in the forefront, playing a negative role that made a bad impact on its Eastern neighbours.

From the coverage in Egypt and Pakistan it seems as if a more reconciliatory mood grew as the process wore on. The violent demonstrations, the deaths and the destruction made the media more reflexive, as one headline in the Egyptian socialist paper put it: "We [...] helped to frame ourselves as terrorist groups". (*Al-ahaly*, February 15, 2006)

Another call for calm and reconciliation came from Indonesia, in a story, in which an Islamic scholar

[...] asked Islamic communities to give a calm and wise response to the issue of the Mohammad cartoons. 'We should be aware that this can become a hot issue', he said, 'that can be utilized to damage the relationship between religions'. (*Kompas*, February 2, 2006)

The specific "we" still remains though. But this must be seen as part of the simplification process occurring in most media representation, not necessarily a particular case for this controversy, although broad categories may have a different impact in a conflict-laden context.

The Other as Unpredictable

Journalism researcher Elfriede Fürsich asks how the Other is constructed “if the ‘We’ becomes an unpredictable category”. Drawing on studies of television travel journalism, distributed through global networks (Fürsich 2002: 60) she suggests that an unstable relationship between location of production and location of reception may allow for new experiments of representation.

Fürsich mentions a “Lonely Planet” programme from Namibia, where the “remotely located” chief is allowed to express the following: “You are coming from very far for making a lot of money with this film”, thus breaking “the anthropological narrative that positioned this tribe [...] as an uncivilized and less intelligent Other” (Fürsich 2002: 75).

Since the “stability” of the institutional frame (in this case the large television networks based in the U.S or the UK) in no way matches the instability of the constantly travelling reporter, I think several constraints may work in the opposite direction, but one sympathises with Fürsich’s envisioning of a less distinct western ‘We’, made possible by reporters inviting the Other to surprise the viewers by not behaving according to their expectations.

The above mentioned Iranian intellectual challenging the Norwegian reporter with his “You in the Western countries...” may be seen as a related incident. Such challenges to the “we’s” of the media world and beyond may sometimes be analysed as attempts to break loose from a tradition of polarized representation – or from a tradition where the Western view of the “distant Other” is rarely criticised.

In this global study we find several such attempts challenging both Orientalist and Occidental representations. From the various country reports we learn that some diasporic Muslims took part in the debate (to varying degrees) and that their views represented a wide range of positions, from defending the publication of the caricatures to expressing their disgust. In this way, the simple notions of “Muslim” or “Islamic world” were undermined. The same holds for notions like “The West” and “Europe”, since in the countries included under these umbrellas revealed a variety of printing practices as well as attitudes; these varied from recognising the rifts in the Muslim countries to treating Muslims as a simple all-inclusive category, presupposing a western-exclusively shared understanding of “our values” as opposed to “theirs”.

The editorials and comments produced in the Muslim countries did not always speak from “a position of defeat and humiliation”; rather, some would try to enlighten their European colleagues by pointing to the increasingly mixed character of European societies. In the countries where Islam is the dominant religion (Egypt, Indonesia and Pakistan) there was also a variety. For example English language newspapers in Pakistan found space for European and North-American comments, also from the cultural editor of *Jyllands-Posten* Fleming Rose and Danish Prime Minister Anders Fogh Rasmussen. There is thus no reason to conclude that papers in Muslim countries in general were less open to views from other continents than were their Western counterparts, in spite of

greater censorship and/or restrictive laws. Calls for reconciliation and reflexivity, challenging heated polarization, were often present in the Muslim media covered by this survey, but the *news* coverage given to such approaches was much more limited (as elsewhere), and the visuals even less so, in the face of competition from the news dramas that emphasised the more vital events of “colourful” street rage.

Is the Clash Theory Reinforced?

Huntington wrote in his famous first essay that he did not advocate “the desirability of conflicts between civilizations” but aimed to “set forth descriptive hypotheses as to what the future may be like”, adding that if they are plausible “it is necessary to consider their implications for Western policy”. He argues that the following factors have increased the conflict between Islam and the West in the late twentieth century. First, Muslim population growth, by generating “large numbers of unemployed and disaffected young people who become recruits to Islamist causes, exerts pressure on neighboring societies, and migrate to the West” (Huntington 1996: 211). His second factor was the existence of an Islamic resurgence and newly gained confidence among Muslims regarding their civilization. Third: “The West’s simultaneous efforts to universalize its values and institutions, to maintain its military and economic superiority and to intervene in conflicts in the Muslim world” (Huntington 1993: 19). Fourth: the collapse of communism led to an acceleration of the perceived threat between the two. According to Huntington, the fifth factor was that:

[...] the increased contact between and intermingling of Muslims and Westerners stimulates in each a new sense of their own identity and how it differs from that of the other” [...] Within both Muslim and Christian societies, tolerance for the other declined sharply in the 1980s and 1990s (ibid.).

The presupposition is here that increased contact generates less tolerance for the other; a highly contentious finding in the field of research on racism and intolerance. Huntington’s view also disregards the way in which people who interact may discover likeness, not only difference – and that living in one society also may generate more similarity. On the other hand, both poverty and oppression is being used by intolerant religious and political leaders to enhance difference.

In instances where a dialogue was created between Muslims and non-Muslims about the impact of the caricatures, an awareness of *both difference and likeness* has occurred. Similarly there is a sense that liberal pragmatism²¹ does not have to mean adopting a cowardly position, an accusation frequently made by commentators in some Western countries. If it did, Huntington himself might be included among those so accused. In a recent interview in a Danish version of his most renowned book, Samuel Huntington was asked about his

view on the (by then fresh) cartoon crisis. He said that he did not look at the “Mohammad-crisis as a particularly big issue” (Redington 2006: 480). He thinks the editors of *Jyllands-Posten* had not foreseen the attention the caricatures would create, but feels that the alleged aim of the publishers (to draw attention and show that one can print anything in a free country) is understandable and right. “But maybe it was not wise to do it” (ibid. 2006: 481). He parallels the situation with a scenario in which one in the U.S. – with its growing population tracing their roots to South America, might publish caricatures of Simon Bolivar. “It would have unleashed reactions. In spite of that one should be ready to criticise Simon Bolivar, but only in an intellectually enriching way” (op.cit.: 483). This does not imply that Huntington has changed his point of view drastically; rather it indicates that he toes the line of U.S. foreign policy makers, who would largely agree with him when it comes to wise decisions concerning the caricatures.

On the other hand, the paralleling of Latin America and the Islamic world when it comes to considerations for the *other* may – despite his ideologically binary considerations about the divisions in the contemporary world – indicate a willingness from Huntington’s side to *avoid* situations (provocations) where clash-like confrontations are brewing.

Dialogue? Further Confrontation?

The caricature controversy was a nationally initiated representation issue that turned global. In a best case scenario, handled through fruitful exchanges and dialogue, this issue may in the long run serve as a bridge between various interpretations. If so, it may enhance reflexivity in communities of very different political and religious traditions and serve as an opening up for the ability to see the world from elsewhere, from a location far away from one’s own. It may also deepen the understanding of how the world has become more “in your face”, more intertwined media-wise and of how our increasingly diasporic societies function and vary.

On the other hand, several experiences point in the opposite direction. The Orientalist attitude toward the Oriental *other* (as irrational and irresponsible) may have been reinforced in Western societies due to the caricature controversy, since the news coverage of the Muslim reaction often concentrated on ravaging crowds setting fire to embassies or burning effigies of the Danish Prime Minister. Distrust towards “Europe” may also have been helped by essentialist representations of “western” provocation, insensitivity and lack of responsibility.

In “Culture and Imperialism” Edward Said wrote that

ever since the demise of the Soviet Union there has been a rush by some scholars and journalists [...] to find in an Orientalized Islam a new empire of evil. [...] Both the electronic and print media have been awash with demeaning stereotypes that lump together Islam and terrorism or Arabs and violence, or the Orient and tyranny. (Said 1994: 346)

Edward Said did not live to see the caricatures that originated in *Jyllands-Posten*. It is both too early to tell and indeed difficult to measure the consequences of the Caricature Controversy in terms of public opinion in various countries. But unlike ten or twenty years ago, the notion of Orientalism (in Said's critical sense) is now much better known in mainstream European media. This hopefully suggests a deeper journalistic consciousness when it comes to the dilemmas involved in representing the Other. Occidentalism for its part still remains less defined, but will probably, as several scholars indicate, be an important trait in future discourses on representation.

The cartoon issue – as was shown by various incidents in 2008 – is far from over, and has forced unnecessary conflicts and led to tragedies in many nations. Simultaneously it has created a greater awareness of the global reach of social relations and the transnational character of media events involving minorities, religion and cultures. Moreover, the debates on freedom of expression across the world may have left some rulers less satisfied than the people they pretend to serve.

Notes

1. No doubt this expression was used by commentators who know the phrase but not the full content of Huntington's work. After Huntington's initial publications (1993, 1996), other works have been published: *Clash of Definitions* (Said); *The Clash of Fundamentalisms* (Ali); *The Clash of Barbarianisms* (Achcar).
2. The phenomena (as representations) are both old, but in the intellectual debates, Occidentalism is more recent.
3. Both notions (cartoon and caricature) were used during the controversy, and I prefer also to use both.
4. In this report, the press coverage of the cartoon crisis in 14 different countries was examined.
5. I am indebted especially to Ass. Prof. Ade Armando for providing essential excerpts from two major newspapers in Indonesia.
6. This is not made explicit by Larsen, but rather considered relevant by the current author. Larsen's text was published in Norwegian. This and other excerpts published in languages other than English, are translated by the author of this chapter.
7. Specifically, a drawing of the Prophet's head with a turban containing a bomb; signed by K.W. one of the regular cartoonists of *Jyllands-Posten*.
8. A certain knowledge of the Orientalism critique is here taken for granted. For critical discussion, see Berg 1998, Eide 2002.
9. Buruma and Margalit emphasise this with 2 historical examples, German romanticists' pre-industrial nostalgia counterposed against modernity.
10. White Anglo-Saxon Protestant (male).
11. Diaspora here refers to minority groups with links to other minority groups by way of the notion of a shared homeland to which they still relate in a transnational way; or it may be seen as an imaginary homeland, as in the case of a strongly shared religion (the *ummah*).
12. This work, although drawing on other scholars, is written in a more journalistic way, as long essays, and the work does not refer to previous scholarly work on the theoretical concept of Occidentalism.
13. The subtitle of Buruma and Margalit's "Occidentalism" is "As short history of anti-westernism".

14. The background is much more complicated, this is the official version stated by *Jyllands-Postens* editors. For further reading, see Chapter 4.
15. Pipes is also the founder of Campus Watch, an organization and website which exposes and publicizes what it claims is anti-U.S. and anti-Israel bias on campus. Pipes and the organization were criticised in 2002 of attacking academic freedom by publishing a list of academics critical of Israel and U.S. foreign policy.
16. This French expression is a synonym for separation of state and religion and stems from the Greek *laïkòs*: of the people, the non-religious, the secular or the laity.
17. The citations from the Indonesian newspapers *Kompas* and *Republika* have been provided and translated from the Bahasa language by Ass. Prof. Ade Armando, of the Indonesian University, Java.
18. The references from Indonesia are, as stated above, based on material from the two papers, provided and translated by Ass. Prof. Ade Armando.
19. PBUH: Peace Be Upon Him, an expression often voiced among Muslims when talking about their Prophet.
20. Five people were killed in Pakistan during the controversy, the same number in Afghanistan, 11 in Libya and more than one hundred in Nigeria. But the demonstrations may well have had several roots.
21. Here meaning defending the right to publish caricatures, but refraining from doing so due to sensitivity.

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Chapter 10

The Bubble World of Polarization

Failing to Realize the Blind Spots in the Cartoon Controversy

Ibrahim Saleh

In a world of wrenching change, the Danish cartoon affair has widened a growing fissure between Islam and the West. For many Muslims it has become a part of the discourse where "war on terror" becomes "war on Islam." Such connections bring up cultural memories of colonization and the Crusaders, when Western invaders ridiculed the Prophet Mohammed as an impious.

The publication of satirical cartoons led to violence, arrests, inter-governmental tensions, and debates about the scope of free speech and the place of Muslims in the West. What seemingly started as a local difficulty about community integration in Denmark, following the publication of the controversial cartoons, has been later escalated into a worldwide chasm. It would be naive to suggest that the Western media did not know what they were getting themselves into, especially since Mohammed is a man, whose influence covers over 1.3 billion people in the world today.

According to the Muslims, any image of Mohammed is blasphemous, while some Westerners perceive its publication as a core right of free speech to depict anything. A number of governments, organizations, and individuals have issued statements defining their stance on the protests or cartoons. Such dilemma raise two main questions: "Why do westerners still fail to realize the blind spots in the controversy?" and "Who hates who in this media hostility?"

Free speech protects the rational mind: it is the freedom to think, to reach conclusions and express one's views without fear of coercion of any kind. And it must include the right to express unpopular and offensive views, including outright criticism of religion. If intimidation and threats are allowed to compel writers, cartoonists, thinkers and institutions of learning into self-censorship, the right to free speech is lost. If Muslims are allowed to pressure critics of Islam into silence, critics of religion will be next. And then everyone else. (Brook 2006)

The Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC), with a membership of 56 Muslim nations, protested to the Danish government. And the most respected authority in the Sunni Muslim world, Mohammed Sayed Tantawi, Grand Sheikh of Al-Azhar University in Cairo, declared that the "Al-Azhar protested against

these anti-Prophet cartoons with the UN's concerned committees and human rights groups around the world." (Qureshi 2006)

The Muslim Protests

The furor over the Prophet Mohammed drawings is a small part of an expanding divide between Islam and the West, or what international leaders such as Archbishop Desmond Tutu described as the "symptom of a more serious disease" (Smith 2006). In Arab/Muslim media many perceived the cartoon controversy as the newest example of cultural confrontation between the Western world and Islam, between the belief that religion should not set any barriers on that sort of expression on one hand (from many media in the West), and the belief that Muslims should not be insulted on the other hand.

Nevertheless, the cartoon imbroglio has given ammunition to the entrenched forces for censorship within the Muslim world, namely authoritarian regimes and their Islamic fundamentalist opposition, both would prefer to silence their critics though the evincing outcry over the Danish cartoons. The authoritarian regimes diverted the attention from their own political and military failures and bolstered their religious credentials against the Islamists who sought to unseat them.

Egypt perceived the insult as a wrong answer to solve cultural differences and accordingly Egyptian officials withdrew from a dialogue they had been conducting with their Danish counterparts about human rights and discrimination. Thousands of Muslims protested in Copenhagen in November 2005 and this began the great cartoon debate. Two cartoonists fearing for their lives went into hiding and the Pakistani Jamaat-e-Islami party offered large amounts of money to anyone who killed the cartoonists. (Spencer 2005)

Malaysia's Prime Minister Abdullah Badawi, described the publication as the latest sign of a deepening gulf between the West and Islam. "The demonization of Islam and the vilification of Muslims, there is no denying, is widespread within mainstream Western society", he added: "The West should treat Islam the way it wants Islam to treat the West and vice-versa. They should accept one another as equals." But he warned that Muslims should also refrain from "sweeping denunciation of Christians, Jews and the West." (Krishnan 2006)

The non-Arab/Muslim public and media did not understand the sudden escalation of anger in the Muslim world over the offensive cartoons, which were republished in Norway and subsequently in other European countries. Waves of agitation for boycotting Danish products gradually grew across the Arab world, resulting in negative diplomatic ramifications. For example, Afghanistan's President, Hamid Karzai called the printing of the images a mistake, and hoped that this would lead to the media being more responsible and respectful in the future, and Bahrain's parliament demanded an apology from Denmark. (Habib 2006)

Libya closed its embassy in Copenhagen in protest and threatened to take "unspecific economic measures" against Denmark. The Kingdom of Saudi

Arabia called its ambassador to Denmark home, while religious leaders urged boycotting of Danish products. The boycott was later then realized in several other Gulf countries, including Yemen and Iran. Mobile phone messages calling for a boycott listed Danish and Norwegian products. Meanwhile, a spate of protests erupted on the West Bank; members of Fatah's Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades carried out a major protest, with demonstrators burning Danish flags and calling on Palestinian authorities to cut diplomatic ties with Denmark. They threatened Danes to leave immediately (BBC News 2006).

This marginalization of reality explains the strong wave of criticism that slammed what were seen in the Muslim/Arab world as double standards by the EU for keeping silent about the cartoons, while insisting on enforcing economic sanctions against countries that publish anti-Semitic material.

Surprisingly, the global media and politics all over the world have always dealt with issues with a double standards for example, Arabs are not considered as semites.¹ What is meant here is that being anti-semitic includes many forms – slurs, violence, economic and political sanctions, standards of behavior, and studied ignorance and indifference to facts. (Levy 2006)

In that context, the laws criminalizing Holocaust denial or minimization were adopted well into the 1990s in France, Switzerland, Belgium, Spain, and other European countries (and several countries outside Europe). France's 1972 Holocaust denial law was amended, by the 1990 law, to extend sanctions to denial of other crimes against humanity and points of view deemed racist. British legislation against incitement of racial hatred was expanded in 1986 and was extended again in February 2006, the latter time to criminalize intentionally "stirring up hatred against persons on religious grounds". This is spreading to the European Union level, where a stream of rules now prohibits the broadcast, including online, of any program or ad that incites "hatred based on sex, racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation" or – crucially – is "offensive to religious or political beliefs". In May 2005, *Le Monde*, France's premier center-left newspaper, was found guilty of defaming Jews in a 2002 editorial that criticized Israeli policies while referring to Israel as "a nation of refugees". (Alexander 2006)

The appeals court found that such juxtapositions made Israelis synonymous with Jews, so criticism of the former constituted incitement of hatred against the latter. After it published a series of controversial cartoons of Mohammed, the Danish newspaper *Jyllands-Posten* was formally investigated to determine whether the cartoons constituted prohibited racist or blasphemous speech.

However, the Muslim reactions were mixed. A host of organizations, including the outlawed Muslim Brotherhood, the Federation of Arab Journalists, the International Union of Muslim Clergy, the Islamic Conference Organization, the Arab League, and the Egyptian Parliament, all joined the fray, issuing statements condemning the cartoons. This radical camp urged the Danish government to make a more formal apology and acknowledge that freedom of expression does not mean people are free to insult prophets. (Saleh 2007b)

In this context, an economic boycott was advocated by some Muslim groups to deliver the message that Muslims were still ready to take action because the Danish media continued to show disrespect. However, the majority of the moderate Muslims believed, like the prominent Islamic scholar, Abdel-Sabour Shahine, that the Islamic world should show more tolerance by promoting dialogue with the West and educating them about Islam. He said, in *Al-Abram Weekly* (February 2-8, 2006): "The Quran ordains Muslims to engage in peaceful dialogue and use a more logical approach with those of different creeds".

A Diverse Muslim World

This chapter attempts to explain the controversy over the publication of the Danish cartoons in the light of the current global drift of skepticism and pessimism about Islam. One important reality is the blind spot about the heterogeneity of the Muslim fabrics and the complete polarized coverage of western media in framing this controversy. For example, the Jordanian journalist Jihād Al-Masani wrote: "What brings more prejudice against Islam are the caricatures, pictures of a hostage-taker slashing the throat of his victim in front of the cameras, or a suicide bomber who blows himself up during a wedding ceremony?" (Slackman and Fattah 2006).

A quote in the international edition for the *New York Times*, by Muhammad al-Asad, condemned the cartoons but also lamented the way many Muslims reacted. "Muslims had an opportunity to educate the world about the merits of the Prophet Muhammad and the peacefulness of the religion he had come with," Mr. Asadi wrote. He added, "Muslims know how to lose, better than how to lose, opportunities". (Slackman and Fattah 2006)

The heated emotions, the violence surrounding protests and the arrests have sent a chill through people, mostly writers, who want to express ideas contrary to the prevailing sentiment. It has threatened those who contend that Islamic groups have manipulated the public to show their strength, and that governments have used the cartoons to establish their religious credentials.

More than 11 journalists in five countries faced prosecution for printing some of the cartoons. Their cases illustrate another side of this conflict, the intra-Muslim side, in what has typically been defined as a struggle between Islam and the West. (Slackman and Fattah 2006)

Both Arab and Muslims in general got involved in a game between two sides, the extremists and the governments in the middle of a tidal wave, which faces 1.3 billion Muslims. Nevertheless, it has magnified a fault-line running through the Middle East, between those who want to engage their communities in a direct, introspective dialogue and those who focus on outside enemies. Besides, it has also underscored a political struggle involving emerging Islamic movements, like Hamas in Gaza and the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt, and Arab governments unsure of how to contain them.

There are intervening questions related to the western and Muslim media unanswered: Why are liberals on both sides silent?, How can moderate journalists write? Who is going to protect them? Who is going to publish the Muslim moderate voice in the first place? With the current media hostile effects in the current global polarized media that is overwhelmed with spin doctors, the list of taboos has been increasing daily all over the world. You should not write about religion. You should not write about politics. Then what is left?

While the cartoons have infuriated Muslims, the regional dynamics underlying the conflict have been evolving for decades, during which leaders have tried to stall the rise of Islamic political appeal by trying to establish themselves as guardians of the faith. It is logical to deduce that even the western governments have resorted to the very practices that helped the rise of Islamic political forces in the first place. They have placated the more extreme voices while arresting and silencing more moderate ones.

The chapter suggests two overlapping factors in the nature of the coverage of the controversy. The first is the highly selective representation of events in the news, influenced by the ideological structure of the present news media, emphasizing conflict and polarization. The second factor is related to the Western-based interpretation of Muslims. Those outside Islam tend to make sweeping generalizations about Muslims in Arab/Muslim countries and Muslims who are either immigrants or have been born in non-Muslim countries. Yet Muslims represent a wide variety of beliefs and ethnicities, ranging from Albanians, Afghans, and Algerians to the West. Between these two ends of the spectrum are Arabs, Bengalis, Bosnians, Caribbeans, Chinese, Indians, Indonesians, Iranians, Lebanese, Pakistanis, Palestinians, Senegalese, Sudanese, Somalis and Turks. Such diversity is not only evident in the national origins but also in the various schools of Islam that historically fragmented the communities.

In the Arab/Muslim world, the controversy had a three-fold background. First, the public have conflicting loyalties to the state and to Islam. Second, the mix of fundamentalism and secularism among different social strata potentially may stimulate destabilizing the social texture of Muslim societies. Third, the diffusion of political Islam in the Arab/Muslim world and its alleged links with *Al-Qaeda* and the banned Muslim-brotherhood group created an acute moral panic.

This chapter seeks to map the real setting, especially that the western media in most cases are still blind to read events correctly and realize within a context of mutual understanding and respect the reasons behind the controversy. Given the teaching of Islam, which promotes tolerance of all religions and cultures, how did local media cover this controversy? Finally, and most importantly, was it a matter of freedom of expression or religious intolerance?

Theoretical Perspectives: Three Inspirations

Revisiting the coverage of the caricature in some Muslim countries has here been informed by a combination of three theoretical approaches: news fram-

ing, the muted group theory, and the self-discrepancy theory, in my analysis, I concentrate mainly on examples from Pakistan and Egypt.

The news framing theory (Entman, 1993) suggests that media and opinion leaders select certain frames to support particular ideologies, such as a disregard for Islam. The muted group theory (Kramarae, 1981) explores the experiences of subordinate groups who are marginalized by mainstream media. Self-discrepancy theory (Higgins 1989) argues that people are strongly motivated to maintain a sense of consistency among their beliefs and self-perceptions. When experience is somewhat less than we think we *can* achieve, we tend to feel sadness, dissatisfaction or even depression. When experience is less than what we feel we *should* achieve, we experience fear, worry and other anxieties.

In the news coverage of the cartoons, these three theoretical dimensions help us to understand the phenomenon of "group think". This phrase was coined in the 1970s by the American psychologist, Irving Janis, to describe a process by which a group can make bad or irrational decisions characterized by uncritical acceptance of a prevailing point of view (Janis 1972). In a group think situation, each group member attempts to conform or let the group know to what they believe to be the consensus of the group. This conformity may result in the group ultimately agreeing upon an action that each member might individually consider unwise.

Group think is a serious problem in Arab/Muslim society, including Egypt and Pakistan. It causes threats to turn the general public into believers and followers of rituals. Hence, it reduces the communication of the group with outsiders. News coverage influenced by group think may result in the eruption of mob reaction, where mob reaction tends to use force and violence to convince non-believers. Cohen describes this constructed "moral panic" in his book *Folk Devils and Moral Panics* (1972). Moral panics allow "the manufacture of news". In such processes certain groups are defined as a threat to societal values and interests by stereotypical representations in the mass media. Moral barricades are manned by editors, Muslim religious leaders, politicians and other "right-thinking" people.

Religion and Politics

The socio-political relation between Islam and the West provides a basis for a series of myths that are used by both the government and radical religious groups in mobilizing public responses to contemporary events.

Two such powerful myths are linked to the concepts of the Islamic State and the Secular State. The earlier identifies persistent underlying religious tension as a possible source of political conflict; the latter refers to an ever-present conspiracy by neo-liberals' constituents to separate the state and politics from religion. Thus the term "myth" here does not refer to a fabricated nature of the scenarios presented but highlights the importance of their content in legitimating political policy and in initiating social action.

Historically, there has been a conflicting relationship between the Orient and the Western cultures, due to the continuous attempts of the West to manipulate the Middle East. Undoubtedly, the West has played a part in stimulating further friction with its growing ethnocentrism (Hassan 1997)

Western media has intensified this disharmony by continuously representing Islam as a threat to western civilization, using images of oriental irrationality and fanatical masses (Lueg 1995). It has even been suggested by some western scholars that Islam is a role model of a culturally-defined racism (Hippler 1995). In this context, Islamophobia has been mobilized to support discriminatory practices.

While there is no space to provide a full historical background, a number of key historical features require appropriate attention. First, both Egypt and Pakistan are consolidated as independent states that can be characterized less in terms of a revolutionary overthrow of colonial rule than as a series of initiatives, unanticipated reversals and exigencies to which the political leadership responded in overwhelmingly pragmatic terms. Secondly, most of the historical time line reflected that the political arena in Egypt and in Pakistan, though different, does not reveal states which could survive as stable, independent democratic nations. As early as 1953, for example, Egyptian President Nasser got rid of Egypt's first president Mohammed Naguib when he suggested implementing notions of democracy and citizenship; and in the beginning of the 1980s, Sadat was assassinated because he confronted the fundamentalists. Pakistan experienced a similar scenario when Yaminur Ali Bhutto was deposed in 1977, and assassinated in 1979. Benazir Bhutto was assassinated in 2007, when she tried to implement democracy.

The Islamic Identity

In the pre-Islamic era, a person's social identity was derived solely from his membership in the tribe. Membership entailed taking part in all tribal activities, especially those involving the tribal cult. However, as Aslan (2006) notes, after the advent of Islam, the "Kharaijites" Shia't Ali emerged as a small faction that represented the first self-conscious attempts at defining a distinctive Muslim identity. They based their leadership on the most pious person in their community irrespective of the tribe, lineage and ancestry.

Islamic-Western history may be viewed in terms of changing power relations. The Islamic ascendancy includes the period from prophet Mohamed's exodus from Mecca to Medina (622) to the fall of Grenada and the expulsion of Muslims from Spain (1492). The Christian West realized Islam's potent presence on its doorstep in Europe at the time of Charlemagne (768-814), and thus a western counter-movement by a series of Christian crusaders emerged from the eleventh century into the Ottoman period. In 1683 the expansion of the last Moslem empire to Europe was stopped at Vienna.

Western ascendancy and the subsequent domination of the Islamic world emerged during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, marked with the industrial

revolution and technological and economic development. Islam has remained, in the eyes of the West as a strange culture (Saleh 2006). Arabs/Muslims themselves have perpetuated the belief that identity can be authentic only if its features spring from a particular environment and develop according to specific conditions. Many Arabs and Muslims tend to believe that preserved original identity can only exist within a cultural environment that is cut off from foreign influence, which explains many of the phobias related to globalization. (Saleh 2007a)

It is important to explain what the notion *Jihad* means for Muslims. It means "to strive" or "to struggle", and is considered a duty by most Muslims. *Jihad* appears frequently in the Quran and common usage as the idiomatic expression "striving in the way of God (*al-jihad fi sabil Allah*)". A person engaged in *jihad* is called *mujahid*, the plural is *mujabideen*. A minority among the Sunni scholars sometimes refer to this Islamic duty as the sixth pillar of Islam, though it occupies no such official status. *Jihad* is directed against the devil's inducements, aspects of one's own self, or against a visible enemy. The four major categories of *jihad* that are recognized are *Jihad* against one's own self (*Jihad al-Nafs*), *Jihad* of the tongue, *Jihad* of the hand, and *Jihad* of the sword. Within the Arab/Muslim world, territorial expansion has always been associated with religious proselytizing; each religion was the "religion of the sword", which Islamic jurisprudence *jihad* is usually used in reference to military combat. It is worth noting that the term of "holy war" did not originate from Islam, but from the Christian crusaders, who gave a purported theological legitimacy to what was in reality, a desire to control land and trade routes².

In the twentieth century, the Arab/Muslim media that has been directly and indirectly influenced by mainstream western media have contributed to the West's public ignorance of Islam. Weak Arab media and political patronage, in addition to economic stagnation, contributed to the existing hawkish climate of extremism. This climate helped to foster an ethnocentric discourse.

Globalization has in late modernity increased regional disparities within and between countries and has aroused fears among people from the Muslim world, who suffer from economic marginalization and, often as a result, dehumanization and degradation. These conditions have resulted in national chauvinism and religious revivalism. The influence of western culture has stimulated new evolving identities and enhanced disparities in income and changing life styles.

There is an obvious radical and explicit anti-Islamic presence in the western media, which adds to the continuous construction of villains for the western public to mock and hate. (Saleh 2007a)

Twofold Challenge

Currently, Islamic societies face a twofold challenge: external domination and internal decay. Muslims have had to admit that the western domination of the Islamic world became a reality only when the Islamic societies had disintegrated

and degenerated into corrupt and fragmented entities alienated from Islamic values of piety and justice. The responses to this dual challenge have been correspondingly twofold: external defense and internal reform. In contrast, the mainstream West perceives the independence, democracy and development in Islamic countries through the historical distortions, prejudices and contemporary ideological mystification.

The two modern ideologies of progress, liberalism and Marxism, have a strong secular bias. Thus, they are predisposed to view any religious manifestation with disdain. Muslims believe that the Quran is the word of God, but its interpretation is left to the "Ulama", or the learned, who have developed the science of "Kalam" (theology) and the "Sharia" (laws). The phrase "Islamic fundamentalism" is misunderstood, much as Christian fundamentalism is misunderstood to apply to those groups who follow the literal word of God. Hence, applying the same label for Taliban in Afghanistan, who endorse medieval practices, and the Welfare Party in Turkey, that came to power through parliamentary elections and carried out progressive practices, demonstrate Western ignorance.

Caricature Controversy in the Muslim Press

As protests against the cartoons turned violent in the Middle East on February 4, 2006, Danish and Norwegian embassies were torched in Syria, most protests in Pakistan, Egypt and Indonesia in the immediate aftermath of the controversy resulted in a peaceful resolution.

At the time, the NBC-news anchorman Tom Brokaw asked in the middle of the crisis, "A puzzling point for the people in the West is that when Islamic suicide bombers attack a Muslim mosque and kill Islamic women and children, there's no outrage in the rest of the Islamic world? But when cartoons are published, it just becomes another jihad against the United States and against Western nations (Brokaw 2006)

While Muslims across the world have rioted against countries whose newspapers have published cartoons of the Prophet Mohammed, there was no uproar when the same caricatures were prominently displayed in an Al-Fagr Newspaper in October 2005.

The Egyptian paper criticized the bad taste of the cartoons but it did not incite hatred protests. The timing and the motivation of the publication can be traced back to spin doctors of Muslim extremists in Europe and the so-called secular governments of the Middle East, who tried to stipulate violent responses to the cartoons as a politically motivated act. It is worth mentioning that despite the fact that many editors who tried to reprint the cartoons in the Middle East were arrested, the Egyptian editors went unharmed.

In contrast, newspapers in the Muslim Asian countries have been largely unified in their strong condemnations of European newspapers' decisions to publish the controversial cartoons that initially appeared in Denmark's *Jyllands-*

Picture 1. Mohammed Cartoon on Egypt's Al-Fagr newspaper cover in October 2005 (courtesy: Freedom for Egyptians)



Note: <http://www.wnd.com/redirect/r.asp?http://freedomforegyptians.blogspot.com/2006/02/cartoons-were-published-five-months.html>

Posten. At the same time, most of the newspapers have been equally intolerant of the violent protests that erupted in the aftermath of the publication of the cartoons, condemning these acts as an over reaction to a provocation that should have been regarded as an insignificant insult (Krishnan 2006)

Since the publishing of the caricatures in September 2005, Pakistan President Pervez Musharraf said that the controversy over editorial cartoons of the Islam's prophet, Mohammed, has united moderate and radical Muslims. In the meantime, thousands of Pakistanis protested, and there were several instances of violence, as the caricatures continue to fuel anti-western rage across the Muslim world (Sand 2006)

In Pakistan, more than 10,000 outraged protesters rallied outside the capital, Islamabad, shouting anti-western and anti-Jewish slogans. The Pakistani protesters were increasingly venting their anger at an ever-wider list of alleged villains, including Jews, Americans, and various European countries. And in several cases, the demonstrations also erupted into violent clashes with authorities.

In the northwestern city of Peshawar, police fired tear gas and used wooden clubs to disperse up to six-thousand angry protesters. As the Pakistan's Foreign Ministry spokeswoman, Tasneem Aslam, called for the United Nations to take a greater role in resolving the global dispute:

There is already a consensus on this issue among Muslim countries, while we believe in the freedom of expression, not a license to hurt the sensitivities of others. (Sand 2006)

In the Pakistani press, the initial condemnation of the cartoons was accompanied by a representation of the violent protests that had been witnessed in Pakistan and across the Middle East. But the first violent protests in Pakistan occurred on February 1, when students in Peshawar clashed with police and attacked public property and Western holdings. But Irfan Husain wrote in his February 11 column in Karachi-based *Dawn*.

Firstly, most people forget that the stricture against depicting Prophet Mohammed (PBUH) in an illustration applies only to Muslims. Secondly, the offending (and offensive) cartoons first appeared in September without provoking a reaction except for some mild protests. (*Dawn*, February 11, 2006)

By February 15, violent riots in Peshawar were another reminder of Pakistan's precarious state. An estimated 70,000 protesters took to the streets in the frontier city – the unofficial capital of Pakistan's radical Muslim movement. Peshawar is the gateway to the tribal region on the Afghan border, where the Taliban continues to operate with the support of the local population.

Aamer Ahmad Khan, the BBC's Karachi correspondent, said that most of the Pakistani media were reproachful of the decision of European newspapers to run the cartoon based on the narrow line between provocation and insult. However, the initial Pakistani response to the publication of cartoons in Denmark (both within the media and in the social sphere) was mild and measured.

Such situation could be explained as a result of Pakistan's stringent blasphemy laws which prevent any open discussion of such religious questions. As mentioned by Khan on a February 7 article, there were other cases of blas-

phemy instituted against teachers for trying to explain to their students that the Prophet's parents could not have been Muslims for the simple reason that they died before the advent of Islam.

In contrast, in Bangladesh where official responses to the controversy were strong the media were also critical of the violent protests across the Muslim World (Krishnan 2006). Indian newspapers joined their South Asian counterparts in their harsh condemnations of the publication of the cartoons as irresponsible journalism. The editorial of *The Hindu* stated on February 9: "At a time when Muslims across the world feel deeply offended by prejudiced stereotypes of Islam post-9/11, the cartoons have not just been insensitive, they have been downright provocative".

Most newspapers in Southeast Asia tried to strike a balance in their coverage by reflecting different political and religious colors, and criticizing any violent protests. Mainstream media were following a polarized approach in their criticism of Western media. For example, an editorial in the Singapore-based *Straits Times* (February 9) accused the western media of having a "cavalier attitude toward Islam, while an editorial in the *Jakarta Post* the day before also criticized publishing the cartoons as an attack on Islamic liberties.

Nevertheless, some journalists have completely defended the publication of cartoons in the name of freedom of expression and were unequivocal in their censuring of the Muslim world's reactions. The overwhelming response of Asia's media has been one of averting the middle-ground between freedom of expression and violent protests, reflecting an optimism that a solution to the escalating controversy might yet be reached.

Media coverage of the cartoon controversy in Egypt was rather different. For example, the opposition paper, *Al-Wafid*, had less coverage of the cartoon issue than the government-leaning *Rosa-Al-Youssef*. In general, the balanced frames of opinions and reports seem considerably higher in the government-controlled newspaper. However, there was a general trend among the different newspapers, regardless of their affiliation, to provide more rational reports than to attempt to mobilize readers. The Muslim weekly, *Al-Lewaa al-Aslami*, had the most balanced mix between rational and mobilizing reports (and also the largest number of items in each category). *Watani* had the second greatest number of pieces employing rational language, while *al-Destour* and *Akhbar Al-Youm* were third.

Al-Fagr, a private newspaper, took a civil stand against publishing the cartoons, though it had published one of them in the beginning of the controversy. However, it has always argued that violence confirms the misperceptions of Islam. Thus, it showed a balanced understanding of the communication problem surrounding the issue. Here are some of the headlines of *Al-Fagr*:

Mob reaction does not deal with the Muslim rights to respond to the western blasphemy but rather maximizes its negative impact.

(*Al-Fagr*, February 2, 2006)

Why does the West use cartoon for blasphemy instead of developing new bridges of cross cultural dialogue?

(*Al-Fagr*, March 13, 2006)

Al-Destour, private newspaper, had a more diversified reaction. Although its ownership is the same as of *Al-Fagr*, its take on the issue was less balanced and leaned more towards mobilizing readers. While taking issue with the violent reactions, it also questioned the effectiveness of more peaceful responses, and resorted to the language of cultural conflict.

Why do Muslims exaggerate in their reactions?

(*Al-Destour*, January 25, 2006)

Jeopardy of the freedom of press: who loses in this cartoon controversy?

(*Al-Destour*, February 22, 2006)

Al-abaly, a socialist partisan paper, also leaned towards more thematic approach, attempting to mobilize readers. It took a stance against the US, as could be expected. The paper also argued that the mob reaction and violent demonstrations were weakening Muslims' rights.

Strikes reflect a more hidden level of anger: Ain-Shams university students rally and have problems with the Egyptian police.

(*Al-abaly*, February 8, 2006)

Comic anger deepens the perception of Muslim terrorist's behavior.

(*Al-abaly*, February 15, 2006)

Akhbar Al-Alyoum, a government-owned newspaper, catered to a variety of opinions, but it, too, leaned toward a thematic approach with articles aimed toward mobilizing readers. Its reports emphasized the conflict between the West and Muslims and blamed the West for what it saw as double standards. But it also expressed concern about the need for better dialogue and mutual understanding.

There is a western conspiracy against the Muslims; Freedom does not guarantee the right of blasphemy.

(*Akhbar Al-Alyoum*, February 11, 2006)

A call for Respect and understanding; how can we stop the loop of labeling?

(*Akhbar Al-Alyoum*, February 25, 2006)

Watani, a religious newspaper published by the Coptic Orthodox Church, took a diversified approach that could be described as bold because it overcame the hyper-sensitivity of such a religious issue. Nevertheless, it was able

to touch upon very important interrelated aspects of the cartoons in a rather balanced way:

All people should unit against Wahabism or fundamentalism. It is a real challenge with regard to activating the means of coexistence between Muslims and Christians.

(*Watani*, January 29, 2006)

Muslim fundamentalists are the cause of this controversy and reaction has to be different.

(*Watani*, February 5, 2006)

Al-lewaa al-Aslami, a religious newspaper published by al-Azhar, took a more balanced approach overall and argued for communication that bridges religious difference. However, it also dealt with other issues, such as economic freedom, which is surprising, given its original religious role:

Religious integrity saves humanity from hatred and intolerance.

(*Al-lewaa al-Aslami*, January 26, 2006)

Current turmoil and problems in the world require a new current Islamic discourse.

(*Al-lewaa al-Aslami*, January 26, 2006)

Al-Wafid, the daily publication of the main opposition party in Egypt, is very liberal in its ideology. It was successful in dealing with the story in a rather objective and bold manner. *Al-Wafid* dealt with freedom issues but also wrote about religious issues in a fairly constructive way. It sought to raise awareness about different interpretations of religious traditions and teachings:

The role of western media in labeling Islam raises a question; when are we going to have a Muslim media that reflects the real Islam.

(*Al-Wafid*, January 20, 2006)

Why did not Muslims and Christians unite when there were other cases of blasphemy? There is a clear absence of accountability in Egyptian media.

(*Al-Wafid*, February 9, 2006)

Discussion and Conclusion

This chapter attempted to investigate news coverage of the cartoon controversy in the Muslim world. The intention, though, was not to prove anything, the reality is that most of the Western media still insists on clustering the Arabs and Muslims in one category. Indeed, there are occasional exceptions to the rule.

One can conclude with three main observations: First, there is a disproportional representation of the facts and exaggerating the implications of incidents such as ignoring moderate views in the Muslim world, by only focusing on the extreme ones. Besides, governments tend to support directly or indirectly the anti-western movements. Second, symbols and labels were often intentionally used to create images that identify "folk devils" with the western role in stigmatized behavior. Third, the news coverage reiterated "crisis" scenarios that were well-known by the public from past history, drawing from orientalism, neo-crusader movements and the conspiracy theories.

There are some clear implications of increasing religious fundamentalism. The cartoon controversy was not a cause but an effect or a sort of crystallization of a crisis that frames an intersection between politics and religion. Such a system breeds intellectual corruption when it systematically subordinates journalistic integrity to other considerations, such as money, politics, religion and fear.

Perhaps the real problem has been the lack of respect for other cultures and social norms demonstrated by some of the western media. Anyway, the reality of applying the theoretical ideals of Western freedom in a heterogeneous world is complex. Though, the escalation of the controversy suggests a much larger underlying problem for Muslims: the extent to which they cherish and support freedom. Typically moderate Muslims adhere to the approach of civility and integrity through peaceful relations with the West in a positive and respectful manner. The Prophet Mohammed (Peace Be Upon Him) once said, "He that is the most righteous amongst you is the one who practices patience in the face of anger".

Cartoon depicting the Prophet Mohammed with a bomb in his turban would be similar to putting Jesus in a pornographic movie holding the switch to a nuclear bomb. Both instances are examples of preposterous professional conduct. Nonetheless, neither of these provocations legitimate the killing of human beings.

During the controversy, some Muslims advocated global laws for religious practice. Human rights, however, are not interpreted as universal but cultural and dependent on faith. The research findings warn against this kind of advocacy because it violates and betrays the basic assumptions of tolerance, that others should live freely according to their beliefs. More importantly, the research highlights the danger of the press abandoning tolerance under certain circumstances in favor of a passive acceptance of intolerance.

The Muslim (Sunni) faith forbids drawing the prophet. But expecting one's religious rules to apply to all others, especially in a free society, is ill-judged and unfair. Expecting others to change or modify their behavior out of respect for yours, or anyone's faith is not democratic. As Martin Luther King Jr. noted, we don't communicate because we fear one another. At the same time, there is no excuse for anyone to offend others unless the other is practicing double standards by being intolerant to the tolerant.

Freedom of speech is a universally-accepted right, but we must carefully realize the fine line of distinction between free speech and hate speech. The cartoons can be seen as a form of hate speech, by stigmatizing all Muslims.

The question that remains unanswered is: "What was accomplished by printing the cartoons?" Some would argue that groups with particular interests for inciting violence wanted the Danish journalists to keep on publishing them so they could continue to mobilize the crowds, in other words seeing the caricatures as part of a larger conspiracy. To a degree, this is part of a broader issue of how to deal with cultural differences: by confrontation rather than by appeasement.

The potential for offense is not an argument against publication. Within the context of a pluralistic democracy, tolerance does not mean respect. It means "to endure", or "to put up with". Tolerance works against borderline theocracy, the legal imposition of the religious dogma of a vocal minority upon others. Hence, the direction of the news coverage of the controversy can be seen as a consequence of the growing influence of chauvinistic strains in the Arab/Muslim society, which seem to be tolerated by the government.

Having said so, Sunni Muslim fundamentalist leaders expressed anger over the Danish cartoons, but no comparable indignation over suicide bombings which attacked Shiite Muslim mosques during Ramadan in Iraq. In Pakistan blasphemy laws have been used by fundamentalists to attack Christians and Hindus. Indeed, the Muslim societies have paid a dear price for the militants in their midst.

Many of the liberal scholars within the Muslim world have had to flee to the West to avoid being silenced or killed. Fazlur Rahman, brilliant and deeply religious Pakistani scholar of Islam, had to flee his native land for the University of Chicago. Similarly, the Islamic studies scholar Nasr Abu Zayd fled Egypt for Islam, for the Netherlands. Naguib Mahfouz, recipient of the Nobel Prize for Literature, was stabbed in the neck in Cairo and barely survived; the Egyptian writer Iqbal Fuda was not so lucky as he was later assassinated by the fundamentalists.

Among some Muslims residing in Europe, the proposed solution is more censorship – that these cartoons and similar expressions should be banned as hate speech. By that logic, also Salafist diatribes against Shiites should be banned, as well as the writings of Maulana Abul Ala Maududi and his Jamaat-e-Islami, which were instrumental in persecuting the Ahmadiyas, a Muslim minority in Pakistan.

In contrast, the answer is not more censorship but rather a commitment to liberal democratic politics that uses such freedoms wisely and responsibly. Worse, these actors in Europe insist on handing Muslim radicals a platform from which to pose as defenders of the faith against an alleged Western assault on Islam. The loudest and most murderous forces have chosen to forget the spirit of the Quran, which opens with an invocation of God's mercy and compassion and which repeatedly urges believers to practice patience and kindness. There is something very ugly about the power of the radicals, their recourse to violence, their anti-intellectualism and their ability to trample on humanistic Islamic tradition.

During the caricature crisis it was right and proper for Muslims to be offended, to be hurt, to protest. But we should be wary of the authoritarian voices that claim to speak and act in the name of Islam. The answer is not more violence

and censorship, but rather peace, mercy and compassion as the essence of Islam favors peace and the "Grand Jihad" of self-discipline.

There are burning questions here that nobody really attempted to answer: "Why not accept these expressions of regret and move on? What is to be gained by the continuing violence and hysteria?", and "Who Hates Who in this Controversy?"

Notes

1. Semite is a person descended from Shem, a member speaking any of the semetic languages such as Arabic, Hebrew, Assyrians, or Phoenicians as mentioned in Webster New World Dictionary, 1980, (p.1295)
2. For these definitional issues, see for instance: *Merriam-Webster's Encyclopedia of World Religions*. Wendy Doniger (ed.) (1999) p. 571. See: *Medieval Islamic Civilization: An Encyclopedia*. Josef W. Meri (ed.) (2005) Routledge, p.419; John Esposito (2005), *Islam: The Straight Path*, p.93; Humphreys, Stephen (2005) *Between Memory and Desire*. University of California Press, p 174-176; Firestone, Rueven (1999) *Jihad: The Origin of Holy War in Islam*. Oxford University Press; "Djihād". Encyclopedia of Islam Online. Retrieved 2007,0

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Chapter 11

Pictures Travel, Discourses Do Not

Decontextualisation and Fragmentation in Global Media Communication

Oliver Hahn

The “staged” farce of the caricatures controversy, and its partly violent aftermath, reported and commented upon by different global media (Debatin 2006, 2007; Kunelius et al. 2007), is a textbook example of both the international mobility of pictures, and the immobility of their accompanying discourses. Often, this total abstraction from contexts is due to great geopolitical, geo-cultural, geo-religious, and geo-linguistic distance between different global media. They serve and use each other as – simple providers of pictures and (sometimes exclusive) visual materials. However, related original discourses and contexts (necessary for a better mutual understanding in global media communication) seldom reach those receiving media (and finally their respective audiences); the latter simply “quote” and re-broadcast pictures or reuse footage obtained from other media. At best, those media re-broadcasting pictures from other media mention the existence of another perspective, but they tend to do so without giving concrete and detailed information about it.

This chapter begins by considering (early) theoretical and empirical, fundamental research findings in the field of cultural anthropology regarding aspects of interpersonal intercultural communication in international comparison – a subject that is also applicable to media intercultural communication. The chapter goes on to look more closely at the problems of the polysemy and the iconic ambivalence of the “language” of pictures. It then discusses case examples of decontextualised and fragmented pictures – one of the three additional so-called non-cartoons as well as news photos – related to the caricatures controversy. The phenomenon of decontextualised and fragmented pictures that travel through media around the globe without their accompanying discourses is not only detected in the caricatures controversy, but can be also observed particularly in, but not limited to, the (post-) 9/11 media coverage in general. A case example of this is also provided. The chapter ends by drawing conclusions about this phenomenon – often a deficit – and its impact on global media communication.

Different Cultures, Contexts, and Communication Systems

In his (early) theoretically and empirically seminal research findings on aspects of interpersonal intercultural communication, cultural anthropologist Edward T. Hall¹ (1959, 1966, 1976, 1983) bequeathed a scientific conclusion; namely that culture is communication and communication is culture.² In the tradition of cultural relativism (not essentialism!), Hall states that cultures across the world tend to differ in their communication systems despite the fact that they are constantly in contact with each other. Even though the media and journalism always reflect typical patterns of interpersonal communication within a specific culture, Hall's findings from interpersonal intercultural research across the world are also applicable to intercultural communication in the media, especially when we engage in international comparative studies (Hahn 1997a, b; Schroeder 1993, 1994).

These findings stress the fact that any item of information, whether found in interpersonal or media organisational/institutional communication is culturally conditioned and coded. An information item is not unequivocal per se; it acquires meaning only within its cultural context. Thus, the same information item can be extremely different in meaning and its significance can vary from one cultural context to another. Different cultural contexts and communication systems lay down different sets of parameters within which their respective media operate. They do not operate within hermetically sealed cultural spaces but within their respective cultural contexts and with the communication systems of their respective target recipients. These findings also underline the fact that in an international context the interactions between, and sometimes the collision between different cultural contexts and communication systems (McLeod and Chaffee 1972; Maletzke 1981), can lead to intercultural frictions³ in interpersonal and media communication (Watzlawick, Beavin and Jackson 1967).

Often, and especially during the caricatures controversy, religion is incorrectly equated with culture. Both culture and religion acquire political connotations or are politicised or even equated with politics. This means that cultural and religious differences can be politically instrumentalised (see Saleh, Chapter 10, in this volume). In this context certain ideas about what is apparently "normal" in other cultures and religions can prevail, ignoring the fact that the meaning or sense-making and structures of visuals are inherent in a culture or religion and its framework system of viewers and readers. Thus, the construction, or even constructivism, of historical and social realities can lead to "misreadings" (Eco 1993 [1963]) of other cultures and religions.

In the processes of encoding and decoding information, according to Stuart Hall (1980), both, the encoder (or re-encoder) and the decoder negotiate the meaning of cultural signs: their mediated meaning is not immediately clear due to the polysemy of signs, but nonetheless it depends on the code symmetry shared by the participants in the communication process.

What should also be questioned is whether an original code actually exists; moreover, who is encoding and who is decoding the original, and how are

follow-up discourses conducted, and with what intention? Often the decoding in one culture is an interpretation of interests with a point of view that gives power to this culture. The *Jyllands-Posten's* caricatures and cartoons are empirical examples of this.

Intercultural frictions may result from inexact translation equivalents from one language to another or from one culture to another (Bassnett 1991; Koller 2001). Also, intercultural frictions result from communication interferences within political and cultural power relations in international relations (Bartholy 1992).

In this context one dilemma relates to the question of who or which collective cultural identity holds the political and cultural power of definition. So far, the West, due to its political and economic hegemony, has held the political and cultural power of definition; it has been able to dominate "imperialistically" the non-Western "hemisphere" leading to a dichotomisation of the world into two sharply different categories: civilisation (the West) versus barbarism (the non-Western rest) (Hall 1996; Said 1978, 1993).

Furthermore, all (media) communicators and journalists are members of at least one culture and native speakers of at least one natural verbal language, a fact that both influences their intellectual work and communication patterns permanently. As (media) communicators and journalists are unable to free themselves from their own cultural and linguistic baggage (Hall and Reed Hall 1990: xx-xxi; Kleinsteuber 1993: 322), the journalistic "objectivity" demanded from them can only be evaluated against the backdrop of their respective cultural context.

El-Nawawy and Iskandar (2002: 27, 54, 202) suggest that news values and selection criteria are conditioned by "contextual objectivity". They describe their perhaps somewhat controversial theory as follows:

The journalistic standard applied here required some form of *contextual objectivity*, because the medium should reflect all sides of any story while retaining the values, beliefs, and sentiments of the target audience. [...] This dual relationship underscores the conundrum of modern media. [...] It would seem that the theory of contextual objectivity – the necessity of television and media to present stories in a fashion that is both somewhat impartial yet sensitive to local sensibilities – is at work. [...] Although this appears to be an oxymoron, it is not. It expresses the inherent contradiction between attaining objectivity in news coverage and appealing to a specific audience.

The collision of different "contextual objectivities" or viewpoints, by representatives of different media or journalism cultures can also lead to intercultural frictions. A clear example was provided by the caricatures controversy. For instance, "whereas many European outlets joined in denouncing theocratic censorship and *France Soir* claimed the right to caricature not only the Prophet but also God, the majority of Arab news anchors referring to the controversy used phrases such as *al-nabi al-karim* (English: the dear Prophet) or added 'peace be upon him' after the Prophet's name" (Hahn 2007: 21).

Polysemy and Iconic Ambivalence of the “Language” of Pictures

The “language” of pictures is often assumed to be a universal instrument of international communication, which can overcome the boundaries of natural verbal languages and (national) cultures. In the era of global media communication the “language” of pictures evolves into a “visual culture” that is an “unspecific global culture” (Weinrich 1987: 1). In the sense that they comprise a semiotic system, pictures can be considered to be a “language”. However, the “language” of pictures is only similar (not equal!) to semiotic systems of natural verbal languages. In comparison to visual “languages”, which are always polysemic and ambivalent, verbal languages are more categorical and monosemic or unequivocal due both to their arbitrariness and to the fact that they have been conventionalised. An information item given in a visual “language” is more equivocal than one expressed in a verbal language. However, visual – especially graphic, photographic, cinematographic and televised – sequences can be described as “texts” with structures consisting of complex and polysemic/ambivalent signs (Metz 1968, 1971; Bentele and Hess-Lüttich 1985; Opl 1990; Prase 1997). These “texts” are able to communicate and illustrate sensibilities that cannot be displayed by natural verbal languages. But the advantages and disadvantages of the “language” of pictures are always and inevitably intertwined. A picture can be worth a thousand words, but a picture can also lie with more impact than (lying) words.⁴

The inevitable synchronous polysemy of the code of pictures (Goodman 1968) opens innovative perspectives, but it also sets boundaries for visual “language” as a universal instrument of international communication. This is the reason why Eco (1995 [1993]: 144), for instance, calls it, rather ironically, “the perfect language of images”. On the one hand, the same pictures can be interpreted and “read” differently by different recipients (not necessarily with different linguistic and cultural backgrounds, but also by those who share the same linguistic and cultural background). On the other hand, precisely because of this fact, the same pictures cannot function as a universal code. (Only conventionalised ideograms and pictograms can do so.) Pictures describe an immense number of attributes of the contents displayed in them. Thus, recipients can interpret them from different perspectives and can ascribe them different priorities. The type of visual “language” is always descriptive and iconic; the type of verbal language is always narrative in nature and explicatory. The “language” of pictures may communicate forms of the contents displayed in them, but it cannot communicate (a) abstract/creative contexts and relationships; (b) acts and plots; (c) morphologically-syntactically generated combinations; or (d) verbal *tempi* and *modi*, because all of these require (cultural) continuity inherent in natural verbal languages only.

Moreover, Worth (1975), for instance, states that “pictures can’t say ‘ain’t”’. This means that pictures can only express affirmations, but no negations of the contents displayed in them. (Again, only conventionalised ideograms and

pictograms can do so.) In this context, Mitchell (cited in Dikovitskaya 2001: 1)⁵ asks “what pictures ‘want’ in the sense of what they lack” and analyses “the idea that the picture lacks what it represents. It does not *have* what it *shows*; it offers a presence, and insists on an absence in the same gesture”.⁶ However, pictures can speak, but they are not able to say or not to say everything in a monosemic or unequivocal way. However the “language” of pictures is necessarily somewhat “parasitic” toward and dependent upon natural verbal languages; unless, that is, a visual code is not a substitutional form of a verbal code (Eco 1995 [1993]: 144-177).

Since every natural verbal language routes the perception of reality differently, every natural verbal language also influences the perception of images in a different way (Zimmer 1983). In order to decode an image an “interior verbalisation” (Sturm 1991: 120-122) is necessary on the part of the recipient. This, of course, depends on the natural verbal language in which the recipient thinks.

However, pictures can function as “*initiatory symbols*” (Eco 1995 [1993]: 154). They can cause a certain déjà-vu effect for recipients of different linguistic and cultural backgrounds and initiate a first, albeit imprecise understanding of the displayed contents. Despite their complexity and polysemy/ambivalence they can do so by referring to the displayed contents thanks to their (almost) internationally comprehensible iconic character.

Willemsen (1995: 89-90) states that for the media, especially the televisual medium, “images integrate into genres characterised by an iconography that is not different from that of a still life or a battle scene; with regard to their genre, images can be read as historical narration, allegory, or portrait – the message of those images are those images. They are tautologic”. It is particularly this tautology of the “language” of pictures that can lead to a common media “language” in global communication. Despite its iconic ambivalence, the “language” of pictures can be considered to be an essential “fermentation” of a common media “language”, and thus, an important catalyst in global communication (Hahn 1997a: 181-183).

In the caricatures controversy, global media have neglected their duty at least to mention the original discourses that accompanied the pictures. These original discourses, drawn from different cultural contexts, could help to avoid intercultural frictions or even a “war of images” (Haus der Kulturen der Welt 2006; Seeßlen and Metz 2002). Presenting visual information without its original accompanying discourses leads to different decoding by recipients who have different linguistic and cultural backgrounds. Even with its original accompanying discourses, that explain the discursive situations in which the images occurred, one would still find viewers making different “readings”, yet when there is no attempt to carry the contexts along with the images, then one can say that intercultural frictions are almost “pre-programmed”.⁷

Discussion of Case Examples

Several case examples of decontextualised and fragmented pictures can be detected in the caricatures controversy⁸ in particular and more generally in media coverage of (post-) 9/11 events.

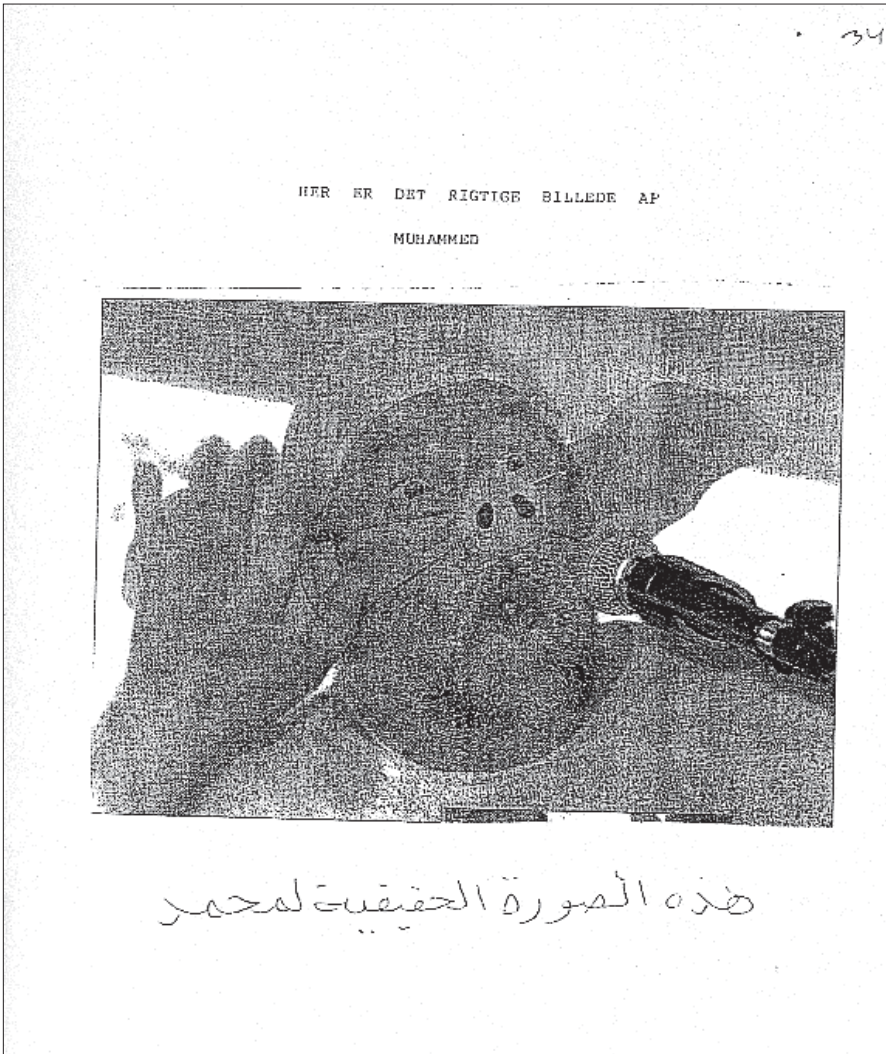
An Additional So-called Non-cartoon

The first example presented here is one of the three additional so-called non-cartoons which were not published in the original set of *Jyllands-Posten's* drawings. These three additional images were included by a group of Danish imams representing many Muslim organisations in their so-called Akkari-Laban dossier (named after the delegation spokesman Imam Akhmad Akkari and after Imam Ahmad Abu Laban, well known in Denmark). This dossier is a 43-page document full of its own inconsistencies. In a concerted action, the delegation of Danish imams set off on their travels to the Middle East in late 2005, where they met many influential Muslim religious and political leaders, as well as scholars, as they lobbied for support in the caricatures controversy. It was reported that this delegation of Danish imams had taken with it a compiled dossier to show to wider audiences in order to present evidence of the perceived Islamophobia under which they claimed Muslims in Denmark were living. The Danish imams' delegation said that the three additional images, which had already been taken out of their original contexts, had been sent anonymously to certain Muslims in Denmark who in turn had written letters of protest to the editor of *Jyllands-Posten*. Akkari emphasised that they had always admitted, while on their travels in the Middle East, that there was a difference between the three additional images and the original *Jyllands-Posten's* caricatures and cartoons. Furthermore, the authors of the dossier claimed to be in no position to give names of their sources or informants, nor of the origins, assumed intellectual parents nor distributors of the apocryphal three additional images. The dossier's three additional images were considered to be even more obscene and insulting than the original *Jyllands-Posten's* drawings. They include a picture that apparently shows the Prophet with a pig's face (p. 34); a photo, or photomontage, which shows a praying Muslim being raped by a dog (p. 35); and a cartoon which draws the Prophet as a demonical paedophile (p. 36) (Asser 2006; Musharbash and Reimann 2006; Reynolds 2006).

The particular item that rapidly gained international prominence was the pig's face picture. The pig's face picture was reportedly shown at the end of January 2006, in Gaza, where anti-caricatures rioters seized EU representations (Reynolds 2006). The possible circulation of the pig's face picture could well have had an effect on the violent escalation of the caricatures controversy. It is possible that some of the (violent) anti-caricatures rioters might not themselves have seen the original *Jyllands-Posten's* set of drawings, but had at least received media (meta-) coverage of the caricatures controversy. Hence, some of the (violent) anti-caricatures rioters might have jumped to incorrect conclusions

Picture 1.

Title [typewritten in Danish]: "Here is the real image of Mohammed"⁹ Caption [handwritten Arabic translation]



Ekstra Bladet, online.¹⁰

that the pig's face picture was part of the original *Jyllands-Posten*'s caricatures and cartoons, which it was definitely not. It appeared, however, in the web pages of another Danish newspaper, *Ekstra Bladet*.

This picture is a poor quality, black and white (grey) photocopy of an original colour wire-service news photo (slightly cropped). The original was obtained from AP, one of the global players among US news agencies. The original news photo shows a male contestant in a pig squealing contest; it

portrays a French man with a pig's ears and snout, a participant in the annual cult competition of Southern France's annual pig-squealing championships. The photo was taken in August 2005 in Trie-sur-Baise, a remote farming village, home to 1,100 people, in the foothills of the Pyrenees. This championship is considered one of France's "fêtes folles" or crazy festivals, that attracts many summer tourists (AP 2005). The story and picture by AP was published, among others, by MSNBC, on 15 August 2005, and it can still be retrieved from their online archive (<http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/8959820>), as the following screenshot shows.

Picture 2.

Caption: "Contender Jacques Barrot performs in the French Pig-Squealing Championships in Trie-sur-Baise's annual festival. Contestants suckle, oink, and even imitate mating"



Bob Edme/AP in MSNBC, online, August 15, 2005 (AP 2005).

News Photos

More re-contextualised examples can be found when one looks more closely at news photos related to the caricatures controversy.¹¹

One of these is a colour wire-service news photo by the globally operating French news agency AFP. It shows a man – apparently a Muslim religious leader – in front of the Danish embassy in Beirut, set on fire by anti-caricatures rioters.

This news photo was published, among other places, by the Finnish quality daily newspaper *Helsingin Sanomat* on 6 February 2006 in its international news section. The accompanying text suggests that the Muslim religious leader portrayed in the news photo took part in the burning of the Danish embassy in Beirut.

Picture 3.

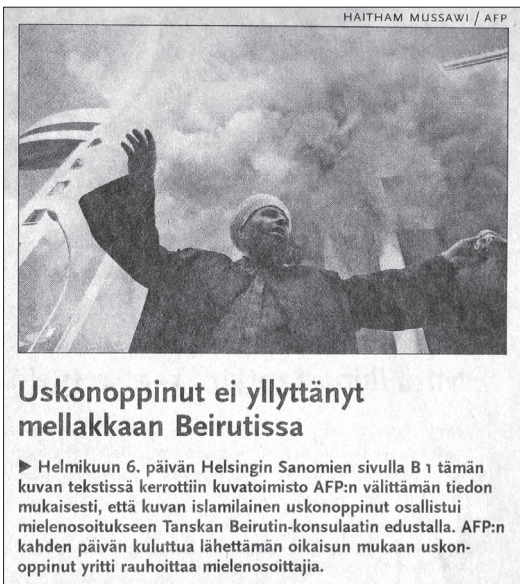


Title: "The anger of Muslims was directed towards the Danish embassy in Beirut". Caption: "A Muslim religious leader [literally: A Muslim preacher, or priest; sic!] participated in a riot in front of the burning Danish embassy in Beirut on Sunday"¹²

Haitham Mussawi/AFP in *Helsingin Sanomat*,
February 6, 2006, p. B 1.

On 9 February 2006, *Helsingin Sanomat*, again in its international news section, reprinted the same news photo along with a correction (published in a far smaller format than the original) which clarifies that the portrayed Muslim religious leader was acting diametrically opposite to what was ascribed to him three days earlier. He was not inciting anti-caricatures rioters, but rather trying to restrain them from attacking the Danish embassy in Beirut.

Picture 4.



Title: "The Muslim religious leader [literally: The religious scholar; sic] was not inciting the riot in Beirut"
Text: "This photo was published on February 6th in Helsingin Sanomat at page B 1. The photo was supplied by the news agency AFP with a caption telling the Muslim religious leader [literally: the Islamic religious scholar; sic] seen on the photo was participating in the riot in front of the Danish embassy in Beirut. According to a rectification sent by AFP two days later, the Muslim religious leader [literally: the religious scholar; sic] tried to calm down the rioters"¹³

Haitham Mussawi/AFP in *Helsingin Sanomat*,
February 9, 2006.

As in many other cases, the worm's eye view of this news photo is in itself a comment by the photographer – normally putting the motif in a superior position. In this special case, the meaning of the photographer's comment is ambiguous because it can be read in completely different and opposing ways: either the Muslim religious leader was commanding, dominating or controlling the rioters; or he was trying to calm them down in a pacifying gesture of protection. Be that as it may, this news photo had also travelled to other European media outlets where it obviously was not accompanied by its original and correct context. In Germany, for instance, two quality weekly (print) news magazines have published the photo in their respective online editions, *Spiegel Online* and *Stern*. In both cases, this news photo has been put in the context of "Muslim anti-caricatures rioters".

As the following screenshot shows, *Spiegel Online* has used this news photo as an illustration for an announcement of a TV talk show to be broadcast on 6 February 2006 on the private-commercial channel XXP.¹⁴

Picture 5.

Title: "Twelve Mohammed caricatures shock the world: the holy hatred" Lead text: "SPIEGEL THEMA: Monday, 6 February, 11:20 p.m. – 0:10 a.m., XXP Worldwide Muslims protest against the publication of the Mohammed caricatures. On XXP experts discuss the clash of civilisations, the respect for religious taboos and the right to freedom of opinion" Caption: "Burning Danish embassy (in Beirut): clash of civilisations"¹⁵

The screenshot shows the Spiegel Online website interface. At the top, there is a navigation bar with the 'SPIEGEL ONLINE' logo, a search bar, and links to 'NACHRICHTEN', 'VIDEO', 'ENGLISH', 'EINESTAGES', 'FORUM', 'ARCHIV', and 'ABO & SHOP'. Below this is a secondary navigation bar with 'Video | Fotostrecken | Interaktive Grafiken | SPIEGEL TV'. The main content area is titled 'Home > SPIEGEL TV > SPIEGEL THEMA' and includes links for 'Drucken | Senden | Leserbrief | Bookmark'. The article headline is 'ZWÖLF MOHAMMED-KARIKATUREN ERSCHÜTTERN DIE WELT' with a sub-headline 'Der heilige Hass'. The lead text reads: 'SPIEGEL THEMA: Montag, 06. Februar, 23.20 - 00.10 Uhr, XXP Weltweit protestieren Muslime gegen den Abdruck der Mohammed-Karikaturen. Bei XXP diskutieren Experten über den Zusammenprall der Kulturen, den Respekt vor religiösen Tabus und das Recht auf Meinungsfreiheit.' Below the text is a photo of a person in a crowd with the caption 'Brennende Botschaft Dänemarks (in Beirut): Zusammenprall der Kulturen'. To the right, there is a 'VIDEO ON DEMAND' section with a list of video topics and a 'SPIEGEL TV DIGITAL' section with a video player. At the bottom right, there is a 'SPIEGEL TV IN BILDERN' section with a list of image topics.

AFP (in Spiegel Online 2006).

Even more seriously, *Stern* has used this news photo as an illustration for a news story first published on its website on 11 February 2006, as the following screenshot displays.

Picture 6.

Title: "Caricatures controversy: Islam, quo vadis?" Lead text [beginning]: "Do people rampage due to spontaneous indignation about the Mohammed caricatures or do they do so because they have been incited by agitational regimes?"¹⁶

The screenshot shows the Stern website interface. The main headline is "Karikaturen-Streit Quo vadis Islam?". Below the headline is a large black and white photograph of a man in a headscarf, identified as Haitham Mussawi/AFP. To the right of the photo is a text block with a bold headline: "Wüten die Menschen aus spontaner Empörung über die Mohammed-Karikaturen oder weil sie angestachelt wurden von hetzerischen Regimen? Gilt das islamische Bilderverbot auch für Andersgläubige? Hinweise von stern-Autor Christoph Reuter." Below this is a paragraph of text starting with "Was nun, fragt man sich angesichts einer streckenweise immer mehr ins Absurde abgleitenden Debatte um die zwölf Karikaturen der dänischen Zeitung 'Jyllands-Posten', die in den vergangenen anderthalb Wochen in der gesamten islamischen Welt zu brutalen Ausschreitungen, Massenprotesten und Toten in mehreren Ländern geführt haben? So wurde nun bekannt, dass eines der Bilder, mit denen die Imame aus Dänemark im Nahen Osten Stimmung machten, in Wirklichkeit den Teilnehmer eines Wettbewerbs im Schweinequieken auf einer Landwirtschaftsmesse in Südfrankreich im Sommer 2005 zeigt. Mit Prophetenbeleidigung hat das nichts zu tun. Höchstens durch die Lüge der Zweckentfremdung des Fotos." Below the text are two small image thumbnails with captions: "Die Sache mit Mohammed" and "Neue Welle der Gewalt". On the right side of the page is a sidebar with various links and sections: "Politik & Panorama-Archiv", "stern.de - Partner Tools" (including Immobiliensuche, Partnersuche, Stromkosten, Jobsuche), "Wetter" (with a table for Hamburg, Berlin, Frankfurt, and München), "Aktuelle Fotostrecken" (including "Politiker als Wachfiguren Besser als das Original" and "Vorwahl-Impressionen Der Super Tuesday in Bildern"), and "Prominente Unterstützer".

Haitham Mussawi/AFP (in Reuter 2006).¹⁷

Another example is the publication of an original colour wire-service news photo by the global US news agency AP. This was published in the international news section of the Israeli quality daily newspaper *Ha'aretz* on 17 February 2006. This news photo showed Muslim protesters at an anti-caricatures demonstration in Trafalgar Square in London two weeks earlier on 3 February 2006. On the left hand side, in the foreground of this news photo is the image of one protester brandishing a placard calling for others to be killed; it says: "Slay Those Who Insult Islam". Apart from showing vehement hate slogans, this demonstration by only a few hundred was reported as peaceful with no injuries and with the police having chosen not to make arrests at the protest itself. It had passed with very little comment in the British national press at the time although it became the focus of a widespread debate during the following week.

Picture 7.



Caption: "A demonstration against the Mohammed cartoons in Trafalgar Square in London two weeks go. On the signs it is written among other things: Slay Those Who Insult Islam"

AP in *Ha'aretz*, February 17, 2006, p. A 15.

Two weeks after the demonstration, *Ha'aretz* used the picture to illustrate a series of reports on reactions in Europe. One of the texts which accompanied this photo in *Ha'aretz* is a news story written by *Ha'aretz*'s London correspondent, about the Muslim community in the UK, quoting a Muslim religious leader in the UK under the headline: "The British are Demonising the Community". The article tells the history of the Muslim community in the UK and gives more voice to Muslim religious leaders who emphasise the peaceful behaviour of the majority of their community, than to other voices in the British public. When the article goes on to refer to this demonstration, it describes it in a similar way to the news photo depiction, bringing to the fore the vehement hate speech slogans. The article also adds that there was one protester dressed as a suicide bomber wearing a mock explosive belt. The text refers to a survey, quoting findings such as the statement that eighty-six per cent of the respondents had defined the anti-caricatures demonstrations as an extreme exaggeration and only seventeen per cent of the respondents stated that they could live peacefully together with the Muslim community in the UK.

What is interesting in this case is that somehow the picture and the text contradict one another. The text suggests that Muslims in the UK are being unfairly treated by the majority population, and according to the quoted survey, the Muslim minority feels uncomfortable about living with the majority. The iconography of the picture *Ha'aretz* has chosen to illustrate this article (a fortnight after this London demonstration had taken place) tells a different story. It demonises the Muslims in the UK – not the British. This choice of an image by *Ha'aretz* – which has a reputation for being an elite liberal newspaper – based on one single (small) angry demonstration that was opposed to the caricatures and cartoons may perhaps reveal more about certain feelings of some Israeli towards Muslims within the context of the Middle East conflict than it does about the actual content of the accompanying article. One can conjecture that *Ha'aretz*, in reporting in a decontextualised way about this London demonstra-

tion, was thus presenting the photographed reaction to the cartoons as evidence of something far worse.

Looking at a different context where there have been different interpretations, one finds many examples in Pakistan. For instance, on 4 February 2006 on its front page, *Dawn*, the most important Pakistani English-language daily newspaper (with the highest circulation) published a colour wire-service news photo by the global French news agency AFP, showing Muslim protesters at an anti-caricatures demonstration outside the Regent's Park mosque in London. This news photo was decontextualised and seemed to imply therefore that this was typical of Muslim reaction in the UK when it only involved a few hundred protesters.

Picture 8.

Title: "Publication of cartoons" Caption: "LONDON: Londoners demonstrate outside the Regent's Park mosque on Friday against publication of blasphemous cartoons in Danish and some other European newspapers"



AFP in *Dawn*, February 4, 2006, p. 1.

This news photo taken in London is placed alongside and, thus, transferred to a more national news story from inside Pakistan, with its accompanying text.

The text leans more toward national events and consequences related to the caricatures controversy. Thus, this picture might have served to demonstrate international Muslim solidarity rather than serving as an attempt to demonise the protesters. Possibly serving the same interest of publication, a similar example is detected in the third most important Pakistani English-language daily newspaper (in terms of the amount of circulated sold copies) *The Nation* – considered to be the more conservative newspaper. On 11 February 2006 on its front page it printed a colour wire-service news photo by the global French news agency AFP, showing (particularly female) Muslim protesters at an anti-caricatures demonstration in front of the justice palace in Brussels in the beginning of February 2006. Also, this news photo taken in Brussels is placed together with – and, thus, transferred to – three more national news stories from inside Pakistan. Here the accompanying texts lean more toward national events and consequences related to the caricatures controversy.

Picture 9.

Titles: “Ban on medicines from blasphemer states” – “Fury continues to boil” – “Ashura day observed” Caption: “BRUSSELS: Muslims gather for a demonstration in front of Brussels justice palace on Friday protesting the blasphemous cartoons”



AFP in *The Nation*, February 11, 2006, p. 1.

In some journalism cultures worldwide it is not unusual and sometimes quite common to the profession to place news photos not only as illustrations, but rather as additional news items on their own alongside thematically related news stories. However, in these three latter examples taken from Israel (and its

neighbouring Palestinian Territories) and Pakistan, the potential for misreading the item and the issue is potentially high: In terms of possible media effects, readers might have implicitly drawn parallels between different multi-religious societies (Israel-UK); might have represented a feeling of Muslim solidarity across the world; or even might have led to influence or incite recipients to mount further anti-caricatures demonstrations inside their own countries – taking distant international news events from abroad as examples.

Visuals in the (post-) 9/11 Media Coverage

The phenomenon of decontextualised and fragmented pictures that travel through media around the globe, and detached from their accompanying discourses, can be also observed more generally in the (post-) 9/11 media coverage. (This phenomenon of detached imagery, however, was in existence even before the suicide attacks on US targets.)

A clear case example was provided by the “staged” video footage produced under false pretences and distributed worldwide by two global US and British TV news agencies based in London: APTN and Reuters TV (and further broadcast by the Geneva-based EBU’s EVN), showing Palestinians in Eastern Jerusalem allegedly celebrating on 11 September 2001, the actual day of the suicide attacks on US targets (Krüger-Spitta 2001; Erdmann 2001). The following screenshot shows two pictures from the “staged” video footage; the accompanying text reports very clearly about the allegation of “staged” images (Erdmann 2001).

The development of possibly counter-hegemonic news services based in the Arab world does not seem to have abandoned the above-mentioned phenomenon of decontextualised and fragmented pictures that travel through media around the globe without their accompanying discourses. Hafez (cited in Billows 2004a) states that “Al-Jazeera may have brought a new era to the Arab information landscape, but it has not been able to revolutionize international communication”. Hafez (cited in Billows 2004b: 52) also observes that Western “media oftentimes re-broadcast visual materials from Al Jazeera or Abu Dhabi TV. But the contexts, the discourses, the interpretations only seldom reach the Western media”. This observation is taken as an indicator that “the scepticism among [...] media representatives towards Al-Jazeera remains great. Editors and producers are still unsure whether the station’s contents are propaganda or solid information. And leading Western politicians continue to circumvent Al-Jazeera and refuse to give the station interviews” (Hafez cited in Billows 2004a).

Furthermore, the *international mobility of pictures, and the concomitant immobility of their accompanying discourses* is particularly clear in media debates about TV and Internet publication and newsworthiness of terror video tapes recorded by either alleged criminals, or more recently also by victims, their relatives, and high-ranking political actors of their home countries. In the case in which media diplomacy substitutes for failed negotiation diplomacy – or in more general cases of conflict, crises, and war communication – reused video

Picture 10.

Captions: "Jubilation in front of the camera for a piece of cake" – "Children celebrating the attacks in front of the camera – in the background uninvolved passers-by"¹⁸

SPIEGEL ONLINE
21. September 2001, 18:10 Uhr
DIE NACHT DER TV-BILDER

Was ist die Wahrheit?
Von Lisa Erdmann

Nur wenige Stunden nach den Attentaten auf New York und Washington zeigten die Fernsehsender weltweit Bilder von Palästinensern, die die unfassbare Tat bejubelten. Jetzt heißt es, ein Teil dieser Bilder sei möglicherweise gestellt, der Rest alt.



Hamburg - Kinder jubeln, eine Frau mit schwarzem Kopftuch und Brille reißt freudig die Arme hoch, ein Mann klatscht und winkt andere Passanten herbei: Eine Straßenszene, gefilmt in Jerusalem am 11. September, am Tag der Attentate in New York und Washington. Bilder, die viele Menschen erschütterten. Der Hunger nach Informationen und Filmmaterial war an diesem Tag unstillbar - so wurden auch diese Aufzeichnungen von den TV-Sendern immer und immer wieder gesendet, unterlegt mit den Worten, diese Palästinenser würden die Anschläge in den USA feiern. Doch nun, zehn Tage nach den Anschlägen, berichtet das ARD-Politikmagazin "Panorama", dass es möglicherweise eine andere Wahrheit über diese Bilder gibt, dass die Szene vielleicht sogar gestellt sind.

Gefilmt wurden die jubelnden Palästinenser von zwei Nachrichtenagenturen: Reuters und Associated Press (AP). Die Fernsehzuschauer bekamen in der vergangenen Woche nur wenige Sekunden von dem Material zu sehen. Insgesamt liefen bei den TV-Stationen aber etwa vier Minuten auf. Die Panorama-Redakteurin Annette Krüger-Spitta sah sich die gesamten Bänder der beiden Agenturen genauer an. "Das ist schlicht britisches Material". Dabei stellte sie Unstimmigkeiten fest.

Die fertig geschnittenen Nachrichten-Filme in der vergangenen Woche hatten den Eindruck erweckt, da feierten viele Menschen auf der Straße. Es waren keine Total-Aufnahmen dabei, die die ganze Straße zeigten, sondern immer nur kleine Gruppen von Menschen. Auf dem gelieferten Material waren allerdings sehr wohl Totalen - sie zeigten deutlich, dass nur eine Handvoll Palästinenser jubelten, viele andere gingen einfach unbeteiligt vorbei. "Die Frau mit dem Kopftuch hat später gesagt, sie habe in die Kamera gejubelt, weil man ihr Kuchen versprochen hat", so Krüger-Spitta. Die Palästinenserin habe erklärt, sie sei entsetzt gewesen, als sie sah, in welchem Kontext ihr Jubel gezeigt wurde. Sie verabscheue die Taten in New York und Washington. Was ist die Wahrheit?

Schon in der vergangenen Woche fegten aufgeregte Mails zu einem ähnlichen Fall rund um den Erdbeall. CNN habe zehn Jahre alte Bilder verwendet, um damit den angeblichen Jubel der Palästinenser zu belegen. Ein brasilianischer Student, Marco, hatte am Mittwoch auf der Website von Indymedia, einer unabhängigen Medienplattform, einen Brief gepostet. Er schrieb, er habe Beweise dafür, dass die Bilder die am 11. September bei den amerikanischen Nachrichtensendern zu sehen waren, gefälscht seien. Das Filmmaterial stamme aus dem Jahr 1991 und zeige Freudenfeiern von palästinensischen Jugendlichen nach dem irakischen Einmarsch in Kuwait. Einer seiner Dozenten habe Videoaufzeichnungen von damals und sie mit den aktuellen Berichten verglichen. Fazit: Beide Bilder seien identisch. CNN mache Stimmung gegen die Palästinenser.

Nur zwei Tage später, am Freitag, ruderte Marco zurück. Die Informationen seien nur eine Vermutung gewesen, der Hochschullehrer könne seinen Verdacht nicht beweisen. Doch da war es schon zu spät. Bis heute geistern Mails mit der Fehlinformation durch das Netz, bis heute erhalten viele Redaktionen, auch wir, immer wieder besorgte Hinweise von Lesern. CNN International hat den Vorwurf gegenüber SPIEGEL ONLINE heftig dementiert. Auch Reuters TV, die das Material an CNN geliefert haben, beäueln sich, die Vorwürfe zu entkräften. Sogar auf der Website von Indymedia selbst gab es Zweifel an dem Vorwurf. Ein Leser erklärte, die Bilder könnten gar nicht aus dem Jahr 1991 stammen, weil darauf ein Ford aus einer Baureihe von 1995 zu sehen sei.

URL:
<http://www.spiegel.de/politik/ausland/0,1518,156625,00.html>



Kinder feiern vor der Kamera die Attentate - im Hintergrund ellen unbeteiligte Passanten vorbei

AP (in Erdmann 2001).

footage obtained from Arab media often reach Western media as visual fragments removed from their actual discourses. The phenomenon of decontextualised and fragmented pictures is also obvious in the case of the Abu Ghraib torture news photos that were perceived differently in various cultural contexts in 2004 and indicated that "iconic news media images" can "exert power in the shaping of news, politics, and public opinion" (Andén-Papadopoulos 2008: 5, 6).

Conclusions

The caricatures controversy suggests that deficient or totally decontextualised fragmented pictures travel through media around the globe and do so without their accompanying discourses. This, of course, has an impact on global media communication. In most cases, also due to the way media are organised, pictures travel while their original accompanying discourses do not. Even if discourses seldom travel, pictures travel faster and leave their contextual meanings behind. Or else pictures and discourses do indeed both travel, but separately like a kind of split DNA, and are put together incorrectly when they have arrived at a new destination.

Problematically, the alleged visual evidence is very powerful and considered trustworthy and, thus, can be abused for political reasons. In this context, it is

interesting to ask whether and to what extent pictures, by simply arriving in newsrooms, can increase or decrease the news value of a news item. The narrative power of visuals is even stronger than the power of visuals on their own and is also stronger than the power of their original accompanying discourses.

If a picture, due to its polysemy and iconic ambivalence, can be “read”, interpreted, encoded and decoded differently by different recipients with the same linguistic and cultural background, the potential of misreadings, misinterpretations, different encoding and decoding is enormously multiplied when the same picture moves, without its original accompanying discourse, to another context in another culture with a different communication system and a different political agenda, as the above visual empirical materials have shown. Because of these differences various cultures “verbalise” pictures differently. Moreover, in global media communication, images are caught in a media structure in which they can be “read” in very different local codes.

A *no-context-no-comment-policy* actually encourages intercultural frictions in global media communication. The phenomenon of decontextualised and fragmented pictures that travel through media around the globe without their accompanying discourses must inevitably increase the probability of distortion as well as engendering stereotypes and prejudices. This deficit in global media communication certainly does not contribute to a better mutual understanding of different value systems.

Notes

1. In the 1950s, Hall became one of the first teachers of the US Foreign Service Institute (FSI), a school for diplomats, which had been founded by the State Department in Washington/DC. The FSI was part of a reform of diplomacy within the framework of the Foreign Service Act which has been approved in 1946 by the US Congress. This reform of diplomacy might be seen as a step taken as a reaction against criticism and complaints from abroad about an alleged ignorance shown by US diplomats towards their hosting countries. To counter this, Hall taught diplomats how to properly act and behave abroad according to different mentalities in the hosting countries (Kleinstauber 2003).
2. Kleinstauber (2003) reminds us that Hall has introduced the concept of intercultural communication – as a variant of global communication – in the context of the understanding of culture which prevailed at that time, and which was congruent with the concept of nation. However, one has to concede that the concept of culture itself is notoriously ambiguous and can be defined, in a broad sense, as the “totality of living appearances and living conditions” (Weber 1982: 217). [All non-English quotes have been translated by the author.]
3. The notion of intercultural frictions does not explicitly refer to self-fulfilling prophecies such as the “clash of civilizations” predicted by Huntington (1993, 1996).
4. For instance, in research of visual communication “lying pictures” have become a paradigm (Liebert and Metten 2007). Especially state propaganda and political PR use and abuse “images that lie” (Hütter and Rösger 2003 [1998]).
5. See also Mitchell (1986, 1994, 1996, 2005).
6. It is also interesting to ask whether caricatures as a journalistic genre or format, and cartoons from an extra-journalistic tradition, are ironically able to deny themselves.
7. Since pictures, and also caricatures, have their own inherent discourse or even multiplicity of discourses and since the idea of a picture in itself is powerful (see Becker, Chapter 7, in

this volume), the concept of visual code remains problematic. Especially political caricatures as a journalistic genre or format are often composed by pre-drawn visual modules (and also pre-written text modules), taken out of the caricaturists' tool box. This seems to be also true for the 12 caricatures and cartoons of the Prophet which show to some extent strong parallels to the making of anti-Semitic caricatures of Jews during the Nazi regime in Germany (published, for instance, in the Nazi anti-Semitic weekly *Der Stürmer*), but also to the making of those caricatures depicting German Nazis as monsters within the US "anti-propaganda", the so-called atrocity propaganda.

8. Furthermore, several meta-caricatures on the caricatures controversy as well as news photos of the original *Jyllands-Posten*'s caricatures and cartoons (in order to avoid reprints of them) can be found worldwide; but they will not be discussed here.
9. Danish original: Title: "Her er det rigtige billede af Mohammed".
10. A scan of p. 34 of the Akkari-Laban dossier, showing this additional so-called non-cartoon was retrieved on the website of the Danish popular daily newspaper *Ekstra Bladet*, <http://ekstrabladet.dk/grafik/nettet/tegninger38.jpg> [2 February 2008]. Scans of all 43 pages of the full Akkari-Laban dossier were retrieved on another website, http://monkeydyne.com/photos/?d=akkari_dossier [2 February 2008].
11. The author thanks Elisabeth Eide (Norway/Pakistan), Anssi Männistö (Finland), Shlomi Barzel and Hillel Nossek (Israel) for their support in collecting the visual empirical materials.
12. Finnish original: Title: "Muslimien viha purkautui Tanskan konsulaattia vastaan Beirutissa" – Caption: "Muslimisaarnaaja osallistui mielenosoitukseen tuleen sytytetyn Tanskan konsulaatin edessä Beirutissa sunnuntaina".
13. Finnish original: Title: "Uskonoppinut ei yllyttänyt mellakkaan Beirutissa" – Text: "Helmikuun 6. päivän Helsingin Sanomien sivulla B 1 tämän kuvan tekstissä kerrottiin kuvatoimisto AFP:n välittämän tiedon mukaisesti, että kuvan islamilainen uskonoppinut osallistui mielenosoitukseen Tanskan Beirutin-konsulaatin edustalla. AFP:n kahden päivän kuluttua lähettämän oikaisun mukaan uskonoppinut yritti rauhoittaa mielenosoittajia".
14. XXP had been formerly run by Spiegel TV and dctp, a TV programme production company; XXP is now part of DMAX, a new private-commercial channel.
15. German original: Title: "Zwölf Mohammed-Karikaturen erschüttern die Welt: Der heilige Hass" – Lead text: "SPIEGEL THEMA: Montag, 06. Februar, 23.20 – 00.10 Uhr, XXP Weltweit protestieren Muslime gegen den Abdruck der Mohammed-Karikaturen. Bei XXP diskutieren Experten über den Zusammenprall der Kulturen, den Respekt vor religiösen Tabus und das Recht auf Meinungsfreiheit" – Caption: "Brennende Botschaft Dänemarks (in Beirut): Zusammenprall der Kulturen".
16. German original: Title: "Karikaturen-Streit: Quo vadis Islam?" – Lead text [beginning]: "Wüten die Menschen aus spontaner Empörung über die Mohammed-Karikaturen oder weil sie angestachelt wurden von hetzerischen Regimen?".
17. Nota bene that, for this analysis, both items were accessed online almost two years later after they had been first published on *Spiegel Online*'s and *Stern*'s websites (see dates of access given in the references) and that, in both cases, the same news photo still remains online as an illustration disentangled from its original correct context, without any (hypertext link to) clarification, correction, or even rectification.
18. German original: Captions: "Jubel vor der Kamera für ein Stück Kuchen" – "Kinder feiern vor der Kamera die Attentate – im Hintergrund eilen unbeteiligte Passanten vorbei".

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Chapter 12

Integration through Insult?¹

Carolina Boe & Peter Hervik

In the words of the Somali-born Dutch politician Ayaan Hirsi Ali, the integration of Muslims into European societies has been sped up by 300 years due to the cartoons (Flemming Rose, The Washington Post, February 19, 2006)

When the now infamous cartoons depicting Prophet Mohammed were published by Denmark's most powerful newspaper *Morgenavisen Jyllands-Posten*,² the culture editor Flemming Rose wrote that they were deliberately intended "to insult, mock and ridicule" Muslims in Denmark. During the last decade, *Jyllands-Posten* has regularly argued that too much consideration is being shown towards religious feelings and that overt criticism, derogatory comments and ridicule are necessary provocations to accelerate social integration. This is the claim made by Flemming Rose in the above quotation from Ayaan Hirsi Ali. As such, *Jyllands-Posten* not only asserts its *right* to publish – it argues that publishing is a *duty*. The cartoons were published September 30, 2005. Eight months later, Rose justified his act as one of inclusion of Muslims in Denmark, arguing that he had meant to "integrate" them "into the Danish tradition of satire" by treating them like anyone else:

And by treating Muslims in Denmark as equals they made a point: We are integrating you into the Danish tradition of satire because you are part of our society, not strangers. The cartoons are including, rather than excluding, Muslims. (2006a)

Similarly, *France Soir*³ and *Charlie Hebdo*,⁴ the two French newspapers that chose to re-publish all of *Jyllands-Posten*'s cartoons in February 2006 along with some of their own making, argued that they were treating Muslims "like everybody else". *France Soir*'s front page showed a drawing of Jehovah, Buddha, Mohammad and the Lord in Heaven, the latter saying "Don't moan, Mohammad, we've all been caricatured". *Charlie Hebdo*'s editorial line is characterized by anti-clericalism and criticism of religions – especially Catholicism – and its editors argued that Islam should be given no special consideration.

This argument was also put forward during *Charlie Hebdo*'s trial in Paris in March 2007.

During a transnational research project (Berthaut, Boe, Hmed, Jouanneau and Laurens 2007; Hervik and Berg 2007) it appeared that a frame in favour of publishing the cartoons on the grounds of "Freedom of the Press" and "Freedom of Speech" dominated the press coverage of the cartoon crisis in Denmark and France. Nordenstreng (2007) warns that "the concept of freedom should not be elevated beyond critical assessment and debate, as often is done, especially by press freedom advocates, who tend to mystify the notion of freedom and stigmatize others questioning the absolutist nature of (press) freedom." By comparing press coverage and opinion pieces published in both countries,⁵ we realized that the media treatment related to Islam and to integration was remarkably similar between France and Denmark. This may appear surprising as the relationship between state and religion in the two countries can be defined as each other's opposites. Indeed, Denmark is a Lutheran nation with little separation between Church and State, whereas the French Republic is a secular state, committed to *laïcité*, or independence from religion.⁶

Among the similarities between these two seemingly very different countries, it appeared that not only the French but also the Danish journalistic field is highly politicized. The French journalistic tradition is often described as opinionated in contrast to journalistic traditions like those of the USA or Scandinavia. Where Danish journalists used to take pride in separating fact from opinion, a shift has appeared in recent years, creating more connections between the political field and the media (Hervik and Berg 2007; Hjarvard 2006).

More importantly, when one specifically analyzes the media treatment related to Islam and to integration in both countries, it appears that dominant⁷ media professionals and public intellectuals tend to argue *for* the publication of the cartoons while identifying cultural differences as *the* major problem to be managed. In the coverage of the publication of the cartoons, specifically, they tend to use the opposition against publication as a proof of the existence of a fundamental war of values. For instance, some Muslims – who may or may not be either Danish or French citizens – criticised *Jyllands-Posten*'s cartoons and questioned the reasons behind their publication. In doing so, they used the legitimate means that are within the reach of any citizen of democratic countries, including writing letters to the editor, demonstrating, or suing the newspapers that had published the cartoons. The dominant media could have described these democratic means of protest as a proof of integration. In both countries, however, these initiatives were more often depicted as though their authors were lacking a sense of humour or an understanding of the Danish or French "tradition of satire" – and were thus also lacking "integration". In this scheme, humour and satire are linked to integration and to belonging, thus becoming essential markers of a new "We", characterised by "humour and democracy" in opposition to a "Them" characterised by "violence and dictatorship".⁸

Both the Danish and the French media's dominant discourse on integration is saturated with nationalist ideology that is used to define and manage who

is included and who is excluded from the nation (Blommaert and Verschueren 1998, Gibb 2003, Miles 1993). According to Appadurai, the identification of minorities as carriers of difference within a nation state reminds the majority, that it is not a “whole”, homogeneous nation. Therefore, even small numbers destabilize the majority, creating an “anxiety of incompleteness” (Appadurai 2006).

The cartoon case is symptomatic of societal debates launched by the media or politicians that identify “lack of integration” and “difference” – and thus the minorities, who are carriers of this difference – as the reason for numerous social problems. According to this frame of interpretation of social reality, “to integrate” is a goal that has not yet been reached, and may never be reached – because minorities stubbornly hold on to their difference.

In this process of inclusion within and exclusion from the “imagined community” (Anderson 1983), an “Us” emerges, represented as rational, modern, democratic, peace-seeking, and enlightened – in a radical opposition to an Arab or Muslim “Other”, depicted as irrational, traditional, despotic, and violent (Said 1979).

However, our analysis shows that specific cultural figures emerge within the rigid dichotomies of Orientalist representations. For instance, non-Muslim opponents of the publications appear as “Traitors” or “Cowards”. Another figure emerges, that of the “Civilized Other”, a person of Muslim background, who has embraced “Our” values and denounces Islam and “Islamism”. One also finds the figure of the “terrorizing guest”, whose “lukewarm” Islam is in constant danger of evolving into fanaticism and “Islamism”, staged in a rhetoric of “home invasion”. This *emic* usage of “Islamism” differs from *etic* standards in studies of religion and politics, as the semantics have changed in popular and media use, infusing Islamism with associations of extreme violence.

By twisting the opposition to the publication into this interpretative framework, dominant media professionals and public intellectuals who defend the publications place their opponents in a no-win situation. All resistance to, or criticism of, the publication, even set in a democratic dialogue – becomes a sign of the opponent’s lack of integration or belonging. This dominant interpretative framework is carried across borders by cosmopolitan media professionals and public intellectuals, who are not only present in their home countries’ media but who also actively participate in promoting various trends and in shaping national debates in other countries than their own. They actively refer to each other in their articles and Op-Eds, sign each others’ letters of support and testify for each other in court, while creating and repeating a (de-localized) transnational frame dominated by specific binary oppositions, causal connections and historical analogies. It is these narratives of war – and of heroes, villains and martyrs – that we set out to analyse in what follows.

Self-Censorship and the Necessity of Satire

The media treatment of the cartoon crisis, whether in France, Denmark or elsewhere most commonly states that *Jyllands-Posten* originally published the cartoons as a response to a specific incident, that is, Danish writer Kåre Bluitgen's search for an illustrator for a children's book on Islam⁹ which he was writing. He explicitly wanted illustrations that portrayed the prophet Mohammad with recognizable features. According to Bluitgen, every illustrator that he contacted refused to work with him in fear of repercussions, and even death threats from Muslims, the customary ban against drawing the Prophet.

Bluitgen is known for his controversial publications and provocative attacks on Muslims. This was rarely mentioned in the media coverage of the crisis in spite of the fact that two of *Jyllands-Posten*'s twelve cartoons picture the drawing assignment as nothing more than Bluitgen's stunt for advertising his own book (see Chapter 2, in this volume). Bluitgen was the only source for claiming that he could not find an illustrator for his book (Larsen and Seidenfaden 2006).

Bluitgen's claim was taken up by *Jyllands-Posten* not as a story in itself, but as a reason for initiating its own news project. Rather than following Bluitgen's path, *Jyllands-Posten* asked satirical cartoonists (and not illustrators as in Bluitgen's case) to draw caricatures of the Prophet Mohammed "as they saw him". Even if cartoonists recognized the provocative nature of this initiative, they were, according to cartoonist Lars Refn, caught in a double bind. If they said "yes" they would offend Muslims, if they said "no" they would affirm "self-censorship" (Thomsen 2006: 34).

Finally only a single cartoonist said that he refrained from participating for fear of repercussion by Muslim radicals (Hansen and Huntevadt 2006: 18).¹⁰

Editor-in-chief Carsten Juste found the results of *Jyllands-Posten*'s project "weak" (Hansen and Huntevadt 2006: 7) and therefore decided not to place the story in the paper's most prestigious section, "Insight" ("Indblik"), but rather to pass it on to the weekend's more opinionated cultural section. Yet at the same time, the editorial of the same date, "The Threat of Darkness", supports the project and uses a similar confrontationally provocative style. The cartoons are necessary, the editorial argues, since: "A hoard of imams and mullahs, who feel entitled to interpret the prophet's word, cannot abide the insult that comes from being the object of intelligent satire". (Editorial *Jyllands-Posten*, September 30, 2005).

Bluitgen's news story of "self-censorship" was repeated again and again in the press as a justification for *Jyllands-Posten*'s publication of the cartoons:

The fear spread when no illustrator dared to illustrate the children's book by Kåre Bluitgen on the Prophet Mohammed – fearing to lose their lives. Was Freedom of Speech threatened? *Jyllands-Posten* tested this by inviting cartoonists to draw Mohammed in the paper. Some dared, others did not – struck by *self-censorship*. (Editorial, *Ekstra Bladet*, February 5, 2006, our emphasis)¹¹

The story was inserted in an already existing narrative, as only one of many events in a chronological succession of acts of self-censorship and self-repression:

It was exactly this *self-repression*, diffuse fear to speak of Islam which *Jyllands-Posten* wanted to throw light on with the invitation to draw Mohammed. The problem is especially connected to Islam because violence stemming from claimed offences of Islam has dominated the media picture in the last couple of years. (Editorial, *B.T.* by Erik Meier Carlsen, March 9, 2006, our emphasis)¹²

Thus the original cartoon publication story is entirely media-created, and so is the public crisis that followed. In the face of merging criticism, *Jyllands-Posten* and the Danish government stopped telling the original story, and began to tell a different one about “freedom of speech” (cf. Hervik, Chapter 4, in this volume).

As the cartoons were re-published in other countries, public intellectuals and media professionals repeated the de-contextualized story of freedom of speech. The central argument that they put forward to justify the publication was that media professionals, out of fear of repercussions, are giving in to pressure and thus stop writing the truth whenever they face themes related to Islam or Muslims. In this light, publishing was not only done to bring out a news story but more importantly, it became a necessary act of solidarity and principle. Thus, the escalation of the crisis was not due to outside events but to the activities of media institutions themselves, as well as the activities of those public intellectuals who were in favour of publishing. Many newspapers throughout the world chose not to publish the Danish cartoons, and these writers argued that this was proof of a generalized and increasing self-censorship in the face of Islam or Islamism.

In the specific French media landscape, the fact that *France Soir*, a tabloid, was first to publish created an important premise for the other newspapers’ reactions to the event. Indeed, as *France Soir* occupies a specific place in France’s media landscape (more commercial, less intellectual, more right-wing), journalists from other newspapers (as well as from *France Soir* itself) could only assume specific positions within a certain range of possible reactions to the cartoon crisis. *Le Monde* and *Libération* then published a few of the twelve cartoons, arguing that they were doing so for the news value. Articles in both papers re-contextualized the initial publication of the cartoons, giving additional information on Bluitgen and describing *Jyllands-Posten* as a far-right-wing newspaper, known to be close to the present Danish government, and as being responsible for harsh criticism of immigration to Denmark in general and Muslims in particular (Boe, forthcoming).

Later, when *Charlie Hebdo*, a left-wing satirical newspaper published the cartoons, this again contributed to altering the field and the possibilities of journalists from other newspapers. Journalists from left wing *Libération* and from *Le Monde* responded to *Charlie Hebdo*’s choice by publishing articles

explaining why they too had published a selection of the cartoons, something that they had understated in the first days after *France Soir* published the drawings. Also, the clarifications on the context surrounding the publication in Denmark disappeared from the columns of these newspapers. Indeed, to newspapers such as *Libération* and *Le Monde*, *France Soir* represents sensationalism, and is not to be taken seriously, whereas *Charlie Hebdo* is regarded as a left wing newspaper defending *laïcité* and freedom of speech. (Berthaut, Boe et al 2007). The crisis now became a matter of principle, a choice between either “resistance” and “freedom of speech” or self-censorship and the danger of reintroducing the law against blasphemy in a secular state. Furthermore, the treatment of the cartoon controversy by the French media echoed the debates that had taken place in 2004, before the passing of the law on secularity and conspicuous religious symbols in state schools, banning the wearing of the hijab. (Berthaut, Boe et al. 2007)

When questioned by the French channel ITV about *Charlie Hebdo*’s trial in 2007, journalist, academic, and public intellectual Caroline Fourest from *Charlie Hebdo* reproduced *Jyllands-Posten*’s and the Danish government’s discourse on the case, while denying that *Jyllands-Posten* had had any intention to mock Muslims – which goes against the newspaper’s editor who stated that he had chosen to publish the cartoon to “mock” Muslims, as quoted earlier:

The public prosecutor was impressive as she rigorously restored the chronology, the facts. This is where I felt that my rights were restored, as a journalist. Because she reconstructed the exact chronology of the publication of the Danish cartoons. She recalled that they were not intended to mock but simply to break the taboo, that is, that no Danish illustrator wanted to make a representation of Mohammed, even though they were not Muslims themselves, and thus not concerned by the iconoclastic ban on visual images – because they were afraid to be assassinated. That the contest was not meant to shock but to break this taboo. (Caroline Fourest, 2006 interview by ITV. www.youtube.com)

It is not surprising that *Charlie Hebdo* repeats this narrative, when one takes into consideration Flemming Rose’s testimony during the court case against *Charlie Hebdo*. The following is a transcription from *Libération*’s thorough day-by-day coverage of the court case:

02.15 pm: Flemming Rose, the editor in chief of *Jyllands-Posten*’s cultural pages, tells how the whole crisis started. He was the one who ordered the drawings of Mohammed. He presents his daily newspaper as being “centre right” and compares it “to *Le Figaro*”. No illustrator wanted to participate in a book on the prophet “for fear of sharing the same fate as Theo van Gogh”, murdered in Holland “after having made a film about women in Islam”. (*Libération*, February 9, 2007, our emphasis)

Like Flemming Rose, Ayaan Hirsi Ali is one of the transnational actors who holds discourses that involve sweeping generalization about Islam and Muslims and who actively takes part in spreading de-contextualized stories stating that the cartoons were a matter of self-censorship and freedom of speech. As quoted in the introduction of this chapter, she even goes as far as to claim that the crisis “sped up integration”. Interestingly, The Jyllands-Posten Foundation financed a quick translation of her book “I Accuse” (2005) into Danish in November 2005. She also has ties to Danish Prime Minister Anders Fogh Rasmussen, with whom she met that same month when she was awarded the Freedom Prize of the Liberal (Venstre) Party (Hansen and Hundevadt 2006: 76). In her speech “I am a dissident of Islam” held in Berlin on February 9, 2006 and published in *Le Monde* on February 16, she repeats Kåre Bluitgen’s and *Jyllands-Posten*’s version of the story, stating that the cartoons were published as an act of resistance against self-censorship and stating that European leaders should look to Anders Fogh Rasmussen as an example.

The same interpretation of the publication of the cartoons – as being a matter of resistance against self-censorship – is found in a letter of support to *Charlie Hebdo* from a group of intellectuals, published before the trial:

If *Charlie Hebdo* is convicted, if this case of generalized self-censorship sets a precedent, we will lose all collective space of *resistance* and *freedom*. (Letter of Support, “Nous soutenons ‘Charlie Hebdo’”, *Libération*, February 5, 2007, our emphasis)

Originally, *Jyllands-Posten* turned author and provocateur Bluitgen’s claim about illustrators not wanting to draw the prophet Mohammed for his book into a new story of self-censorship and freedom of speech. In France, where the media gave it a further twist, the complexities of the original story soon gave way to a debate dominated by the question of freedom of speech and of solidarity among newspapers. This media-created story travelled across borders, and has been re-enforced by transnational media professionals and public intellectuals, who, as the quote above exemplifies, make use of a dramatic rhetorical framework. In the second half of this chapter, we analyze this framework and the historical analogies it uses.

A Rhetoric of War

A historical comparison with Germany in the 1930s is present in both the French and the Danish media cartoon coverage. Interestingly, this is not meant as a warning against the media’s treatment of Muslims today, comparing it to the stereotyping of the Jewish minority by the Nazi press. Instead, these references to the Nazi era are used in order to compare the resistance against totalitarian ideologies with “Our” contemporary battle against “Islamism”. According to

editor Flemming Rose in *Jyllands-Posten*, Islam is a totalitarian ideology comparable to Bolshevism, Communism, and Nazism (2006a).

This is also a key issue in the *Manifeste des 12*, a manifesto subtitled “Together facing the new totalitarianism” which was written in the aftermath of the cartoon crisis. It argues against cultural relativism and compares “Islamism with Fascism, Nazism, and Stalinism,”¹³ without making any distinction between Islamists who use violence to reach their goals, and the majority of Muslims or Islamists for that matter, who use democratic means and would never dream of resorting to violence.

The Manifest is consistent with the publications of one of its initiators, Caroline Fourest (2005), who writes on the dangers of Islam. Fourest, introduced above as one of *Charlie Hebdo*’s collaborators, is a French feminist, author, and political scientist. She has also carried out extensive research on both Christian fundamentalism (notably in the United States and within the Bush administration) and Jewish and Muslim fundamentalism. Based on this research, she argues that “Islamism” is the most threatening form of religious fundamentalism. Fourest’s claim echoes that of *Jyllands-Posten*’s, and their tacit front-page commemoration of 9/11 with the heading: “Islam the most belligerent [religion]” (*Jyllands-Posten*, 11 September 2005). The paper’s sole source to this claim was Danish researcher Tine Magaard, who based her claim on a comparative study of older sacred Christian, Jewish and Islamic texts.

Among the co-signers of the “Manifeste des 12” which was initiated by Fourest, one finds Taslima Nasreen, Ayaan Hirsi Ali, and Salman Rushdie, the fatwa against whom was used to justify the publication of the cartoons.

One also finds Mehdi Mozaffari, an Iranian exile since 1979, now a professor of political science at the University of Århus in Denmark, who, unlike most of the other signers, supported the invasion of Iraq in 2003:

Fascism, Nazism, Stalinism, and Islamism have in common that they are totalitarian. They are a form of governing, a way of living, a belief, and a culture. The individual has no freedom beyond what the ideology decides. However, Hitler and Mussolini at least had to produce arguments to legitimate their theories of race. Islamists do not have to do so, as they merely express Allah’s will. (*Politiken*, March 2, 2006)

Another co-signer of the Manifeste des 12 is Ibn Warraq, who has written numerous books and articles on what he calls “the totalitarian ideology.”¹⁴ He promoted his first book from 1995, entitled *Why I am not a Muslim*¹⁵, as a “war effort”, against self-censorship. a rhetoric of war that is also present in his latest publication *Defending the West: A Critique of Edward Said’s Orientalism* (2007).

Danish People’s Party leader Pia Kjaersgaard praises this and Salman Rushdie’s contribution to join the call for a battle against “Islamism”, which she agreed “is the Nazism of our time” (*Berlingske Tidende*, March 2, 2006) and sees no reason for dialogue, much less compromise.

Interestingly, the comparison between Islam and fascism is not only to be found with public intellectuals and journalists. On August 11 2006, news from London that British intelligence agents had foiled a potential new terrorist plot in its advanced stages prompted the following reaction from President Bush, who said that it was a “stark reminder” that “this nation is at war with Islamic fascists,” who in his opinion were seeking to “destroy those of us who love freedom”. At this point, Bush changed his rhetoric from one of “war with terrorism” and “war on terror”, as he characterized events right after the September 11 attacks.¹⁶

The frequent comparison between Islam and Nazism or Fascism can be seen as a reference to what is equated with quintessential evil in popular culture in France and Denmark, countries that were occupied by Nazi Germany, and saw both resistance and collaboration. Writers who make a call for “resistance” stage themselves as freedom fighters, and simultaneously portray their opponents as invaders, collaborators, or “Cowards” and “Traitors”.

Home-Invaders

Drawing a historical parallel between Islam and Nazism is far from neutral in countries such as France and Denmark that both share a story of occupation during World War II. Commentators see no contradiction between comparing themselves with heroic freedom fighters and members of the resistance when they describe the necessity of insulting and provoking the Muslim minority:

The parallel with the period of occupation [1940-1945] becomes even more striking. Of course the enemy does not have troops in the country – not very many at least. (Lars Hedegaard, *Jyllands-Posten*, March 9, 2006)

Few go as far as Hedegaard, but many commentators do imply that Muslims living in “Our” country are comparable to occupying forces.

Even journalists and opinion makers who do not go to such extremes still tend to represent Muslim minorities (including Muslims who are French or Danish citizens) as symptomatic of difference, in a frame set in an opposition between “hosts” and “guests” who do not belong naturally within their “host country” (see also Hervik 2004). Thus, even when Muslims feel provoked by such Danish publications, it is argued that “They”, the Muslim minorities, “owe” it to their “hosts” to “integrate” by adopting their host country’s values. Universal rules of hospitality state that nice polite guests ought not to ask for special treatment from their hosts. Thus, it is legitimate for hosts to be annoyed by guests who do not wish to assimilate – an annoyance easily expressed in the idiom of home invaders.

As “unruly guests” “They” are described by commentators as being closer to “the Muslim World” than they are to “Our” society:

The cartoon story has exposed the cultural differences between the Danish society and large parts of the Muslim world and a part of the migrant population at home. (Ralf Pittelkow, *Jyllands-Posten*, February 19, 2006)

Showing consideration to “Them” by accepting restrictions in “Our” freedom of speech thus becomes an act of surrender in a battle that should be fought for the defence of “Our” values, “Our” nation’s well being:

This crisis is a *battle* between values, on one hand between a *dogmatic, dictatorial* type of society without room for democracy and diversity, with *forced* faith for some and forced infidel for the rest of us, and on the other hand, our *free, democratic, tolerant* and *developed* society. (Pia Kjærsgaard¹⁷, *Berlingske Tidende*, March 2, 2006, our emphasis)

In “Our”, “free” and “tolerant” society, the “Others” who lives in “Our” country should behave according to “Our” set of rules, not “Theirs”. A “battle” of values is going on, and it is argued that any considerations shown towards “Their” ways are signs of weakness that will lead directly to restrictions in “Our” freedom:

The case of the Mohammed cartoons is in fact quite simple. It is a matter of asking whether we are supposed to introduce *restrictions* in the Danish freedom of speech out of *consideration* for Islam? (Ralf Pittelkow, *Jyllands-Posten*, February 5, 2006, our emphasis)

Lars Hedegaard, for instance, uses exaggeration as a means to create moral panic¹⁸ and fear. He states that if *Jyllands-Posten* gives in to pressure and apologizes, then “it would be the end to freedom of speech”. Apologies won’t stop the “Arab rage against Denmark”; quite the contrary he predicts that there would be even more new demands and further restrictions. Consequently,

We can give up the scientific study of history and most of the humanities, besides many aspects of the exact sciences that go against the holy writings of Islam. The public school curriculum will be adjusted to guidelines coming from Islamic centres of learning. Creative artists will have to look over their shoulders, before becoming too daring. Because, in the Muslim culture there is a tradition of slitting the throats of people who speak their mind. (*Jyllands-Posten*, February 1, 2006)

MP for the Danish People’s Party, Søren Espersen writes in an Op-Ed article in *Jyllands-Posten*, that there is no difference between Islam and Islamism (*Jyllands-Posten*, June 25, 2007). For writers such as Lars Hedegaard, Søren Espersen and other adherents of the discourse “Freedom of speech is a Danish freedom” (Hervik and Berg 2007), the only Muslims who are exempt from being referred to as Islamists are members of the organization Democratic

Muslims, an association founded primarily by Danish MP, Naser Khader. We will return to him shortly.

In Denmark, “Islamism” has become a blanket term for an ideology that maintains Islam as an all-embracing system capable of setting up rules for all aspects of modern life. This connection is further strengthened in media coverage, which often connects Islam with scenes of violence (Hervik 2002, Hvitfelt, 2001, Simonsen 2007). In Danish popular consciousness, the term connects Islam and fanaticism to create a prevalent enemy image that leaves little room for nuances (Hervik 2003).

Certain French public intellectuals and journalists also argue that moderate Muslims are potentially dangerous as Islam easily slides into fundamentalism, or even that there is no difference between “lukewarm” Islam and Al-Qaida:

The first observation is that Islamism is a sickness within Islam and only prospers in its bosom. Saying that one “has nothing to do” with the other is absurd: “bad” Islam is only the warrior version of a Qur’anic law against which no recognized Islamic authority has built any protections. And one needs only listen to Abd Samad Moussaoui these days to see how his brother Zacarias – right in our midst (chez nous) – went from a lukewarm Islam to Al-Qaida. The second fact is that no strong reform has purged a dogma sent down from heaven; in the VIIth century, in Mohammed’s Arabia, its sands, its camels, and its bloody graveyards. (Claude Imbert, *Le Point* no 1567, September 27, 2002, quoted in Geisser 2003)

In France, most journalists, politicians and public intellectuals – and that also includes Claude Imbert in many of his articles – are careful not to use Islam and Islamism synonymously. However, as Bruno Étienne points out:

In effect, the danger of Islam is used by renowned editorialists and recognized journalists, from Claude Imbert to Caroline Fourest, even when they specify – a little hypocritically – that they make a distinction between Islam and Islamism. For the average reader, there is little difference and less nuance. The amalgam between “Muslim”, “Islamist”, and “terrorist” becomes dominant. More and more French people do not believe in a “drift into Islamism” but in the violent essence of Islam and its congenital conservatism! (Étienne, 2007)

According to Vincent Geisser, even journalists who write about “moderate Islam”, about everyday forms of worship, tend to focus on moderate Muslims’ capacity of “resistance” against “Islamism-terror” (Geisser 2003: 28). The media tend to represent Islam in even its most moderate forms as being in permanent danger of sliding into “Islamism-terror”:

Little by little, a dramatically simplistic equation has become widespread: Maghrebi Islam = non-integration + violence + anti-Semitism + oppression of women + fertile soil for terrorism. Thus, progressively, all the values that

are (rightly or wrongly) identified as the foundation of European civilisation (and, by extension, Western civilisation) are supposedly repudiated by the populations that are perceived as stemming from another block of civilisation: the Muslim East. (Mucchielli 2007: 168)

The cultural figure of Muslims living in the West as home-invaders is, however, not the only “enemy within”.

The Coward

In these fearful times of war and resistance, danger lurks, even within “Our” own ranks. Indeed, the “enemy within” is not only the immigrant, the “foreign invader”. “Our” worst enemies are the ones in “Our” midst, the “Traitor” and the “Coward”.

The “Coward” is staged in a rhetoric of “Their” “consideration”, “self-censorship”, and “self-repression” due to fear, to which an “Us” is opposed, characterized by courage in “Our” uncompromising defence of freedom of speech and liberty. As in other wars, “Our” courage and honour are valued in the face of the “Internal Enemies”, the “Cowards” “shameful” and “dishonourable” compromise:

Everybody protects freedom of speech, it is said. However – then it comes: We have to show consideration. We have to show consideration towards religious feelings, says the “sole” defenders of freedom of speech. No, we only have to show consideration towards freedom of speech. It stands above religion. If we say “freedom of speech, but” then we have renounced the most important basis of democracy. That is why we have to repeat the judgment towards the failing writers: It is *pathetic*. It is *without honour*. It is *despicable*. (Editorial, *Jyllands-Posten*, February 28, 2006, our emphasis)

When *Charlie Hebdo* published the cartoons, François Cavanna, co-founder of the satirical newspaper, echoed the previous quote as he argued against the phrase “freedom of speech, but...” in terms that are very similar to those of *Jyllands-Posten*’s editor, Flemming Rose:

One can laugh at anything apart from one single thing, the image of a certain prophet, founder of a certain religion. “One can laugh at anything apart from...”, in this phrase, “apart from” is more important than “everything”. Where there is “apart from”, there is no longer anything. “Freedom can only be total, or it is not”. And to remember that “refraining from publishing the too famous Danish drawings, forbidding oneself to defend them, censoring oneself (what a vile thing to do!), is giving up on *laïcité*, it is turning our backs on the hard battles that were fought in the beginning of the 20th century. (François Cavanna, *Charlie Hebdo*, February 8, 2006, quoted in *Libération*, February 15, 2006)

In a similar vein to Flemming Rose – who argues that the presumed self-censorship of “the failing writers” is “without honour” – and to Lars Hedegaard – who harks back to the Danish King’s call for collaboration with the Nazi occupier during World War 2, as he calls against compromising with Muslims/Islamists – Renaud Girard, a French journalist argues that if “We” compromise, “We” chose “dishonour and war”. He then paraphrased Churchill’s famous words to Chamberlain when he came back from Munich in 1938:

Let’s know how to defend our values in our homes (...) let’s not chose *dis-honour and compromise* in an attempt to prevent war. Because, in the end, we shall have *both dishonour and war*. (Renaud Girard,¹⁹ journalist, in *Le Figaro*, February 7, 2006, our emphasis)

When *Charlie Hebdo*’s staff won the trial, editor Philippe Val called it a “European victory”, and a “revenge” for the murder of Theo Van Gogh in the Netherlands, the cancellation of Mozart’s *Idomeneo* by the Berlin Opera, and what he says is “a Munich attitude”, that is, the absence of reactions to the attacks against Denmark and its embassies, echoing Ayaan Hirsi Ali’s speech in Berlin, quoted earlier.

Against “Them”, the “Cowards”, an “Us” emerges characterized by “Our” courage and uncompromising attitude, as “We” dare both to face and speak the truth against “taboos” and “political correctness” for which a specific group of people in “Our” society are responsible. Indeed, this rhetoric of war covers not only dishonourable “Cowards” in “Our” ranks, but also outright “Traitors” to “Our” values.

The Traitor

Among these “Traitors”, one finds members of the political elite who are held responsible for the lax immigration policies that supposedly led to the “problems” of integration, as well as intellectuals, scholars, and activists, mainly from the political left, referred to as “red-brown”, “neo-leftist-social-scientists”, “Islamophile”, “pro-Islamists”, “left-obscurantists”, “Islamist-leftists”, and “Useful Idiots” (Fourest 2005, Taguieff 2002).

These “Traitors” take part in an “active collaboration that consists in taking sides with Islamists against America” (Fourest 2005: 29), succumbing to “The Obscurantist Temptation” – the title of Caroline Fourest’s publication. Fourest asks the question of whether “Their” “blindness” is due to “Their” being naive or cynical (Fourest 2005: 9-10), and answers that “Their” “blindness” is “voluntary”, and “cynical” (ibid.: 140, 141). Other critics of “Islamist-leftists” use the same argument. Supposedly, what drives the “Traitors” is “Their” belief that all ills in the world are the responsibility of the West. This creates a psychological, masochistic drive to punish themselves for being Westerners, while defending any ideology that they may perceive as emancipating. Just as the “Traitors”

blindly defended socialism, communism, Marxism, and even Stalinism before, “They” now perceive Islamism as a weapon of the oppressed and as such refuse any criticism of even its most fundamentalist practises such as the oppression of women, random terrorism and violence.

As cultural relativists, the “Traitors” are accused of systematically dismissing any attempt to discuss problematic issues related to Muslims and Islam as “racist” or “islamophobic”. The cartoon crisis is only one of many symptoms that show that Europe is trapped in such moral or value relativism (Jespersen, *Berlingske Tidende*, February 4, 2006), as a consequence of the “Traitors” political correctness, naive generosity, and “politics of victimology”:

Europe today finds itself trapped in a posture of moral relativism that is undermining its liberal values. An unholy three-cornered alliance between Middle East dictators, radical imams living in Europe, and Europe’s traditional left wing is enabling a politics of *victimology*. This politics drives a culture that *resists integration* and adaptation, *perpetuates* national and religious differences, and aggravates such debilitating social ills as *high immigrant crime rates* and *entrenched unemployment*. (Rose 2006a, our emphasis)

The solutions suggested to the catastrophic consequences of the “Traitors” policies are to reject cultural relativism and political correctness altogether, and to recognize some cultures as better and rightly more empowered than others. Before the cartoon crisis, the former right-wing Minister of Integration and currently Minister of Ecclesiastical Affairs, Bertel Haarder argued that there can be no moral equivalence:

Danish Culture is more important than other cultures are. (...) That’s why I argue that all this talk about equal cultures and equal religions is nonsense. Cultural relativists [*kulturradikale*] who ask for equality of cultures and equality of religions – they cannot have been in their right mind. After all, Denmark is a Danish society. The Danes do govern Denmark. It is us that decide how many should be allowed into our country. (*Weekendavisen*, March 1, 2002)

In these calls against cultural relativism, it is argued that since one worldview is better than the other, clashes are inevitable and must be fought until “Our” morally and culturally superior worldview has won. In this battle “We” must stand firm and make “Them” adapt to “Our” superior values. Similarly, “We” must not falter as “We” face the “Internal Enemy”, the “Traitor”, that is, the left-wing multiculturalists and other proponents of lax compromising policies that Muslims know how to exploit and use as a first step to gaining a foothold in Western society.

The Civilised Other

Just as the “Coward” and the “Traitor” are “Others” in “Our” midst, who do not defend democracy or support satire against minorities, some of “Us” are present among the “Others”. These “Civilized Others” are often used as “*caution ethnique*”, or an “ethnic warranty” (Geisser 2003) as they are put forward as proof that “We” do not adhere to Huntington’s worldview based on a clash of civilizations. The “Converted Others” can be found in the West as well as in the East. They have rejected “Their” former ways and have embraced “Our” values:

In order to live in a peaceful world, or to achieve peace, it is not enough to renounce the spirit of conquest, to confess one’s crimes and to proclaim *urbi et orbi* that one has no enemies. A proof: we do that zealously but it is clear that in spite of these efforts we do have enemies who are determined and formidable. But beware: this “We” is not only “We, Frenchmen”, “We, Europeans”, nor even “We, Westerners”. One must also count moderate traditional Muslims, secular Muslims, emancipated Muslim women – or who aspire for emancipation, Christians living on the soil of Islam. Thomas Mann used to say that Hitler had not fallen down on German soil as a meteor and that consequently, Germany could not exempt itself from Nazism. But he added that Germany was also himself. Well, instead of trying to soften up fanatics with pious words without honor on the Other and the respect that we owe him, we have to affirm our unfailing solidarity with all the Thomas Manns of the Muslim world. (Alain Finkelkraut, *Libération*, February 9, 2006)

Finkelkraut goes on to adopt the rhetoric of war that we analyzed above, to argue for uncompromising solidarity with the “civilized Other”, thus drumming them up to fight on “Our” side. Simultaneously, he warns against the dishonourable compromise of the “Traitor’s” cultural relativism.

Among the co-signers of the Manifest and the letter of support to *Charlie Hebdo*, mentioned above, one finds persons such as Ayaan Hirsi Ali, Taslima Nasreen, Salman Rushdie, Abdel Wahab Meddeb, and Naser Khader, who present themselves or are portrayed as “Civilized Others”. As such they renounce values connected to their socio-cultural background and enthusiastically embrace values of their new societies, becoming more “royal than the king” (Hervik 2002). These “Civilized Others” take a very active role in the criticism of multiculturalism, the “Traitors” and the “Cowards”. Moreover, their judgments on “the dangers of Islamism” in any manifestation of Islam are often harsher and less nuanced than other international public intellectuals whose background does not protect them as well from criticism, as being identified as having a Muslim heritage does.

Among public intellectuals who play the role of “Civilized Others”, one finds Naser Khader, co-founder of the Danish party “The New Alliance” (Ny Alliance). Khader defended *Jyllands-Posten*’s publication of the drawings and even went

as far as to say that he had “laughed out loud”, when he saw the cartoons for the first time (Thomsen 2006: 115). Here, he plays on two subject positions, a politician’s and a Muslim’s, which had empowered him in Danish politics and made him a favourite among Danish news reporters. He is most commonly represented as an “ethnic” politician and is praised as an “integrated Muslim” by such actors as Danish Prime Minister Anders Fogh Rasmussen and public intellectual Ralf Pittelkow. According to the latter, Khader should be a role model for other Muslims, as his reactions to the cartoons were both calm and peaceful – in perfect accordance with Danish democratic traditions. By representing Khader as a “cultural Muslim”, growing up in a Muslim family, Khader is used, both by journalists and politicians, as though he were a spokesperson for Muslim believers in general, in spite of the fact that several Muslims in Denmark have stated publicly that they don’t regard him as their representative, and that it offends them whenever he speaks in their name (Hervik 2002, Shah 2006).

Abdel Wahab Meddeb, a French-Tunisian philosopher and poet, author of *La Maladie de l’islam*, and *Le Contre-Prêche* testified for *Charlie Hebdo* in the court in February 2007. Like Khader, he declared that he had “burst into laughter” when he saw *Charlie Hebdo*’s front page with a drawing of a prophet saying “It is hard being loved by fools” (*Libération*, February 9, 2007). Meddeb was also among the “six personalities of Maghrebi origin” who published a letter under the heading “Do not succumb to Islamism – open letter to Dalil Boubakeur, recteur of the Great Mosque in Paris” (*Libération*, February 28, 2007), Boubakeur was one of the plaintiffs in the court case against *Charlie Hebdo*. Several of these “six personalities” had also signed the letter of support to *Charlie Hebdo*.

The fact that “Civilized Others” are on “Our” side, and often go even further than “We” do in their criticism of Islamism proves that “We” are neither islamophobic nor racist. The “Civilized Others” are often “darlings of the media”, that is, efficient shields against criticism coming from the “Traitors” or the “Cowards”.

The End of Tolerance

Some minorities (and their small numbers) remind the majorities of the small gap which lies between their condition as majorities and the horizon of an unsullied national whole, a pure and untainted national ethnos. (Appadurai 2006: 8)

We have shown that the dominant media debate takes part in creating an “anxiety of incompleteness” and argues that in order to integrate minorities it is legitimate that “We” the majority, demand of minorities that they eliminate their difference, calling for an “end of tolerance”:

Minority is the symptom but difference is the underlying problem. Thus the elimination of difference itself (...) is the new hallmark of today’s large-scale, *predatory narcissisms*. (Appadurai 2006: 11, our emphasis)

If minorities do not diminish or even eliminate their difference, “We”, the majority, has the duty to make them do so. Thus, what Appadurai calls the majority’s anxiety of incompleteness can turn into a geography of anger, where minorities are persecuted because they “do not belong”.

Retrospectively, that is, eight months after he had published the original cartoons in Denmark, Flemming Rose legitimized his act by arguing that not only is mocking the “Other” an act of inclusion, but being insulted is proof positive that one is not considered a stranger, and that one is recognized and respected as an equal member of society:

An act of inclusion. Equal treatment is the democratic way to overcome traditional barriers of blood and soil for newcomers. To me, that means treating immigrants just as I would any other Dane. And that’s what I felt I was doing in publishing the twelve cartoons of Mohammed last year. Those images in no way exceeded the bounds of taste, satire, and humour to which I would subject any other Dane, whether the Queen, the head of the church, or the prime minister. By treating a Muslim figure the same way I would a Christian or a Jewish icon, I was sending an important message: You are not strangers, you are here to stay, and we accept you as an integrated part of our life. And we will satirize you, too. It was an act of inclusion, not exclusion; an act of respect and recognition. (Rose 2006a)

Thus, if one follows Rose’s argument, Muslims or other “Internal Enemies”, such as “Traitors” and “Cowards”, that is, those of “Us” who were offended by the cartoons, have not understood *Jyllands-Posten*’s intentions. One can only conclude that those who did not perceive the publication of the cartoons as a generous act of inclusion are clearly not integrated into Danish society. At the same time, we note Rose’s own shift of emphasis. He set out to test the alleged “self-censorship” among cartoonists. Backed by the editorial of *Jyllands-Posten*, on September 30, 2005, Rose shifted the focus from cartoonists to Muslims, who needed “insult, mock and ridicule”, in order to be forced to become less arrogant and more open to Danish values. Then, five months later, he explained that the publication of the cartoons was best seen as a positive attempt of inclusion and integration.

Ulf Hedetoft has analyzed the arguments against cultural relativism and for the suppression of difference that he perceives as a dominant tendency in today’s Denmark. Immigrants (who may have been residents and even citizens for many years) are approached and measured in absolute cultural terms (Hedetoft 2003).

Vincent Geisser has analyzed the discourse of various actors in the French debates on Islam and the tendency to see multiculturalism as a threat to the national cohesion:

The argument of these new Islam experts relies on their trying to objectify the ravages of multiculturalism – that is supposedly contrary to French tradi-

tion – of which Islamic activism supposedly represents the clearest and most threatening manifestation against our national cohesion. (Geisser 2003: 71)

Interestingly, this evolution of the public debate on immigration is strangely close to the one on crime, and the widespread notion that generous, lax, victimizing social policies have led to moral degeneracy among the lower classes, and are, as such, responsible for unemployment, delinquency and crime, as analyzed by Loïc Wacquant. According to the “Broken Window” theory and the discourse of “zero tolerance” that came out of American think tanks during the Reagan era, the only solution to social ills is discipline and punishment. These theories were central to New York’s fight against crime, and they have been exported to Europe with much success in the political elites (Mucchielli 2002, Wacquant 2004).

The belief that immigrants have been victimized and spoilt to the point where they feel no urge to integrate into their host society, that they have held on to their differences and that this has led to disastrous consequences for their host society – this belief is present both in Denmark and in France. The notion that one can only counter the disastrous consequences of lax policies by standing firm and rejecting any compromise thus seems to gain ground and to be part of a larger trend in the media and political fields, not only when issues such as Islam or integration are concerned.

Conclusion

The analysis of the dominant media treatment of the cartoon crisis in Denmark and France with seemingly different models of the nation state reveals “the structures of common difference”, coined by Richard Wilk in a different context. Indeed, in spite of their fundamental differences, both models of the nation embed simultaneous processes of inclusion and exclusion, that is, inclusion in the nation-state and “anxiety of incompleteness”, as a basis of excluding minorities.

During the cartoon crisis, the processes of inclusion and exclusion were further strengthened by an interpretative framework carried by transnational actors (see also Hervik, Chapter 4, in this volume) who operated under the premise of a global narrative of conflict, while easily borrowing categories, arguments, and reasoning back and forth across nation-state borders. These actors represent themselves as uncompromising defenders of freedom of speech in opposition to “Others”. We have shown that the opposition that emerges between “Us” and “Them” in their rhetoric is not simply based on a global conflict of “the West against the Muslim world”, but that it subtly includes figures of “Internal Enemies” and “Others” who have adopted “Our” ways. Thus, the figure of the “Civilized Other” is included in “Us” and emerges as a “darling of the media” that serves as a shield behind which both journalists, politicians, and public intellectuals can fend off racist accusations.

Among the “Internal Enemies” one finds Muslim minorities who are portrayed as carriers of difference, a difference that threatens to convert them from “lukewarm Muslims” to Islamists or “Islamofascists”. Muslim minorities are either represented as foreign troops with references to the Nazi occupation in Denmark and France, or “Home Invaders” whose presumed refusal to give up on their threatening difference and adopt “Our” values creates an “anxiety of incompleteness”. The “Coward” and the “Traitor” are also “Internal Enemies”, who either fail to understand the importance of defending freedom of speech or who cowardly restrain from doing so. According to this scheme, the “Internal enemies” are responsible for the failed integration policies that they have created or maintained, and are also responsible for excessive generosity to immigrants who were never asked for any contribution in return.

To argue for an end of tolerance and claim that mocking and ridiculing Muslims are “acts of inclusion”, actually reaffirms the idea that there are incommensurable differences between “Them” and “Us”. The fact that the cartoons offend “Them” shows that “They” do not adhere neither to “Our” humour nor to “Our” values; thus, this is proof of their lack of integration. This dichotomization of a positive “Us” and a negative “Them” is a core element in the process leading to predatory narcissism and aggressive nationalism, as described by Appadurai.

These appeals for provocations and calls for an “end of tolerance”, clad in a rhetoric of war, sustain the idea that the lack of integration of Muslim minorities is a major problem caused by the incommensurable cultural and religious differences. Thus, “integration through ridicule” is a strategy that can only reproduce and worsen the very problem it claims to solve. The journalists and public intellectuals who support this framework rely on a rudimentary method of solving conflicts, a method that has become dominant in popular culture, namely the idea that by staying firm and being tough one can beat one’s opponents and re-establish peace and order. As such, claiming that the solution to the alleged lack of integration lies in intolerance, discipline, no compromise, no apology, and no dialogue positions is counter-productive.

Notes

1. Parts of this chapter were presented at the IAMCR conference, July 23-25, 2007, UNESCO, Paris. Writing up the chapter was made possible through a small grant from Malmö Institute for Studies of Migration, Diversity and Welfare (MIM). Thanks to the Paris audience for comments and thanks to MIM for the sponsorship. Other thanks go to the generous and constructive comments by Clarissa Berg and Robert Gibb.
2. Denmark’s largest nationally circulating newspaper, founded in 1871, today with a daily circulation of 149,760.
3. *France Soir* was founded in 1944, prospered during the fifties and became the top-selling newspaper in France in 1961 with a peak circulation figure in excess of one million. Since then, sales have dropped steadily to 50,000 copies per day. The newspaper has become increasingly sensationalist in content in an attempt to revive sales.
4. *Charlie Hebdo* is a satirical left wing newspaper, highly critical of religions. Where it is usually published in 140,000 copies, the special issue on the Mohammad controversy was to become

- the best selling issue of the paper's history as it was reprinted and sold in additional 400,000 copies.
5. In this paper, we draw on news articles, editorials and letters to the editor that have been written by public intellectuals, journalists and other media professionals, published in Danish and French newspapers, with special focus on fall 2005, February and March 2006, and February 2007.
 6. No English word seems to capture the meaning of "laïcité", which is sometimes translated to "laicity", or to secularism. "Laïcité" covers a separation between the Church and the State, which implies the absence of interference by religion in government affairs, and the State refraining from taking position on religious doctrine, as long as it is not contrary to the Law (Berthaut, Boe, et al. 2007).
 7. The media treatment of the cartoon controversy in Denmark was dominated by writers who adhere to Frame 1: *Freedom of Speech as a Danish Freedom* (Hervik and Berg 2007) and in France by Discourse 1 *Defending Freedom of Speech and Our Civilization* (Berthaut, Boe, et al. 2007).
 8. Philippe Val on French/German television Channel Arte, 16 October 2007.
 9. When the book was published later, in early 2006, Bluitgen had put so much emphasis on the violent aspects of Mohammed's life, that the publisher changed it from a "children's book" to a "family book".
 10. Both authors are journalists working for *Jyllands-Posten*. Their book is funded by The Jyllands-Posten Foundation and reads much like *Jyllands-Posten's* official version of the cartoon story.
 11. *Ekstra-Bladet* is the largest Danish tabloid, and fourth largest national newspaper.
 12. *B.T.* is the second largest Danish tabloid and fifth largest nationally circulating newspaper.
 13. <http://www.prochoix.org/cgi/blog/index.php/2006/03/01/413-manifesto-together-facing-the-new-totalitarianism>
 14. <http://snaphanen.dk/2008/04/01/ibn-warraq-apologists-of-totalitarianism-from-communism-to-islam/>
 15. Warraq's book is published in Danish in 2004 by Lars Hedegaard (2004).
 16. <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2006/08/20060810-3.html>
 17. Member of Parliament, chairwoman of the radical right-wing Danish People's Party since its foundation in 1995.
 18. Moral panic is characterized by out of proportion reaction against threats to common values, public concern, responses from experts in fields even beyond the original story and finally leading to social change and change of policies (Chritcher 2003, Cohen 1973, Hervik 1999)
 19. Reporter at *Le Figaro* since 1984. In 1999, he was awarded the Mumm (French equivalent to the Pulitzer Prize for an investigation on Osama Bin Laden's network in Albania.

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Chapter 13

Ourselves and Our Others

Minority Protest and National Frames in Press Coverage

Angela Phillips & Hillel Nosssek¹

International news has never been more available. Journalists have instant access to stories breaking anywhere in the world and can compare and contrast reactions to global news events. However, what we found in examining the Mohammed Cartoons affair (Kunelius, Eide et al. 2007) is that interpretive frames are not international. In each country journalists and comment columnists covered minority protest related to the cartoon crisis. In the process, they engaged in an internal struggle to define the identity of their nation, or their imagined community (Anderson 1983), in the light of the majority's relations to its minorities. These definitions were then used either to excuse or explain decisions relating to minority protest against the publication of the cartoons.

The struggle to define who “We” are, in opposition to “Our” minorities, or our “Others” was undertaken largely by the existing elite (see Phillips, Chapter 6, in this volume). In the non-Muslim countries surveyed, members of minority communities were to a greater or lesser extent marginalised in the debate. In most cases, rather than definers or participants they were the object of the debate. The treatment of minorities in other countries was also often used in national press coverage to define the strengths or weakness of the treatment that “We” give “Our Others”. In order to consider the “national framing” within which the press makes sense of events related to minority protest, we looked in detail at the press coverage in three countries: France, the UK and Israel. All three countries have a recent history of political unrest linked, at least in part, to the different approaches they have adopted in order to accommodate the relationship between the majority and its “Others” and to ensure the legal and political representation of its minorities.

We re-examined press coverage² of the protests against the “cartoons” affair in each country but, in order to provide some depth to our analysis, we also tracked back to look at the coverage³ of three additional, recent events concerning minority protest – one in each country: The “October Riots” in Israel in 2000 (described as part of the Palestinian “Intifada” in the British and French press). The “Bradford Riots” of 2001 in the UK, the “Banlieues Riots” in France in 2005 (that were referred to as the “Paris Riots” in the Israeli press, in spite

of them having taken place in various suburbs, not in Paris). In each case we examined how the newspapers represented their own minorities' protest but also how they described the way in which the other countries treated their minorities. We also looked at how these minorities (and these events) were named because: "naming is a quintessential metaphorical process" (Lakoff 1996) and we wanted to see how the naming changed across national boundaries and over time.

We started with a simple binary of exclusion/inclusion and analysed each event in each newspaper in terms of that binary. We looked at the moments when minorities were treated as "us" and when they were treated as "other" in the national press. When we examined how newspapers treated riots in the other two countries we were interested to see whether they made judgements in terms of their own national "frame".

The Evidence: Tracking Backwards

Covering the October Riots (Second Intifada) in Israel (2000)

In Israel in October 2000, according to most Western news reports⁴ at the time, Ariel Sharon, (then leader of the Israeli opposition) surrounded by a large armed contingent, made a well publicised and provocative visit, on the 28th of September 2000, to al-Haram al-Sharif, (the Temple Mount), which is both a Jewish and Muslim holy site. Israeli Arabs, joined the Palestinian second Intifada (that started immediately after the visit), on 1st October in a violent protest in which thirteen were shot and killed by Israeli police. This was a new departure. Israeli Arabs, as citizens of Israel, living within a common legal framework, had tended to stay out of the confrontations between Israel and her Palestinian neighbours. In Israel the action of the police and of these Arab/Muslim citizens, came under a great deal of press scrutiny internally and the news coverage has been subject to several research projects that concluded, in essence, that the press had adopted the government's frame. They saw the rioting by Israeli Arabs as a breach of the common assumptions by which citizens live peacefully together. By excluding them from the Israeli pluralist 'tent' (and regarding them in the same 'Othered' frame as the Palestinian Arabs) it was possible to maintain the view that real Israelis are able to tolerate difference and that, in this instance, the Arabs had excluded themselves by joining with the "Palestinian enemy" (Nieger, Zandberg and Abu-Raaya 2001).

The events in Israel were covered in the press of both France and Britain where they were described as the al-Aqsa or second, intifada⁵. In the French coverage, the rioting of Arab Israelis was explained by their exclusion within the Jewish state. To *Libération*, for instance, their rioting was due to "a strong feeling of solidarity" towards Palestinians and "several decades of frustration, disappointments, and discrimination", as they have far better living conditions than "Palestinians from the territories" but far worse than Israeli Jews (October 10, 2000).

UK news coverage of the events barely recognised that there was a difference in the way in which Israelis treat Arab citizens and non-citizens. Deaths were referred to throughout as “Palestinian deaths” though Suzanne Goldenberg (October 4, 2000) and Jonathan Freedland (October 11, 2000) in *The Guardian* did alert readers to a changed situation among people whom the latter, Freedland, called “Palestinians of Israel”. In *The Telegraph*, French political intervention (critical of Israel) was condemned: “French Muslims may have applauded him, but this [Chirac’s] crass act of political opportunism was the very opposite of statesmanship” (Comment, *The Telegraph*, October 10, 2000). This was just another chapter in an on-going and intractable dispute “over there”. The two British newspapers differ entirely in their interpretation of events but they did not relate them to events at home. Where *The Telegraph* saw French Muslims as a definable and politicised group, there is no record of any organised British Muslim response to these events in Britain.

Later that month, the French press related how the Intifada had been “brought home” with attacks on four synagogues in Paris and its suburbs. *Le Figaro* ran an interview with political scientist Bruno Etienne, leader of the Observatory of Religions, who argued:

In France, integration strategies are deeper than we usually believe (...) Since the Gulf War, there have been few problems between the Jewish and Muslim minorities. We do not have ethnic and religious riots the way other European countries such as Germany or Great Britain do. In France, what we face are social problems, urban movements (*Le Figaro*, October 12, 2000).

These rhetorical attacks on each other’s immigration and integration policies (often with complete disregard to the “facts on the ground”) turned out to be a common thread in the newspapers of all three countries.

Covering the Bradford Riots in Great-Britain (2001)

In the summer of 2001 neo-Nazi groups planned to march through the northern city of Bradford in England, where nineteen per cent of the population is Asian⁶. Anti-nazi groups and local Asian people had gathered to confront them. The march had been banned but fighting broke out between groups of people and then spread into a confrontation with police. The events were regarded in a law and order frame by the media, with stories about good people being let down by rogue elements who had in turn been provoked by white racists. The right-leaning *Sunday Telegraph* went to some lengths to demonstrate that the rioters were merely a minority in a community that shares key values with the majority population. The paper covered stories of an Asian man who had given refuge to frightened white neighbours and a white pub landlord who had no trouble reasoning with the rioters (Stokes July 8, 2001). *The Guardian* view was similar. On its “Comment” pages *The Telegraph* (Leader July 10, 2001) wrote that it saw the problem as one of inadequate policing. *The Guardian*

(Leader July 9, 2001) took the view that multiculturalism had not gone far enough – that young Asians felt excluded and that greater understanding and more inclusion were the way forward. In both newspapers there was a clear sense at this moment of a larger “We” which included most members of the Asian community and excluded racists.

The Israeli press viewed the events through a very particular frame shaped by events at home. *Ha’aretz* (July 10, 2001) reported that Bradford had the country’s largest Muslim population, a fact that had not been mentioned in British reports, which on the whole referred to them only as ‘Asians’. For the Israeli press the religion of the people of Bradford was the significant factor because it is religious affiliation that most clearly marks out difference at home. However in this case, the involvement of white racists might well have inclined the press to adopt a more sympathetic approach seeing the riots as a law and order issue rather than a problem of policy. The French press, like that of the British, made no mention of the rioters’ possible religious affiliations. *Le Figaro* referred to them as “violent racial riots” and “clashes” between “Youth originating from Asia” and “White youth” (July 9, 2001). A few days later, *Le Figaro* wrote that: “Inter-ethnic tensions persist in Bradford, city of intolerance and fear” (July 11, 2001). In *Libération* (Boltanski July 12, 2001), the Bradford disturbances were seen as caused by unemployment and racism and as a symptom of “failed integration policies” that relied on “traditional leaders”, who are more interested in “money and power” than in representing their community. According to both newspapers, Britain’s multicultural policies had led to increasing segregation. Communities live side by side without having any contact, and their mutual ignorance of each other’s ways had led to intolerance and racism. This criticism of Britain’s multicultural policies implicitly praised the French model of integration.

Covering the Banlieux Riots in France (2005)

In October 2005 two young men were electrocuted and died when they tried to get away from police who were pursuing them. There ensued a period of violent protest in several of France’s suburbs. Even when French journalists and commentators were somewhat sympathetic to the causes of the riots – such as discrimination, unemployment, tensions with the police, and even then Minister of the Interior Nicolas Sarkozy’s provocations towards suburban, marginalized youth – the dominant press coverage tended to show the rioters as being “un-integrated” in the Republic. Many journalists, even those critical of the Minister of the Interior, reproduced this very Minister’s framing of the events. They did so in their descriptions of the suburbs – and their inhabitants, saying they were out of reach of the laws of the Republic. Failed integration policies were often put forward as explanations. The rioters were represented as essentialized “Others”, often characterized as “immigrants”, in spite of the fact that most of them were French citizens (Morice 2005, Mucchieli 2006).

For the Israeli press the events in France were just another instance of rioting “Muslims” (though there was no evidence that the rioters were predominantly

Muslim). It was seen as evidence that the French model of integration had failed (*Ha'aretz*, November 7, 2005) and a vindication of the Israeli model. This frame may have been promoted or re-inforced by an interview with French philosopher and public intellectual Alain Finkelkraut, published in *Ha'aretz* on November 18, 2005, under the heading "They Are Not Unhappy, They Are Muslim":

They want to reduce the riots in the banlieux to their social dimension and see them as a riot led by youths against discrimination and unemployment. The problem is that the rioters were Black or Arabs, with a Muslim identity (...) We are clearly facing a riot of an ethnic-religious nature.

All evidence points against any link between the protests and Islam; yet in the UK too, the spectre of Islamic extremism started to make an appearance particularly in *The Telegraph* where Colin Randall (November 7, 2005) suggested that they might have been "orchestrated by Islamists". In the news coverage the riots in the French suburbs were framed as evidence of the exclusion of black, or North African immigrants in France. Comments in both newspapers examined were a mirror image of those in French newspapers four years earlier. Both weighed in with editorials about the failure of the French policy of integration and the superiority of the British approach. *The Telegraph* (Comment November 3, 2005) said: "The riots have cruelly laid bare the inadequacies of the French model". Jonathan Freedland in *The Guardian* (November 9, 2005) said: "Indeed, the problem of racial cohesion in Britain is far from solved, as we saw last month in Lozells. But multiculturalism is still the best model we have. And, after the last 10 days, it may be the only one left."

Coverage of the Cartoons Affair the following year should then be seen in a historical context. In each country, journalists were making news decisions within pre-existing national frames and using events both to describe and to reflect upon social and cultural policies internally and in contrast to events abroad.

Covering Minority Protests against Publication of the Cartoons

Protests in Britain

British newspapers had shown virtually no interest in the Danish cartoons affair until the day after they had been re-published in Europe. Within two days, editorials in all the newspapers examined, had come out against publication and condemned the European press for stirring up anger amongst "their" minorities. The fact that the decision in Great Britain not to publish was unanimous, added to the sense that this was a "British" reaction, and allowed the unsigned leader columns, which in the UK represent the voice of the newspaper, to take the high moral ground. The most common discourse across all the newspapers studied was one that glorified "British tolerance and restraint".

The Guardian questioned the motives of newspapers in countries that it felt had “Far less good histories of inter-communal relationships than ours”. (*Guardian* leader, February 3, 2006) and *The Telegraph* found that “Our restraint is in keeping with British values of tolerance and respect for the feelings of others.” (*Telegraph* leader, February 3, 2006).

It was clear across all newspapers that the British “We” is still white and Christian and espouses enlightenment values but that “our” enlightenment values lean in the direction of tolerance rather than the “grandstanding” indulged in by “Europeans”. (Leader, *The Daily Mail*, February 3, 2006). The comment columns framed the angry demonstrations happening abroad as the outpourings of “Others” who were far from home. This was seen as an irrational over-reaction by over-excited “Orientals” and was only to be expected if Western newspapers (who, it is implied, should be sufficiently courteous and understanding to know better) were injudicious enough to provoke people. The mood changed after a demonstration of 500 people in London on February 3rd was organised by fringe Muslim group al-Ghuraba. Analysis of news events have always demonstrated that news at home is covered in more depth than similar events abroad (Golding and Elliott 1996) and this was a classic example, however on this occasion the change of direction, and the depth of anger, regardless of political position, seemed to imply something rather more profound.

The build up was slow. The demonstration had taken place on a Friday and passed without much comment over the weekend. The then Foreign Secretary, Jack Straw, had chosen this moment to denounce the decision of European newspapers to publish the cartoons, calling it “gratuitously inflammatory”. In fact that was exactly what the newspapers in the UK had themselves been saying but the combination of Straw’s comments (which were constructed as an attack on press freedom), and the demonstration on Friday, in which inflammatory placards had been waved and a man had worn a mock “suicide bomb belt”, provided the impetus for an almost unanimous change of heart. Conservative Members of Parliament saw an opportunity to accuse the Government of protecting Muslim extremists at the expense of the majority community. Columnists who had so far reported the whole event as though through a long lens were suddenly focussing on events at home.

By Monday, leader comment in *The Daily Mail*, *The Daily Telegraph* and *The Guardian*, newspapers, suggested that the Government should step in and the demonstrators should be arrested for incitement to murder, because of the extreme nature of their placards and chants. Only *The Times* suggested that freedom of speech should apply to demonstrators as well as newspapers. It is most unusual for the right wing *Daily Mail* and the socially liberal *Guardian* to find themselves on the same side over an issue of this kind. On this occasion the liberal *Guardian* actually outflanked the *Mail* in its intolerance suggesting that: “They [the demonstrators] should be arrested, cautioned and placed under surveillance. If appropriate, the authorities must not be afraid of bringing charges. Those who are eligible for deportation should be deported.”

(Leader, *The Guardian*, February 6, 2006). *The Telegraph* explicitly linked the demonstration to loss of empire:

After all, the question of whether it is possible to be a good British Muslim is not a new one. Hundreds of millions of Muslims lived peacefully under the British Crown, in India, Sudan, Malaya and elsewhere. They saw no conflict between their faith and their civic loyalty, fighting for Britain even when we went to war against the Ottoman Caliph. The difference is that, in those days, we had confidence in ourselves, and conveyed this confidence to others. (*The Telegraph*, February 6, 2006)

The most startling thing about this reaction is the insignificance of the incident that triggered it. The demonstration was small, there were no arrests and no one was hurt and yet it received massive and universally condemnatory coverage. It was picked up and re-interpreted by other commentators in the press of other countries as evidence of “disintegrating race relations” in the UK. Rather than seeking out members of the Muslim community who might speak up in favour of press freedom, the press polarised the debate. All shades of moderate (and even not so moderate) Muslim organisations denounced the demonstration, and two weeks later, they went on to organise bigger but far less inflammatory demonstrations. However, these attempts to re-capture the agenda from the extreme Islamist group failed. They were barely reported and in some cases positively derided. According to a *Times* leader (February 7): “It has become depressingly routine for moderate Muslims, rightly endorsed by Government, to denounce the excesses of extremists as un-Islamic.”

Columnists in the *Mirror* and the *Mail* disregarded the feelings of Muslim solidarity in the UK and across the world and were equally dismissive of moderate Muslim opinion:

On Saturday we had yet another Muslim demonstration in London against the Danish cartoons of Mohammed. Why? By my reckoning, that was the third march in London alone and the cartoons haven’t even been published here. (Richard Littlejohn (*The Daily Mail*, February 21, 2006)

It’s hard to understand why it was strictly necessary to demonstrate, for the third week running, about something that didn’t even happen here.

I’m baffled, as many of us are, as to how we’re supposed to react. Respect is demanded but how much more respect can we pay a religion which is alien to most of us in almost every sense? (Sue Carroll, *The Daily Mirror*, February 22, 2006).

In contrast to the coverage of Bradford five years earlier, the British press chose to ignore evidence that minority communities might seek to be part of the debate. They focussed instead on their differences (and often explicitly referring to an exclusive “Us”) taking a “clash of civilisations” frame (Lewis 1990, Huntington

1998). By choosing to promote the interests of Islamist group al-Ghuraba, the press, in effect, seemed to have decided to allow this “enemy within”, possessing all the characteristics of the Orientalist “Other” described by Edward Said (1979), to “stand in” as a symbol of the British Muslim community.

The sharp change in coverage, even since the previous year during the Banlieux riots, when British multicultural policy was seen as the way forward, seemed to signal a new direction in the cultural framing of ethnicity in the UK.

Protest in France

Initially, the French press published articles about the cartoon affair in their international sections, covering the beginning of the affair in Denmark and reactions to the cartoons abroad as a result of various governments’ manipulation of their own citizens, or of minorities in other countries. It was only when *France Soir* became the first French newspaper to re-publish all twelve cartoons that the debate took off, dominated by a discursive framework based on the notion of *laïcité* and calls for the defence of freedom of the press, and for publication of the cartoons. In France, the judgement of journalists and media professionals regarding other newspapers’ choices to publish or not was clearly influenced by the newspapers’ positioning in the media field, and their relations to one another. There was clear interaction between the media and political fields (see Hervik and Boe, Chapter 12, in this volume). Several newspapers seemed to choose their editorial stance according to whether they wanted to support or oppose the government and President Jacques Chirac, who made several statements against the publishing of the cartoons.

The demonstrations in Israel against publishing were not reported in the French press, whereas protests in the jurisdiction of the Palestinian Authority got press coverage. In general, the French press represented protests in the Middle East as violent and strategically manipulated by totalitarian regimes. The French press also commented on the fact that no British newspaper had published the cartoons, suggesting that censorship and self-censorship regarding religion in general and Islam in particular were central in the British press: “The bombings in July in London, the British troops in Iraq, and the willingness not to hurt the strong Muslim community have reinforced the English press’ self-censorship when it comes to religious issues” (*Libération*, February 3, 2006). Later that month, *Libération* reported how a Welsh student magazine, *Gair Rhydd*, which can be translated from the Welsh as “Free Speech”, had been censored: “In a society where religion, from the institutional and monarchical Anglican Church to the Catholic faith of Cherie Blair, is very respected, and in an uncertain context, the press preferred to be prudent” (*Libération*, February 9, 2006).

Demonstrations in London were reported as being led by “demonstrators against blasphemy holding signs saying that infidels’ heads should be cut off” (*Libération*, February 3, 2006). The choice of the term “demonstrators against blasphemy” is not innocent in a country where *laïcité*, or the separation between Church and State is central to the national self-understanding. Once

more, this critique of the place of religion in the British model of the nation indirectly praises the French model of integration, according to which belief is to be relegated to the private sphere.

In France, several Muslim organizations began litigation against the publication of the Danish cartoons; and on February 11th, members of the Muslim Council, CFCM, called for a rally in order to “give the French Muslim a nice image” in the name of “respect for religions and for journalistic ethics”. Anti-racist organization MRAP joined them, arguing that the cartoon showing Mohammed with a bomb-shaped turban on his head had been published with the specific intention to “provoke, hurt, humiliate and stigmatize, and that it contributes to a racist confusion between Muslims and terrorists”.⁷

These events were reported by French journalists and commentators, who often emphasized that there were no violent reactions from French Muslims to the publishing of the cartoons. A framework based on the notion of a “clash of civilizations” in France was very seldom suggested by journalists, who described “our” “French” Muslims and their reactions to be calm, moderate and democratic – whether they happened to be readers and public intellectuals in letters to the editor, demonstrators or the legalist responses from Muslim representatives. The French press thus distinguished between supposedly backward and irrational Muslims abroad, and sensible, democratic, modern Muslims in France, who have been successfully educated to the ways of democracy. In the following editorial from *France Soir*, this is seen as a proof of the superiority of the French model of *laïcité*: “It is, however, reassuring to see that the majority of Muslims in France stay calm in spite of being outraged or shocked. It is a sign of Reason gaining ground [...] This is *France Soir*’s battle.” (Serge Faubert, *France Soir*, February 4, 2006).

In France, the cartoon crisis can be separated into two phases: an initial phase, in February 2006, when several newspapers re-published the cartoons and a second phase, in February 2007, when *Charlie Hebdo*, one of the papers that had published the cartoons, was taken to court by some Muslim organisations. During the first phase, the French press tended to celebrate the distinction between “Our” “good” Muslims, who turn to democratic means if they wish to protest against the cartoons, unlike “Their” “bad” Muslims, in other countries, who resort to violence when they protest. During the second phase of the cartoon crisis, however, the court case against *Charlie Hebdo* was treated as an internal matter. Muslims were then distinguished as “good” Muslims if they supported *Charlie Hebdo* and freedom of speech, while “bad” Muslims were those who filed suit against *Charlie Hebdo*.

Protest in Israel

The secular liberal approach favoured in France – holding that freedom of expression is an important universal value which takes precedence over any possible encroachment upon religious sensibilities (Liberal Fundamentalism) was advocated only by a very few Israeli intellectuals who expressed their

views in the Op-Ed columns of *Ha'aretz*. The Israeli press almost unanimously expressed a position that advocated limiting freedom of speech when it hurts the sensitivities of social groups, including the believers of various religions. The dominant framing was that the incident was a problem of European countries with their Muslim populations. Hence, the incident was presented essentially as a manifestation of the war of civilizations (Islam vs. the West).

In the Israeli case there was also one particular strand in the debate that made Israel a somewhat special case of the “double standards” rhetoric which appeared in many other places as well. Occasionally Arab Muslim states employ oppositional caricatures of Israel, the Jewish people and Judaism which either are reminiscent of, or are even copies of well known old Nazi propaganda caricatures. Such caricatures have never been denounced by Muslim clergy and are rarely denounced by the European press:

Indeed, people from the West are not insulted by much, much worse caricatures published in Muslim countries, mainly because they consider Muslims the ‘bad kids on the block’, and don’t expect too much of them... the problem is, that even at home, in England, Holland, Germany, France, and Belgium, the children of Muslim immigrants are evidence of the failure of the western melting pot. The gentle process of ‘multicultural’ blending through the allures and threats of the free market, has failed” (A. Kleinberg “The Post-Politically-Correct Era”. *Yedioth Aharonoth*, February 22, 2006).

So the Israeli press felt able to position itself as paradoxically having a superior understanding and insight into the experience of being repressed, ridiculed and marginalized and, therefore, having a better understanding of the reactions of Muslims and any other religious and national, ethnic or cultural communities. This opportunity to occupy the moral high ground, in relation to those European countries that regularly criticise Israel, was too good to miss. The newspapers took obvious pleasure in being able to demonstrate the others failures of policy towards minorities. The demonstrations in the UK, where there were no arrests and no one was hurt were reported in *Ha'aretz* under the headline: “A Muslim Leader: The British Are Demonizing a Community” (A. Oni, *Ha'aretz*, February 17, 2006). Also, *Yedioth Aharonoth* (February 7, 2006: 23) wrote of “stormy” demonstrations in London (H. Hazan, Y. Bar, J. Louis and P. Abbas).

This understanding is also well illustrated by the UK correspondent of *Ha'aretz* who chose the following quote in an article about the UK: “The situation of the Muslims in Britain is worse than that of the Jews in Germany in the 1930s,’ claims Mas’ud Shadjara, Head of the Muslim Human Rights Council and a prominent leader of Britain’s Muslim community” (Assaf Oni, *Ha'aretz*, February 17, 2006). This approach is also evident when we turn to the correspondent of *Yedioth Aharonoth* in France whose article was headed “France: The Capital of Anger in Europe”. (S. Handler, *Yedioth Aharonoth*, February 3, 2006).

The choice of word to describe the behaviour of protestors in Israel and the Palestinian authority leads to the conclusion that “our” Muslims know how to

protest while “their” Muslims, the Muslims in the Palestinian Authority, together with other Arab and Muslim states as well as those living in Europe are different and not acculturated to the western standards of liberal democracy, let alone Western civilization and culture. Demonstrations in Israel were reported on the news pages with low key headlines and very little comment:

in Nazareth, too, there was a massive demonstration, attended by some 15,000 people waving green flags and shouting curses against the West. The rally ended quietly. D. Shaked and P. Abbas *Yedioth Aharonoth* (February 5, 2006: 19).

Demonstrations in the Palestinian Authority (The West Bank and Gaza) were reported in stronger language:

Dozens of Palestinians burst into the German Cultural Center in Gaza, smashing windows, and causing considerable damage...in Hebron, hundreds demonstrated opposite the offices of the multinational peacekeeping force, trampling the Danish flag and burning the Norwegian and German flags... D. Shaked and P. Abbas *Yedioth Aharonoth* (February 5, 2006).

Thus, the press coverage tended to play up the violent protests elsewhere and play down the demonstrations at home. By treating the cartoon case as “a problem of European countries with their Muslim populations” (Nossek 2007: 156), the Israeli press re-affirmed that the Israeli system – an Ethno Democratic state with a Jewish majority and an Arab minority that has individual rights but also ethnic cultural rights – is superior to, for instance, the British multicultural model or the French model of integration.

Tracking the National Frames

The shifting concept of multiculturalism frames all debates on ethnicity in the United Kingdom (Baumann 1996: 22). Society is represented as a mosaic of communities, each with its essentialized culture. The importance of difference between cultures, as opposed to similarity between individuals – is deeply dyed into the discourse. This tendency to see cultures and communities, not as spaces for possibly fleeting relationships, and points of temporary identification, but as concrete entities, has underpinned the press coverage of the cartoons affair in the UK, as it does most debates on ethnicity. Individuals are defined as belonging to this or that community and are encouraged to seek representation in the public sphere through their communities. There is much debate about who “represents” these communities (see for example M. Jan-Khan, *The Guardian*, July 12, 2001). This policy approach has never been uncontentious. Gerd Baumann, for example, suggests that it is an extension of a colonial ethos and a “time honoured colonial strategy,” which ensures that groups are divided

from one another when negotiating for social benefits (Baumann 1996: 28-29). Lord Bihkhu Parekh, who acted as Chair of the Commission on Future of Multi-ethnic Britain, wrote that multiculturalism is a means to “celebrate” difference rather than erasing it. (Parekh 2006: 6).

To begin with, the editors in the UK approached the cartoon question as a contest between different ways of “managing” difference and concluded that the British way was the correct and mature approach rooted in both British philosophy and colonial experience. When a small group of radical Islamists staged a noisy and provocative demonstration, the anger expressed in the editorials was akin to the rage of parents whose children have betrayed them in a public place. They seemed to be incensed that “our” Muslims should repay the restraint of the press in such a way and also to be afraid that ‘the stranger in our midst’ had turned against “Us”.

Looking back at the coverage of earlier cases of minority protest, it seems that the Cartoon Debate marked a turning point, a crisis in confidence about British ways of handling minorities. In earlier coverage, religion was not seen as an important constituent of “difference”. In the 2005 coverage of the Bantleux Riots, religious identification of the rioters started to creep into coverage towards the end and was dominant on the Comment Pages of *The Telegraph* (though not in *The Guardian*). Clearly the nature of the “cartoons” debate ensured that religion would be central but the framing of the coverage, and the tendency to identify the demonstrations with the Muslim community rather than with a group within the Muslim community, was not dictated by the events themselves.

In the course of our analysis the British press moved from Liberal Pragmatism, when there was no internal threat, to Liberal Fundamentalism, and a defence of mono-cultural Western values, when a threat was perceived (Kunelius, Eide et al 2007: 17). Dialogic multiculturalism was represented only as a minority discourse in *The Guardian* and *The Independent on Sunday*. Far from representing a “rainbow” of community groups, harmoniously respecting each others differences, the UK press saw itself as the guardian of a Western, indeed British, tradition ready to rush to the barricades to protect these ‘core values’ at the merest hint of opposition.

It is striking how much the framing of British Muslims as “the Other” has been normalised since the Cartoons debate. A front-page article in the tabloid *Sun* newspaper (February 8, 2008) called for Archbishop Rowan Williams, (Head of the Anglican Church) to resign because he suggested that aspects of Muslim law could be incorporated into British law. The headline was: “Williams: Victory for Terrorism”.

The dominant press in France framed the debate within a discourse of integration and *laïcité*: the separation of Church and State, celebrating those members of minority groups who respected so-called “republican values”. In the French ideal model of integration, France is defined politically by a social contract, and to the adherence of individual citizens to their state and its laws (Schnapper 1991). In this model, there is a strict separation of the private and

the public sphere, of state and religion. In the public sphere, an individual is represented and is expected to act as a citizen of the Republic only, leaving all cultural or religious differences aside. The State refrains from interfering or taking a position on cultural or religious aspects of a citizen's life, and the citizen may do what he or she wants in the private sphere, as long as the laws of the Republic are respected (Bleich 2003: 10).

Looking back at the Banlieux Riots in 2005, this law and order frame made it possible for the press to speak of marginalized suburban youth as "Others" on the grounds that they did not respect the laws of the Republic, and that they were occupying territories that neither the state through the police, nor the press could enter. It did not separate out a particular ethnic sub-group as the Israeli and, latterly the British press did. However both the government and the press did use the opportunity to stigmatise "immigrants" although subsequent trials showed that very few of the rioters were, in fact, immigrants. Most were French citizens. (Morice 2005, Mucchieli 2006).

In the beginning of the cartoon crisis, in early 2006, the dominant media distinguished between "our" moderate Muslims, and "their" fanatic Muslims. "Our" Muslims respected the legal right to publish and used democratic means to show how hurtful they found the cartoons: peaceful demonstrations, writing letters to the editor, or filing a court case. Muslim minorities in other countries ("their" Muslims), who used intimidation and violence to protest against the cartoons, were represented as violent, archaic and undemocratic, in their attempt to censure a universal value, Freedom of Speech, stemming from the French Revolution.

This dominant world view reproduces the Orientalist figures of "Other" vs. "Us" (Said 1979), in a world split between Western democratic states with rational, educated, calm populations, on one side, and on the other, despotic totalitarian Middle Eastern regimes where populations are uneducated, unsatisfied, frustrated and easily manipulated into irrational and violent actions. At the beginning of 2006, in press coverage that spoke of other countries' minorities, this "Us" included "Our" Muslims – the "Others" who have benefited from education and enlightenment in our country and have come to recognize freedom of speech as a fundamental value. The narrative of "our" Muslims – or "our Others" – reactions to the cartoons crisis thus became a celebration of "Ourselves", of the superiority of *laïcité* and "our" national model of integration of minorities.

When the court case against *Charlie Hebdo* started a year later, in 2007, this celebration of "Our" minorities against "Theirs", became set in an opposition between "good" Muslims – the ones who respect "our" fundamental values, such as freedom of speech and *laïcité* – and "bad" Muslims – who wish to "reinstate the law against blasphemy". As mentioned earlier, the argument that "Muslims wish to reinstate a law against blasphemy" is a strong rhetorical weapon in France, used against those who argue for showing respect towards religious feelings, as "blasphemy" is reminiscent of the times before the French Revolution, when France was undemocratic – or of the culture that "bad" Muslims have brought with them from the despotic, totalitarian regimes that they have

migrated from. In this scenario, Muslims who celebrate their religion in the private sphere without asking for any special treatment from the French press or French justice, thus bring proof that they are integrated, and as such, that they are “good” Muslims.

In Israel, ‘difference’, in terms of ethnicity and religion is fundamental but played out in a very different way. Israel was created as a specifically ‘Jewish’ state with the assumption that all internal cultural difference would melt into a single, monopolistic, Israeli, Jewish culture and that this would coexist alongside an ethno-cultural Arab minority (currently 16.3 per cent of the population) with equal civic legal rights as citizens and special cultural rights as an ethno-cultural minority (Smootha 1989, 2002, 2004). More recently the country has had to recognise the cultural divisions amongst Jewish Israelis from different diasporic cultures, as well as Muslims and Christians, and has moved towards what it describes as a pluralist cultural policy in which citizens are free to follow their own community culture of origin alongside the dominant national Israeli culture. These ostensibly contradictory trends are reflected in Israel’s civil rights legislation and the drive towards legal equality for different social groups. These groups include the Arab minority, women, gays and lesbians, foreign workers, and immigrants not considered “halachically” Jewish (Jewish according to orthodox Jewish religious law). This internal struggle for a way to live together is played out against the background of almost permanent war with its Arab neighbours and in the shadow of the deeper historical memory of the Jews as a persecuted minority in Europe and in the Holocaust.

One could infer from the coverage in the Israeli press that it reinforced the basic Jewish majority’s attitudes towards the Israeli Arabs and the rest of the Muslim world (Smootha, 1989, 2002, 2004). From the analysis of the coverage it is evident that the Israeli press attributed to “our” Muslims a different behaviour than to “other” Muslims who are part of the Arab and non-democratic non-western Muslim states as well as “their” diasporic Muslims, the ones that live in Western Europe and do not accept the western and democratic way of life.

The only newspaper to publish any articles in favour of total press freedom was *Ha’aretz*. Most opinion in the Israeli media identified with Muslim anger while at the same time condemning the violence with which Muslims demonstrated their feelings and comparing this to the (superior) Jewish reaction to the persistent use of anti-Semitic caricatures in Arab newspapers. The most outstanding insight from the analysis of the coverage of the demonstrations in Israel, in the Palestinian Authority, in “Other” Arab or Muslim states and in England, France and the rest of Europe is that *here*, in the state of Israel, Muslims are part of a democratic state. They have freedom of expression and know their rights and the limits of these rights. “We”, the Jewish majority, understand their rage and appreciate their feelings and civilized and controlled reactions. This enhances the majorities’ understanding and acceptance of pluralism and tolerance in contrast with fundamentalism from both sides.

In contrast to the events of 2000, the protests by Israeli Muslim Arabs were covered in an inclusive frame, suggesting that the Israeli Muslims are integrated

into the political civic democratic state and have the right to follow their religion. No Israeli newspaper published the cartoons and the whole affair was conducted at arms length. In spite of the fact that there were big demonstrations on Temple Mount and in Gaza, the Israeli press chose to deal with the cartoons affair in the international pages, and concentrated on the fact that it was a European country which was bearing the brunt of Muslim anger.

The Israeli press seemed almost to take comfort from the fact that, for once, it was not the Israelis who were under attack for their attitudes. This seemed to fit into the general framing of the Israeli press suggested by Israeli academic Daniel Dor; namely of the need to justify the place of Israel in the court of world opinion. He said, "The *third person* involved in the discourse between the media and the public is not the government or the military, but the *outside world*. What all the media project, what they offer their audiences as a core marker of identity, is ... a sense that the entire world directly blames us, the people, for things we are not guilty of" (Dor 2004: 102). By providing evidence that European countries were also having to defend their way of life against Islamic demands, the publication of the cartoons provided the Israeli Press with a fleeting, but well-used, opportunity to sit in judgement on Europe's relationship with its own Muslim minorities

Conclusions

Journalists, wherever they were based, interpreted events and framed the debate in ways, which helped to make sense of changes in their own social world. The cartoon affair may have been a quintessentially global news event but journalists referred to it as their own "maps of meaning" (Hall 1997: 2) in order to make sense of it. In doing so they constructed stories, or commentary, in which different aspects of the dispute were amplified (or made less significant), and analysed in the light of internal debates about policies towards ethnic and religious minorities.

As we looked back on the coverage of three cases of minority protest, we paid special attention to the press definitions of the reasons for the riots and identity of those deemed to be "rioters". We found that certain terms have become "floating signifiers" taking up new meanings according to the context, both national and international. The use of the term "Muslim" had particular resonance. For the Israeli press, world events become interesting when they can be viewed within a very particular frame shaped by events at home. In the dominant Israeli press coverage of Bradford and the Banlieux as well as of the Cartoon debate, those who were rioting, or involved in disturbances, were named as "Muslim" even when their religious affiliations (or lack of them) were not mentioned or considered relevant by the national press of those countries.

It was striking that, over time, in the UK press, the term 'Muslim' also started to be attached to acts and people who were considered "outsiders". In

the earliest reports, Israeli Arabs are named as Palestinians and their dispute is seen as political. In Bradford, Asians who did not riot, were included in the national “we”, while neo-Nazi groups and rioting Asian youth were seen as “Others” – the religious affiliations of the rioters were rarely referred to and the word “Muslim”, where it was used at all, did not appear to carry connotations of violence and the dispute was seen as one of internal policy. The Cartoon Debate, however, launched a new phase in the national conversation about minority communities – a debate which was still held within the frame of multiculturalism but was starting to critique it. By this time, the signifier “Muslim”, had started to take on new meanings. Little room was left for nuances in the representation of Muslims. Whether they were against the publications or not, they had slipped from “Us”: to “Other”.

In France, journalists never characterised the rioters as “Muslim” in their news coverage of the banlieux disturbances. The media presented marginalized urban youth, and the suburbs they inhabit as being out of reach of the laws of the Republic. During the first phase of the cartoon crisis, this law and order frame was emphasized to praise Muslims who used democratic means to protest against the publications. In the second phase, however, Muslims who filed a case against the publication, were condemned as “outsiders” who failed to understand the binding importance of *laïcité*.

In all cases it was clear that, when the minority does not accept the role given by the majority (or is represented as such), they are condemned by the media. When they accept the rules of the game, as established by the majority, they are praised. Thus it is possible to see that, in all three countries, the media were not so much playing a role in defining “press freedom” but rather playing out their role in defining who are insiders or outsiders in their societies.

Notes

1. We wish to thank Carolina Boe for contributing to this chapter by collecting and partly translating the French material. Any errors are, of course, our own. Hillel Nossek wishes also to thank Ms Maya Litwin-Yeshua for her help in research for this chapter.
2. In the process of examining the affair of the cartoons, six newspapers were chosen for analysis in each of the countries; these papers represented a spread of the political spectrum in each country and a range of popular/elite publications (cf. Berthaut, Boe et al 2007; Nossek 2007, Phillips 2007).
3. We chose two newspapers from each country representing differing political approaches. In Israel: *Ha'aretz* (circulation ca. 90,000 copies), an elite daily newspaper known for its liberal editorial policy and read mainly by the Israeli liberal and intellectual left, and *Yedioth Abaronoth* (circulation ca. 370,000 copies), a popular newspaper that caters to the center-right of the political spectrum. Both are published in Hebrew. In France: left-wing *Libération* (127,229 copies) and right-wing *Le Figaro* (322,497 copies), close to the current government. In the UK, we chose two ‘quality’ newspapers, *The Daily Telegraph* (850,000 copies), with a right-leaning editorial policy and *The Guardian* (338,000 copies), with a left/liberal editorial policy.
4. <http://archives.cnn.com/2000/WORLD/meast/09/28/jerusalem.violence.02/> In Israel many believe that the visit was only an excuse for the Palestinians to resort to violence after the Camp David talks failed

5. <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2001/sep/20/israel>
6. Figures provided by Bradford City Council.

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Chapter 14

Between the Ritual and the Rational

From Media Events to Moments of Global Public Spheres?

Risto Kunelius & Hillel Nossék

One of the defining questions in media research is the tension between the ritual and the rational. On the one hand we acknowledge the ritual. Media partly emerge from and carry with them strong social functions related to the cohesion of societies and communities. On the other hand we believe in the rational. Media play an important (albeit imperfect) part of the social practices and institutions of self-reflection and criticism. One useful way of trying to capture the dynamics of the ritualistic aspect of media performance is the model of *media events*. Key concerns around the problem of rationalization, on the other hand, have been discussed around the notion of the *public sphere*. Both these concepts have been developed within another key notion of modernity, the nation state. Hence, it is not surprising that since debates about modernization have been reformulated as debates about globalization, such key concepts have also been decorated with the adjective “global”.

In this chapter, we take a look at some of the features of the cartoon controversy through the prism provided by a discussion around the media role in ritualizing and rationalizing at the global level. In doing so, we largely bypass the discussion about whether or not – and in what sense – the idea of a “global epoch” in itself is “true” (cf. Sparks 2007). Our reference to “global” is rather technical. We make no broad claims about either the fall of the nation-state as a political operator or the rise of the media as central to global power processes. However, we do think that recent changes in media networks and technologies suggest that the role of media and journalism in the dialectics between ritualization and rationalization merits closer scrutiny. We wish to use our study of the international cartoon conflict as a chance to look for preliminary evidence of how the media (and journalism in particular) represent and interpret transnational and transcultural news. Without claiming any sort of exhaustiveness we approach this question first by linking it to some discussions concerning *media events*, a theory or model originally suggested by Dayan and Katz (1992), and recently (under the “spell” of globalization) reformulated and broadened by others (Cottle 2007, Couldry and Rothenbuhler, 2007, Cottle, 2008, Dayan, 2006, Liebes and Katz 2007). Within this discussion, we look at the ways in

which the media's functional, ritualistic role operates in connection to transnational news. Secondly, we tap into a growing body of literature that extends the theory of the *public sphere* into global or transnational contexts (cf. Keane 2003, Silverstone 2006, Lull 2007, Calhoun 2007, Volkmer 2002). With the help of this discussion we ask whether the coverage of the cartoon event included any signs of a *global public sphere(s)*.

It goes without saying that in the end there is no conclusive evidence. But returning to such fundamental questions of modern media theory hopefully helps us in two ways. First, it is our task these days not only to try and make sense of how the media actually functions. Second, this sense-making should also help us recognize some of the emerging pitfalls and possibilities of the new political, cultural and technological context of globalizing modernity.

Media Events and Mediatized Rituals

At the heart of talking about media events is the notion of ritual. Simon Cottle (2006) has elaborated this terrain by distinguishing six categories of mediated rituals: moral panic, celebratory media events, conflicted media events, media disasters, media scandals, and mediated public crises. Couldry and Rothenbuhler (2007) have criticized this move for over-extending the idea of ritual in relation to media events to fit almost any extensive coverage of an event by the media. It is indeed important to bear in mind James Carey's (1975) old lesson that journalism always carries with it a ritualistic aspect of cultural reproduction. Nonetheless, both of these recent contributions rightly remind us that we need a nuanced understanding of the different ways in which ritualistic elements are played out in different kinds of media events. This has become particularly important in relations to events that can be deemed "global". The transnational and trans-cultural aspects of such event raise new questions about what kind of rituals serve which communities when it comes to globalized media events.

Originally, Daniel Dayan and Elihu Katz (1992) built their theory of media events on functional-structural premises. In their original formulations, the focus was on the effects that live TV broadcasts had on the main actors in an event: the perpetrators, media themselves, and the audience (which watches the event without being actually present). For the most part, the notion of media events was developed to make sense of the ritualized, orchestrated (positively framed, national) spectacles common to the age of television. (Cottle [2006] calls these "celebratory" media events). Recently, Katz and Liebes (2007) have asked whether this model is still valid. They suggest that the media today in fact sometimes collaborate with perpetrators who are enemies of society, thus themselves becoming dysfunctional. They suggest we ought to reframe our conception of media events to encompass negative as well as positive events, and that in such cases as terrorism the media may actually be said to co-produce the "news" event with the terrorists. Conversely, with positive events, the media may cooperate with governments and official institutions. In both

cases, the media have an important and *sine qua non* function, although they still have a secondary role in the creation and production of the event. In any case, the first thing to bear in mind about media events is the fact that social actors (domestic, foreign, benign, critical and hostile) orchestrate their actions by anticipating media coverage. In that sense, their action is dramaturgically defined by the logic of media representations or spectacles.

Nossek (2008) suggests another interpretation of the role of media in dramatizing negative “outside” threats and actions to society¹. He argues that media should not be perceived as collaborators with the enemies of society, but rather, in many cases, we would do better by assuming a somewhat independent role undertaken by the media as a whole – and also in distinction from the real or imagined professional autonomy of journalists. According to Nossek, the role of the *media* is not directly dictated by anyone, neither by the establishment, nor the social leadership, nor the perpetrators of the event. He suggests that there are, in a sense, “news media-media events”. In such events, some of the dramaturgic elements of the event may indeed have been prefigured by the perpetrators (such as terrorists) but there is a crucial difference between their attempts to co-opt the media and media’s actual reaction. In the end, whatever the pre-scripted ideas of the terrorists might be, it is the media who essentially write the story, and thus dramatize the “original” event into a media event. In this work of dramatization, all the media (old and new) play a role in shaping the response to the event and the public memory of it later on. This symbolic work of the media is not simply synchronized with the dramaturgical initiatives of perpetrators (be they friends or enemies).

The model of “news media-media event” focuses on the media as the main actor. The media frame the story and the whole media system participates in shaping the response to the event and its subsequent public memory. Often in connection to dramatic events, a common media message emerges despite the multiplicity of TV channels: other media besides TV – newspapers, radio and the internet – take part in the creation and performance of the ritual along with the audience. Moreover, the news media-media event is not necessarily limited in time to the live broadcast of television and might be expanded to more than one day, with all the news media taking part in creating the story and performing the ritual. For instance weekend magazines are usually very active in rebuilding the story according to the shared narrative frame (ibid.).

Particularly in large-scale terrorist attacks, the media’s active role is a more independent and primary one. They become co-producers of the *media event* – not the act of terrorism itself – and their conception of the audience’s needs and their own social role cannot be reduced to serving either the government or the perpetrators. Rather, the relationship between the audience and the media becomes central. In moments of crisis, journalists act as members of an imagined community and their professionalism is pushed aside (or complemented) by the role of a ritualized storyteller. Nossek (ibid.) argues that this role is mostly local, not global, and dominantly cultural, not professional.

Through the reporting and narrative work of the “news media-media event”, a new actor category often emerges: victims become heroes -- symbolic representatives for the audience, as the media seek meaning in their non-heroic deaths. The event thus continues from its initial negative act into a symbolic closure anchored in the local audiences. The story is often carried through to the end on the basis of emotions rather than reason.

Hence, in a case of a “news media – media event” the basic sociological and anthropological definitions of ritual come to the fore. The concept points to the idea that the media are also the producers of the ritual content and not just the transmitters or amplifiers of symbolic action performed by other actors (e.g. political leaders, religious leaders etc.). The ritual carries the exceptional moment through a series episodes into a closure which – just as in non mediated rituals – helps the community (audience) to understand and to feel that the event is over and there is a return to routine day-to-day business. The media coverage enables a communion of grief to occur, identifies the heroes of the event, and gives meaning to what happened in terms of the national culture and its master narratives. Even technically global and negative media events, then, are dramaturgically domesticated by the media.

This dimension of domestication becomes more nuanced with the example of massive terrorist events. We can distinguish between the coverage of external and internal terrorist events. *External terror* is an international foreign news event and does not necessarily carry a “news media- media event” effect. When the act of terrorism takes place somewhere else, one can say that the media reproduces a picture of a dangerous world syndrome and serves terrorists by showing off their muscle. It affects tourism and international freedom of movement. It increases the amount of resources that citizens are willing to see spent on security and allows governments to violate the public’s rights and privacy. *Internal terror*, in which terror appear at home ground, conforms to a different model. Here the news becomes a domestic media event, which follows other rules. In internal events, the media themselves create a ritual that places (as rituals do) the values of integration and cohesion at the center. It also opens up a path to the rapid return to normality by telling about security forces controlling the situation, heroic rescue of victims and also producing meaningful narratives about the (irrational and wasteful) death of victims . All this strengthens resilience. In doing this work, the media employ local myths and connect to the master narratives of the society.

High profile terror events illustrate well the role played by the news media. When events are interpreted by the media as a threat to society’s existence, they easily trigger the media to perform a ritual that often overrides professional concerns. The ritual is a convention in which journalists, editors, producers, directors, photographers, and the audience all follow a familiar, highly ritualized screenplay. Professionals become “human beings”, so to speak, and thus are able to transgress normal professional conventions, actions that can become part of the ritual. Each has a part set out in the script. Functionally speaking, one might say that the society creates a ritual, dictated by the need of the hour

– the perception of an existential threat – where the journalists of the electronic and print media carry out the ritual as proxies for their society.

The ritual becomes part of the coverage and its aim is to weaken the threatening and alarming message of the terrorists, the anxiety and the shock, returning the audience to normality, while bolstering the country's or the communities resilience in the face of terror, and confirming that conflicts can only be resolved through the application of its own values, without using extreme and varying forms of political violence. The ritual calls for framing within a traditional patriotic form of coverage, and the suspension of the normative professional frame – until the storm passes and the country regains its sense of control and security. The ritual redefines the identity of the victims and their families in the war against evil forces that are threatening the central values of the society. Free “society” is usually of course the nation, but sometimes terrorism also sparks media reactions where such “natural” borders of identity and solidarity are transgressed ².

Media Ritualizing the Cartoon Case

When one studies the cartoon controversy one finds illustrations of many elements of the media event model. At the same time, it also opens up new questions. To begin with, one might suggest that the Mohammed cartoon incident was indeed a *media* driven media event, since *Jyllands-Posten* played such a crucial role in starting the controversy. By setting up the “test” for self-censorship, the paper constructed an image of a threat posed by the Muslims. This threat was, from the beginning, linked to the master narratives of Western self-understanding, and particularly to a perceived Danish identity. Thus, the publishing act of *Jyllands-Posten* was intended as an event initiated in order to be covered. It was in itself a dramatic act that defined the parties and made distinctions. Not only was it a test to the Danes (and their assumed overtly developed political correctness) but also a test to the Danish Muslims to be “integrated through ridicule”, as Boe and Hervik point out (Chapter 12, in this volume). The publication created a spectacle that was meant to show where the true lines of identity are. In this sense, the act of publication was not a simple ritual aiming at uniting the Danes under one flag. It clearly was also a political ritual, aiming to sharpen political lines *inside* Denmark, creating a spectacle which would distinguish proper Danes from the enemy within.

It is important to distinguish the event of publication from subsequent episodes, even if the cartoon controversy as a whole can be seen as part of the same event too. In any case, after the publication in September 2005, a slow buildup of tension took place in rather low key (at least internationally): the political work of Danish Muslims, the failed diplomatic moves of the Danish government, the boycott-decisions, the demonstrations and the violent conflict around them took the event into its next stage. In this stage, the event actually became transformed from a publication/boycott issue into a much more

dramatic event of interconnected demonstrations. It was at this point, through the routine application of (negative, conflict driven, repetitive) news criteria, that the controversy became a truly “global media event”. Some essential qualities of such an event were evident. First, single news events all over the world became part of the same event, thus implying a sense of global drama and at least a broad, transnational audience. Second, much of this activity was clearly designed and planned with a view to building attention in the media. Third, much of the relatively simultaneous action was interpreted and framed in the media with familiar, ritualistic stereotypes. These stereotypes, focused attention; this activity defined “us” apart from “them”, it focused on action and slogans rather than arguments, and so on. Thus, although in many ways the coverage around the world was “domesticated” to national and local discourses there was also a sense of broader cultural communities into which audiences were interpellated. In parallel to the initial Danish setting, this event ritualizing posed the questions of recognizing the enemy, both out there and within one’s own ranks. It also constructed solidarities across national borders.

The most dominant finding of our survey of the coverage in 14 countries (Kunelius, Eide et al. 2007) however is that the news media largely act as a domestication device. The routines of news coverage are intimately tied to *domestic* news actors and institutions, and through this, to national and local narratives and frames of identity. In this sense, the broader transnational narrative suggested above, is a secondary phenomenon. It only emerges as an implication of the national framing routines. The domestication was clearly visible in the way national coverage often draws from local narratives: in Finland, for instance, the debate was connected to the Cold War tradition and self-censorship (Finlandization) concerning the Soviet Union (Kunelius, Maasilta, and Väliverronen 2007); in the UK, journalism referred to the experience of ‘multiculturalism’ from the colonial past and experience (Phillips and Lee, 2007); in Russia, the coverage partly became an opportunity to show how Western Europe was incapable of understanding cultural differences (Bakoulin 2007). Somewhat similarly as in Russia, a controlled and official version of ‘multiculturalism’ framed the (very scarce) coverage in China. (Hu and Zheng 2007).

The broad finding of domestication in itself does not mean that a ritualistic event-frame dominated the coverage. Differences in domestication are still interesting. First, the amount of coverage seemed to depend on the eagerness of domestic news actors and consequently the intensity of domestic news events related to the bigger world event. For instance Craft and Waisbord (see Chapter 8, in this volume) explain the relatively thin press reaction in USA and Argentina by suggesting that lack of local consequences and concrete news events kept the issue on a low level of intensity. The same seems to apply in some ways to Russia (Bakoulin 2007), China (Hu and Zheng 2007) and partly also to Israel (Nossek 2007, b). The national media events – through which the broader global event becomes locally meaningful – are dependent on local actors and their willingness to take part in the potentially global drama. Without such willingness, the media seems to play a rather passive role.

It is not easy to explain the differences in this willingness. But wherever the conflict was framed as an internal issue the debate and coverage was intensive. In the countries where the media (by itself or in cooperation with dominant news actors) framed the issue as an *external* event (i.e. not really our problem) there was much less coverage and the involvement of politicians as well as public intellectuals was limited and mainly referred to as a problem of Europe and not of their own countries. Interestingly, these differences do not seem to correlate with the actual size of Muslim minorities, nor with “real” problems of multiculturalism. In Israel, Russia and China the event was largely “externalized” whereas in Finland (with a very small Muslim minority) it became rather intensively domesticated. However, they do seem to correlate with a vague identification of being “European”. In countries where both the political elite and the press were unwilling or unable to distance themselves from the notion of being “European”, the free speech frame of the coverage opened up heated domestic debates. Similarly, in some dominant Muslim countries, where the event became a part of local politics, internal tension fuelled the coverage (see Saleh 2007 and Chapter 10 in this volume, Eide 2007, and Chapter 9 in this volume). In any case, the internalization of the global event seems to have mobilized discourses of identity. At this level, then, the media fulfilled a strong ritualized function which often framed seemingly more the rational debates.

Finally, the discussion on media events helps to address the visual and performative aspects of the conflict. With its emphasis on the ritual – as opposed to the rational or argumentative – the media event offers a way of looking at the conflict as a kind of media spectacle in which communication mostly just *seems* to take place. At the core of the cartoon controversy, we have a genre of pictures (caricatures) which by definition are evasive of criticism. Their very function is to arouse emotion and counter-arguments but never to reply, their language is often ambiguous, their style is ironic and the messages they construct are complex (see Alhassan, Chapter 3, this volume). Their ability to challenge power structures is in many ways built on the assumption that their authors can also hide behind the next level of narrative tricks. Their potential for meanings and interpretations makes them a powerful and partly uncontrollable starting point for the controversy. The role of the artist as a constructor of a media event is here very interesting, as Becker (Chapter 7, this volume) suggests. The ways the media build up, amplify and redefine artistic acts as public statements deserve a lot more attention in the future. It is perhaps rather telling that the cartoon controversy has had an afterlife precisely in many artistic contexts, ranging from the Mozart-opera and Madonna-concerts in Germany (see Hahn, et al. 2007) to a Swedish artist drawing Mohammed as a dog. Turning these artistic and sometimes complex representations into journalism seems to often escalate the conflicts. Perhaps one could suggest that often journalism turns artistic (individual, provocative, open) acts into more ritualized (collective, reproductive, cloud) rituals.

Even more to the point, the cartoon conflict as a *visual* media event shows how effective yet problematic images are in intercultural communication. They

do in many ways create common focuses of attention but do not necessarily do much more to facilitate further understanding or dialogue. In this sense, they become visual material for rituals that separate people from each others viewpoints and experiences (see also Hahn, Chapter 11, in this volume). Media routines in a global media event often end up doing rather closely what Douglas Kellner (2003) warns about, citing Guy Debord (1967):

When the real world changes into simple images, simple images become real beings and effective motivations of hypnotic behaviour. The spectacle as a tendency to *to make one see the world* by means of various specialized mediations (it can no longer be grasped directly), naturally finds vision to be the privileged human sense... (Debord in Kellner 2003, 2)

While we do not wish to slide into clichés of distrusting visual communication in general it is clear that the cliché-ed, routine ways in which images are staged, created and used as part of global media events look more like an obstacle to communication rather than a potentially rich medium of insight into the ways others live and think. In many ways, images block us from seeing and hinder the beginning of reasonable discussion. The Mohammed case (and its aftermath) are just one example of this.

Theorizing Transnational/Global Public Sphere/s

If the media event perspective underlines the spectacle and the ritual side of such global news events, another way of approaching the same case can be constructed by drawing from the debates about the notion of a public sphere. Here, different metaphors of communication are emphasized: reason instead of ritual, speaking and listening instead of seeing, dialogue and conversation instead of showing and being seen and – ideally – insight into others instead of confirmation and confrontation of (of often stereotypical) identities.

Looking at the Western intellectual resources of public sphere theory, Slavko Splichal (2006) has recently offered a useful analysis of two aspects of this tradition. He separates the visually and individualistically inspired utilitarian tradition (related to Jeremy Bentham) from the republican tradition with its emphasis on dialogue and community common sense (related to Immanuel Kant). The former draws from the democratic potential inherent in curiosity of the crowd, the latter believes in deliberation, reason and argumentation. To be sure, both strands of the theory need each other. But they also lead to different discussions about how to bring the public sphere about, particularly in relation to the media. Utilitarian liberalism assumes citizens as spectators, republican liberalism expects citizens to take part in the conversation. Both paradigms also become newly problematic at the transnational level. It is not clear who would constitute the “crowd” whose democratically suspicious gaze the international power brokers should internalize. Nor is it much clearer, what

the “community” would consist of, whose common sense should guide the reasonableness of rational arguments and public participation.

Despite the fact that Habermas’ early formulations (1962/1989) were largely based on issues *not* related to media and media technology (but rather to the structural conditions of private and public reasoning), theorizations about the public sphere often have centered on the media (i.e. confusing the media sphere with the public sphere). This sometimes leads to a division in the debate. On the one hand, public sphere discussion turns out debates about the media as a *system* or *structure*, i.e. as means by which a shared space of appearance or debate is created in modern societies. On the other hand, the debates concern the question of *performance* in these (real or imagined) spaces, i.e. they argue about what would constitute an acceptable set of criteria for a discussion in any given space to be afforded the epithet “public” (and by the same token, to be afforded special political democratic weight). This distinction between *spatial* and *performative* versions of public sphere (which partly overlaps with Splichal’s distinction) can be used to shed some light into how the “global” plays into our discussions about the public sphere.

On the one hand, then, there is a question about structural preconditions of the “spaces”, “spheres” or “realms” we call public. These *spatial* public sphere(s) have been part of the debate all the time. In Habermas (1962/1989) original narrative publicity is displaced from feudalized order of spaces (ibid., 27-31) in two ways: by creating an expanded *imagined* sphere of publicness and by introducing new *actual localities* (coffee houses, salons etc.) in which a different kind of communication (presumably less ritualistic, more critical and driven by the logic of “purposive-rational action”) took place. These new concrete spaces and the understanding of the larger sphere they constructed, emerged under the distinct structural forces of capitalism. It is in these quarters, that – analytically speaking – the “end of traditional society begins to be well in sight”, as he elsewhere put it (Habermas 1972, 94-98). In the European story, it is in these partly concrete and partly fictional, imagined spaces, where if not de-ritualized communication, at least re-ritualized patterns of rationalisation began to emerge.

Although originally this story concerns more the question of *what is practiced* in the localities, the spatial metaphor narrative of the public *sphere* often directs the debate about the public sphere to the question of *where?* Where is the – more or less actual – space in which private citizens or various interests and pressure groups could or should be forced to “come together” under the imagined critical eyes of “the public”. How and where are we to create the inverted panopticon of Bentham which would ensure that decision makers feel the hot glance of the public at large on the backs of their necks when they argue and make decisions – even when these decisions concretely take place behind closed doors?

Here, the spatial understanding and the question of institutional arrangements often touch each other. This matching of the space and polity was the lesson that Nicholas Garnham took from Habermas in the mid-1980’s when he speculated

about the internationalization of the public sphere (cf. Garnham 1990, Curran 2002). For the political process it was crucial, he argued, to uphold a “national focus for political debate” (Garnham 1990, 113). As an aspect of the debate, then, this “ground” on which a public sphere can be built, has been important and has led to important critical views about the political and economic realities of mediated communications. While this spatial/structural tint of the theory has been a target of some important criticism (for instance Fraser 2005, argues that at least Habermas is caught up in a ‘Westphalian’ framework of national spaces and identities), it has also inspired many new attempts to define the global or transnational public sphere(s) as complex, interlocking system of networks and spaces (Couldry and Dreher 2007) or “dialectical spaces” made possible by transnational and transcultural news flows (Volkmer 2003).

Since actual communication structures (for instance the spread of satellite-tv and the Internet) have become more complicated and less controlled (at least at some levels) by money and power, the *potential* for the global information structure to serve as base for a global public sphere seems intuitively to exist (cf. McNair 2006). Resources or chances for reaching alternative information, or of hearing other voices are clearly better. At least potentially, our decision makers and power holders could be becoming more aware of not only the fact that some of “us” can be watching all the time, but that also “others” are part of the crowd of surveillance. Silverstone (2006) writes of the thus-created *mediapolis* as a dialogical (or contrapuntal) space. Parallel to – and often integrated with – this discourse of structural hope, there is also structural pessimism, and indeed, just as Habermas’ original work on the structural conditions of the public sphere suggested, the structural forces of capitalism, modernity or globalization can also be seen working largely against the democratic potentials of global communication.

From the perspective of a spatially framed public theory in the context of global media, we could well ask the following. Have the structural conditions which define our spaces of communication changed? By any reasonable evaluation, the answer must partly be yes. But this of course does not mean that these spaces have necessarily become closer to the ideal imagined spaces that the theory suggests.

One of the trends that might undermine the creation of genuine transnational or global and even national public spheres, is a particular version of multiculturalism which has been influential especially in Western societies. In a society based on the division between hegemonic groups and those groups distant from society’s centers of power, multiculturalism sometimes allows for parallel divisions in society between various ethnic and cultural groups. In conditions where such groups are dominated by others, these groupings struggle for the existence and preservation of their culture and identity, as entities that are at once unique and equal in status to the more dominant groupings in society. Gitlin (1998) suggests that such groups develop distinct *sphericules* that may replace the shared public sphere of the nation state. This development is made possible by communications technologies that enable these social

groups to develop independent systems or to rely on global systems (Adoni and Nossek 2007). The emergence of diasporic communities with their own “public spheres” which are connected both to the public discourse at their diasporic geographical locations as well as to the discourses going on in their cultural “homelands”, creates situations that vastly complicate the structures that underlie the publics today.

In contrast to the spatially emphasized view of the public sphere, then, an alternative is to emphasize the presumably distinct quality of the *constitutive action* of a public sphere. In the pragmatist tradition, the main point about *publics* is that among a public, the communication between its members is qualitatively different from other social formations. For such thinkers as Robert E. Park (1904), John Dewey (1927) or Herbert Blumer (1946) a public was not primarily something spatial but rather a form of *particular kind* of interaction. It is the interaction between its members that defines a social formation, a group, a *public*. For instance Blumer (1945/1950,47): makes a series of distinctions to specify the point:

the public does not act like a society, a crowd, or the mass. A society manages to act by following a prescribed rule or consensus; a crowd, by developing rapport, and the mass, by convergence of individual selections. The public faces, in this sense, a problem of how to become a unit when it is actually divided, of how to act concertedly when there is disagreement as to what the action should be. (ibid.: 47)

For the pragmatist tradition, a public is called into being by concrete *problemization of an issue*. A public is made of people and groups who *disagree* on what ought be done and who – as members of a social formation that does *not* have shared traditional, routine answers to the problems – discuss the matter at hand. Pragmatism has traditionally been sceptical of all kinds of universalising, and for many pragmatists (for instance Dewey [1927]) there are no guarantees that publics are ideally democratically representative, although the mechanism of how publics emerge (people recognizing problems and calling for action to control them) might make one somewhat optimistic about future developments. Following a pragmatist route, later Habermas developed the idea of communicative rationality as *species capacity*. At least implicitly, then, he suggested that *validity claims* recognized in all speech acts can serve as a model for general criteria for an ideally ‘public’ and rational debate. Albeit in his *Theory of Communicative Action* (1987) Habermas’ pragmatist of choice was G.H. Mead, his elaboration of the model and aspects of communicative action can be seen as an attempt to spell out why such a critical discussion as Blumer was sketching above is theoretically possible and what might serve as a beginning for finding criteria for judging whether or not it takes place. Thus, he added a touch of universalism to the pragmatists more relativist and historical scheme.

In the transnational/global framework the pragmatist tradition focuses our attention on two things. First, the emphasis on *problems* as the fuel of publics

is useful for arguing that the impulse and functional need for global publicity is real, and perhaps becoming even more intensive, given the fact that economically, culturally, or environmentally, current problems respect no national borders (see also Dewey 1945). Second, it stresses the point that since current routines, institutions and structures are partly a result of the action of earlier publics, they reflect an earlier understanding of what were the issues, who were the stakeholders and so on. Thus, by analytically *separating* the question of publics from the actual political arrangements or communication structures this perspective reminds us that it is quite possible to have a space of open access to everyone where much or all of the interaction between people is *not* public interaction at all. Conversely, for a particular action to be of public nature it is not necessary always to presume that the site of that particular action is actually totally open and transparent. For instance, even though many “counter-publics” can hardly be described as open to all participants, they are still often characterised by a desire of being recognized in a broader level of more dominant publics. Hence also the interaction inside such counter-publics (often of restricted inclusion and access) include public qualities (taking into account perspectives that are not actually present), perhaps even more so than in what we call shared or mainstream public sphere.

In order to make sense of potential global public spheres (or publics), it is useful to bear both spatial-structural and the pragmatist-performative strands of theory in mind. It is more than clear that the *structural* realities of global communication systems by no means provide equal access to shared spaces of representation or argument. In this sense, then global publicity is – just as its national or local predecessors were – based on exclusion. However, it is just as clear that the communication structures of transnationally and globally digitalized network media are not the same as they used to be. The thresholds of voicing your case are different, the dynamics of the communication environment has changed (cf. Benkler 2006). While this by no means solves the structural problems of the public sphere, it clearly somehow redefines the systems of exclusions by which spaces of deliberation have been built.

As for the pragmatist ideal of public interaction, global cultural diversity provides a formidable challenge. Even though in theory one can talk of a public as a social formation with no shared habits, routines or even culture, in historical practice, shared localities, traditions and customs and common identities have been important assumptions for developing real deliberative practices. Cosmopolitan dreams of overcoming culture can be seductive, but practically speaking also dangerous as Calhoun (2007) warns us. At the same time, though, given that the space-time relations shaping the media flows have become more de-spatialized and synchronized, one might argue that this opens up the truly genuine test case for the question whether communicative rationality (the potential for dialogically challenging the validity claims of others) actually can emerge across cultural boundaries and across the borderlines of inherited cultural identities. Guided by pragmatism, media studies should – instead of spheres and spaces – look at such global media events as the

cartoon case for *moments* in which – despite the historical odds – signs of communicative behaviour can appear.

Public Moments in the Cartoon Case

In the case of the cartoon controversy coverage we can now try to locate examples where at least the claim can be made that the discourse at hand makes an effort towards *publicness*, i.e. it openly suggests a deep and thorough investigation of the very premises from which its own (and its own imagined audience's) claims to validity begin (see also Kunelius and Alhassan, Chapter 5 in this volume). While there are no perfect examples of this, we believe that there are many instances where journalists (or people whose work and words they have published) made a genuine attempt to this direction. Some findings call for more interpretation than others, some are quite speculative. But in a spirit of theoretical optimism, we will list some of these.

Let us first look at professional journalism. The first ray of light might be found in the fact of diversity. In a number of cases we found that there are in fact many 'journalisms' living side by side – and sometimes also interestingly intertwined. While it was rather common to see that international news flows and images relying upon an armature provided by the dramatic event frames, it was also common to detect at least two things referring to a public sphere ideal. First, phrases of identity politics, such as "Clash of Civilizations", were often used but at the same time they were also often denied, contested and criticized as ideological slogans and rhetorical weapons of those who wished to further expand the conflict³. Thus, there was a clear tendency to call into question the epistemological validity of some of the key concepts of the debate. True enough, this criticism mostly took place in editorials and letters to the editor, while the routine news focused on the dramatic events,. But even then, one of the common enough arguments of the press was to say that violent events did *not* reflect the true nature of people's reaction but rather that they were manipulated by power, and that at a personal level people had the right to be offended by the cartoons. Thus, much energy in professional journalism did go into suggesting that what we "witnessed" with our own eyes, was not the whole picture.

On the other hand, such a journalistic critical attitude towards power and ideologies, worked also the other way around. It was relatively common in the European countries we studied to see how professionalism also partly drove journalists towards sharper free speech positions. Since the case was often framed as one in which journalism was under attack, this is not surprising. Combined with a sense of professional solidarity, criticism (an act of distinction) of local politicians often meant that journalists tended to take sides as well. This move, while often taking place within a series of reservations and clarifications, nevertheless did take place all the same. The following extract from Finland is illustrative here:

Journalists are a group of professionals with a sense of solidarity. They are the last line of the battle for freedom, because they are the ones that watch others. In the name of freedom of expression, they “have to defend even the degraded forms of journalism, such as bad and mindless Mohammed cartoons” (Toni Ervamaa, *Helsingin Sanomat*, 4.2.2006) (see Kunelius, Maasilta and Väliveronen, 2007: 208).

Despite the fact that professional solidarity in this particular case might have meant that journalists became part of the event and took sides, in terms of possible global public sphere it is clear that journalists in many countries felt that they were part of a community more extensive than their respective national borders. In terms of professional solidarity and core values of journalism, one important thing that potentially (albeit in somewhat abstract terms) defines such a community is the ability and duty to blame the powerful – on both sides! For all the sins of professional journalism one of its merits continues to be that it distrusts ideologies and constantly tries – at least in the surface level – to check the validity claims of the powerful.

Another interesting question concerning the quality of press coverage – particularly in the West – relates to the role of diasporic communities in local coverage. While it is true that individual immigrants often are taken into the drama to play the role of the “civilized other” and thus actually reinforce cultural boundaries, it is also true that in the voices of diasporic communities, the media have a rich potential of making much more diverse and reasonable sense out of events in the world. It would be wrong to say that this potential was well used in the cartoon case (cf. Steien 2007, Phillips and Lee 2007). There are also some signs of a change for the worse (see Phillips and Nossek, Chapter 13, in this volume). However, it would also be untrue to say that journalists did not try to open up this dialogue at all. Indeed, in some localities, such as France, earlier debates of similar issues (though not so explosive) had already structured this field somewhat functionally for journalism. This kind of sensitivity was one visible strand in the debate in France, despite the fact that the issue was intensively domesticated. (Berthault and al, 2007)

Going beyond professional journalism, we can speculate about another finding that we registered across the dividing lines of the conflict: the use of *double standard*-criticism. It was common practice all over the conflict to mobilize a rhetorical figure in which the other side was blamed for having double standards. In the West, commentators and journalists blamed Middle-Eastern regimes for not allowing the kind of space for other religions that these regimes demanded for Muslims in Europe (Kunelius and Eide 2007). In Pakistan and elsewhere in the Muslim countries, Europeans were accused of charging people who deny the Holocaust but not charging people that demonize the Muslims, or for not publishing blasphemous cartoons about Jews (Eide 2007). In Israel, while expressing understanding of the insult to Muslims, the argument of double standards was aimed at Muslim leaders in Arab countries who did not condemn anti-Semitic caricatures in their local media. (Nossek 2007 b)

From the point of view of public discourse this is an interesting point of speculation. On the one hand it suggests that there is no common ground whatsoever, that the positions taken are dictated by taking sides on the conflict and that the trouble in one's own backyard is poorly recognized. On the other hand (and admittedly in a rather abstract level), the findings also show that people on different sides of the debate apply somewhat similar criteria when judging the arguments of the other. By demanding from each other consistency in applying to themselves the same principles they impose on others, these actors actually might presuppose a common set of criteria of validity. While this does not prove the existence of any demanding and rigorous public sphere, it is an aspect of coverage that hints at a shared language which just might reach across the cultural barriers and cause a moment of reflection on the other side.

Finally, it is important to say that looking at the international press coverage – and thus one of the roles that media play in globalization – that there is a vague but sometimes clearly articulated sense of a world theater, a global framework within which people write and speak. Often enough, the world is understood to be a complex place in which communication across boundaries calls for extra effort. In our survey of the coverage we find – from countries in which Islam is the dominant religion – arguments directed towards European leaders (and editors), appealing to them to realize that they are living in a more complex world than previously, and that they had to take into consideration others' ways of practicing freedom of speech in order to avoid deepening existing divides and conflicts. This concern was also echoed by numerous journalists and politicians in Western countries. (Kunelius and Eide, 2007)

In localities where the public sphere was already politicized in these issues, one could also find voices that made an extra effort to understand the other side – even when it was difficult. For instance in Denmark – the heart of the conflict – newspapers such as *Politiken* and *Berlingske Tidende* did not support the publication of the cartoons due to what they saw then as unnecessarily provocative disposition (Hervik and Berg, 2007). In Norway, another hot spot of the conflict, as the controversy developed, the attitude of the press changed from an intransigent position on freedom of speech to arguments for employing freedom of speech “with sense” (Steien, 2007, 46).

Much of what we have said above needs a healthy dose of theoretical optimism in order to shine a clear light through the murky shadows of the controversy. At first sight and short sight, looking at the coverage of the Mohammed cartoons across a variety of local contexts does indeed make one rather skeptical in terms of media potential in the broad public sphere. But if one assumes that the idea of the public sphere means *that something other than traditional, identity framed, ritualistic communication is (to re-quote from Habermas) “at sight”*, it is possible to draw out moments of interesting reflection. This also reminds us of the fact that cultural learning is not only a slow process but also a process that demands a certain element of faith – however secular that faith might be. Thus, while religion has made a strong reappear-

ance in (global) politics, while national identities and master narratives still, to great extent, define the mediated events, as well as their actors and roles, and while new geopolitical ideologies in many ways rule the landscape, there is another side to the globally networked media world we now live in. It has been nicely defined by Garnham in a recent essay on Habermas:

The key point in his historical anthropological account of the growth of reason and especially communicative rationality is that such rationality is simply now all-pervasive, the symbolic sea in which modern humans swim. Here the public sphere becomes very close to a description of what others have dubbed self-reflexivity or what for instance, Bourdieu calls post-doxic. From a material, institutional point of view then the public sphere takes on a multifaceted, fragmented form as the myriad ways in which both private and public identity and opinions are constantly formed and reformed. (Garnham 2008, 209)

Epilogue: Towards Further Questions

Originally, this chapter was supposed to be co-authored by an inspiring colleague of ours, Jan Ekecrantz. In his last seminar appearance before his untimely death in July 2007, he gave a speech in which he outlined his ideas of how to make sense of the contemporary global media flow of images and arguments. In order to further enrich the picture we have drawn, we wish to add his voice into the conclusion. As a long time student of Bakhtin and the idea of polyphonic communication, Jan would – we are sure – have constructively disagreed with how we use his ideas – but we are also confident that he would have approved of the cannibalizing practice we are about to undertake here.

In his presentation, Ekecrantz (2007) argued that the new global communication structure consisted of at least three analytically different elements, interconnected, overlapping and in intense interaction. He distinguished between the *national publics*, the *global (phantom) publics* and changing networks of *transnational actors and workers* (who operate in the realm of both publics but also between and beyond them). (see Table 1.) In order to make sense of how these imagined and real actors operated, Ekecrantz sketched some of their defining qualities concerning the time/space relations which dominated their discourses, the major media through which they operate or become actualized and the dominant, strategic modes of communication they emphasized.

There is a complex theory buried in the chart, one that would take the author himself to be unraveled and developed. But by briefly looking at the cartoon controversy through it, the scheme does begin to make actual sense, and indeed it can shed some order into our conclusion.

First, it remains a solid result of our survey of the international coverage of the cartoon controversy, that in the *national public* domains, the cartoon conflict case invoked often ritualized, stable forms of stories. The “rational-

Table 1. Communicative Structures in the Global Contact (adapted from Ekecrantz 2007)

Communicative Structures	National Publics	Transnational Workers/Actors	Global Phantom Publics, Mediation	Diasporic Sphericules?
Temporality	Stable frames History and future Repetitive stories	"Timeless time"	Instantaneity (a-historical) Oblivion	<i>History of origin Uncertain future?</i>
Spatiality	Nation state, geolinguistic region	Moving in non-spaces	Everywhere and nowhere	<i>Displaced in two ways</i>
Major Media	Press and TV Elite, mainstream, tabloid	Internet	Satellite TV Visuality	<i>Internet Satellite</i>
Strategy	Rationality	Organisational goals	Attraction, war more celebration of conflict	<i>Identity re-inforcement</i>
Public	In place before the events, Demimonde relations	Always turned on	Events producing audiences. Rea- lized categories and one-dimen- sional identities)	<i>Already there, in place before the events</i>

ity" articulated in such forums was, no doubt, largely of a ritualized nature, constructing identities, histories and futures which were anchored in the well rehearsed narratives of the nation. Rationality stayed mostly safely inside the boundaries set by these narrated identities, thus not often critically challenging the audiences or publics (in place before and after the event) it served. The story of the Mohammed cartoons so far is largely a story of domestication and localization, a "news media – media event" in which the media re-creates the world order according to the basic values and norms of local societies.

At the same time, however, by focusing global attention, the global media also created transnational or global social formations populated by "phantom publics" (in the sense that Walter Lippmann coined the term in 1925). In the routines of focusing this attention, the media applied not "rational" but dramatic modes of communication. Indeed, the logic of "attraction", "war mode" thinking and the "celebration of conflict" in some ways catch this dimension very well. The global media attention was often based on drama and conflict, on spectacular elements of producing global audiences (not so much addressing already existing ones) and perhaps creating one-dimensional identities suitable for instant, emotional consumption. On an abstract level, it would not seem very far fetched to suggest that the "global phantom publics" and the "national publics" are fairly well synchronized with each other in the mechanisms of global media events. The attention and emotion are built on strong images and sense of presence of witnessing the events. The "rationalization" of these events, then, takes place within nationally grounded, historically naturalized limits of "public discussion". This means

that public deliberation mostly takes place within a culturally closed sense of “us”. Mostly, the “us” is instinctively a national one, sometimes a broader category at the level of “civilizations”.

However, the global media environment in which we live means much more than merely a new division of labour (between ethnically or nationally grounded “reason” and transnationally mobile “spectacles”). New social formations and groups of actors complicate the dynamics of the system. These new actors and arguments (sometimes even institutions) pay less and less homage to the local identities. They also (negatively – as in terrorism, or positively – as in the case of many NGOs) refuse to respect the vocabularies and categories of the existing *international* order and call for more *transnational* questions. True enough, these actors – and we might suggest that both the neoconservative network of Flemming Rose as well as the Danish Muslim delegates travelling to the Middle East belong to Ekecrantz’s middle category – do not, in and by themselves, demand or articulate the new fairer rules of global, rational discussions. But by their actions and words they open questions of validity that cannot – without explicit and thus contestable acts of exclusion – be solved without constructing some sort of embryonic global public sphere moments.

Ekecrantz’s original table included only three elements. The last column (to the right) on Table 1 is our own addition. In the case of the cartoons we would like to emphasize the importance of diasporic communities and their communication practices in the new global media system. As a set of hypotheses, we would suggest that in order to understand the global media flows and their publicness, we need to pay close attention to the ways in which various “diasporic sphericules” emerge as sites of sense making. In these formations, temporality is sometimes strongly built on the history of *distinct* origin (and perhaps on a different understanding of time altogether than in the modern linear time of nation states). Crucially, we believe, these sphericules (to the degree that they are excluded from other levels of public spheres) can often lack narratives about the future of the group. In contrast to national publics, people participating in these sphericules are in some sense doubly displaced – both from their places of origin and from the social space of the present locations. It is clear then, that such corner stones of political and public discussion as the sense of belonging can be fragile. The constantly problematic time/space relations of such formations are reflected in their communication strategies which naturally emphasize identity reinforcement. Via the internet and satellite communications, people identifying with these sphericules and communities are strangely present in two places at the same time, or in two times at the same place. This makes them a somewhat new kind of audience or public, a characteristic ingredient of the global media system.

The first instinct of the modern social imagination is to suggest that diasporic formations are problematic. In many ways, they disrupt and disturb the order of things, at least for people of the dominant culture and the rules of the (nationally and culturally restricted) public deliberations. But if we are to take seriously the idea that genuine reasoning is something that is also capable of

calling into question its own fundamentals and limits, diasporic communities and sphericules can also be seen as a practical necessity of critical reason.

Just as in the case of transnational actors it is crucial that journalism – and journalism research – learns to understand how such new parts and elements of the global media system function and could function. It is our belief that this work can only begin if we learn to recognize that their existence is not merely a threat to old forms of public spheres. If the emerging new dynamics of the global media system challenge our inherited rituals of rationalization they also make our media and the spaces they create, well, more *public* than they used to be.

Notes

1. We wish to thank Ms Maya Litwin-Yeshoua for collecting and re-analysing evidence of our 14 country research report for the purpose of this chapter.
2. Talking about terrorism is of course notoriously ambiguous (Nossek, Sreberny and Sonwalkar, 2007). Our sketch here does not, for instance, include the idea that the state itself performs terrorist acts. While this can certainly be the case, such a situation usually means that the same government also controls the media. This shifts the discussion into a different frame not discussed here.
3. There were of course also cases where the clash-rhetoric was swallowed all the way. These moments were often connected to a particularly clear liberal (or liberal fundamentalist, see Alhassan & Kunelius, Chapter 5, this volume) framing of the case (see also Craft & Oyedele [2007: 181].

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Afterword

In Quest of Ever Better Heresies

John Durham Peters

The Recursive Character of Free Speech

There is something recursive about free speech. Many of the most important cases are not about substantive issues but about the principle of free speech itself. Provocateurs who had unconventional views about free speech and even more unconventional ways of expressing them have often ended up providing the occasion for legal decisions. The stand-up comic Lenny Bruce, for instance, both got into legal trouble for foul-mouthed routines about free speech among other things. Bruce's scatological rants were both tests of and comments on the legal and social limits on expression. He noted with a certain sardonic glee how much the judge and prosecutor seemed to enjoy repeating a certain ten-letter word that they were trying him for having uttered in public. Strikingly enough, Bruce followed a higher law: in his retrospective narrative of his trial, he does not name the word, thus avoiding the hypocrisies that entangled those who tried him (Bruce 1967: 247-248). To advocate free speech is itself a speech act – often an offensive one. To suppress free speech is as well.

The call for free speech is always an intervention in, and not only a statement about, the world. In a famous example, the National Socialist Party of America applied for and was denied a parade permit to march in Skokie, Illinois in 1978. This otherwise routine administrative decision against a miniscule and obscure group was soon made famous by the American Civil Liberties Union, which chose – in the face of intense opposition – to represent the Nazis in their legal appeal for a permit. The case quickly went “meta” and it became hard to tell what was at stake in the subsequent controversy. Was the debate about the concrete question whether to let a few crazies advocate genocide in a Jewish neighborhood or the abstract question of how far a free society will go to preserve the right to disseminate objectionable ideas? One of the banners that the Nazis wanted to march with advocated “Free Speech for White America” (Bollinger 1986: 27). In free speech it is often impossible to tell the debate from the metadecade.

The cartoon crisis is the latest installment in this recursive lineage. A provocation by a Danish editor ended up sparking a world-wide event. It was soon unclear, as usual, what it was all about: the power of pictures, internal Danish politics, the benefits and problems of holding nothing sacred, the responsibility of the press, the failure of Arab democracy, the violence of Islam, or the arrogance of Europe. The flap of a butterfly's wings can cause a typhoon in the Indian Ocean, they say, and caricatures first published in Denmark somehow caused riots throughout the globe. Small cause, big effect: this formula from chaos theory is certainly true in this case.

In what follows I use the cartoon controversy to consider the philosophy of free speech today, building upon arguments from my *Courting the Abyss* (Peters 2005).

Corrupt Universalisms

Though no one could have predicted the events that followed, the overall pattern of offense and outrage is clear from other free speech cases. Almost all recent dramas around free speech involve a threefold cast of characters. The first is the rather naughty risk-taker who seeks to prove freedom by transgressing some cultural taboo. The second is the high-minded defender of transgression as a sign of a free and democratic society. The third is the conservative bystander who takes offense at the transgression. All three are essential to the drama, but they do not have an equal footing: the first two figures are typically in league against the third. Those who take offense from acts that are, after all, designed to push the limits of what can be thought, said, and depicted, end up being treated as deficient in comparison with the evident open-mindedness of those who can tolerate transgression.

In this case Islam was the odd man out. For various reasons – many of them having to do with local politics – some Muslims responded violently to the provocation. I have no interest in justifying violence and sustain wholeheartedly the norm of a democratic public sphere where ideas and feelings can be aired freely and respectfully. Alas, the global liberal public sphere rarely has operated this way. A self-reflective inventory of liberal activism would show that the call for free speech has long been paired with geopolitical policies that separate the nations into the children of light and of darkness. *Areopagitica*, John Milton's foundational tract on unlicensed printing from 1644, railed against Catholic censorship and the Spanish inquisition. *Cato's Letters*, a classic call for a free press from the 1710s, repeatedly contrasted enlightened England with French and Ottoman absolutism. J.S. Mill's *On Liberty* (1859) called for civilizing missions to India, China and Mormon Utah. Treating the cartoon controversy as a test of free speech principles was one way to avoid stickier questions about the treatment of Muslims in Denmark. Lofty proclamations of liberty often cloak policies of domination or accompany claims of moral superiority. That the children of darkness can sometimes lash out in frustration should not be surprising.

Today several variants on the theme of righteous universalism married to particular kinds of demonization dot the political sphere. The neo-conservative foreign policy of George W. Bush invaded the countries of some of those who did not subscribe to its vision of peace and democracy. In France there is a new kind of “anti-racist anti-Semitism” that disdains Jews because Israelis abuse the rights of Palestinians – thus tender-hearted progressive attitudes about multiculturalism are coupled with one of the oldest of all slurs. In the Netherlands, the assassinated, openly gay politician Pim Fortuijn advocated an anti-immigrant politics in the name of tolerance: immigrants (read: Muslims) did not belong because of their intolerably close-minded views of sexual and other forms of social difference. Anti-racist anti-Semitism combines a left-wing stance with a regressive motive; Fortuijn offered a right-wing stance with a progressive motive. In the cartoons debate, those who called for unlimited free speech pretended to hold an unquestionably moral high ground – for what reasonable person could actually advocate censorship? – not noticing that this claim was a move in a zero-sum game that cast others as immoral. This is not to say that these various developments are identical in effect or significance – that is another huge debate; it is, rather, to note the ironies of a disturbing kind of early twenty-first century politics. A genuine (Kantian) universalism would not minoritize anyone but would have to include all humanity; corrupt universalisms include only the “righteous”. They share a similar and alarming structure: the assertion of an abstract universal whose claim to moral excellence and immunity is motivated by outrage at the evils of a particular other.

That liberalism should be found in such company is deeply ironic. The militant zeal with which some announced the virtues of free speech in the cartoons controversy undercuts the old strain within liberal thought that says we need free speech not because we are so smart, but rather because we are so easily mistaken. Liberalism should be a great teacher of humility. It constantly reminds us of our endless capacity to be wrong. Liberalism, to be true to itself, needs to risk rigorous self-criticism of its own assumptions – especially its love for monopolizing the virtues and its distrust of nonsecular forms of reasoning. If it does not, it risks being the ideological arm of a geopolitical struggle that will only further polarize the twenty-first century into warring factions. In its classic formulations, free speech was supposed to enhance the understanding of strange doctrine and people – not to stoke their feelings of marginality and militancy. In some deep way, liberalism’s love of openness and religion’s sense of the sacred may be eternally at odds. But liberalism should be able to see in this tension a source of the plurality of approaches to the universe that it so extols. Instead of hardening the tension between secular and religious outlooks, liberalism should soften it. The tension of sacred and secular is not simply geopolitical or cultural: it also runs through individual people’s hearts and heads. Free speech theorists who too quickly sort the options into good rationality and bad belief risk a certain kind of shallowness about the deep self-divisions that many people, at all points of the political and intellectual spectrum, have about modern life.

Theological Roots of Free Speech Theory: The Liberal Theodicy

Despite the hostility some liberals show to both religious perspectives and to ideas older than the Enlightenment, free speech theory would be unthinkable without deep theological and philosophical roots. In seeking after ethical ideals to reconstruct a more radically plural philosophy of free expression, there are at least two broad sources: (1) Judeo-Christianity, if you will forgive an expression that might seem to force together two distinct traditions and (2) the moral philosophies of ancient Greece and Rome, especially Stoicism. Both streams were fully present in the formative years of the modern philosophy of free speech from the seventeenth to the nineteenth centuries, and their weakening hold on the opinions of the educated goes together with a decreasing robustness in the philosophy of free speech.

Free speech is, in a way, a peculiar fruit of European culture. It has a deep set of cultural prerequisites that are not globally distributed. Chief among these is a high value placed on courting the abyss. Europe inherits from Greek, Hebrew, Roman and Christian sources notions about the benefits of descending into the underworld for educational or even redemptive purposes. From the Bible and Milton to Rimbaud and Freud, from Homer and Virgil to Dante and Dostoyevsky, European literature loves to tell stories about the ultimately redeeming value of a season in hell. The confidence that we can survive exposure to the dark side is one of the deep cultural backdrops to liberal notions of free speech. Such confidence is nourished by the Stoic ethics of composure and toughness as well as the Christian belief – explicit in Dante and Milton, and deeply indebted to the Hebrew Bible – that transgression can bring about good in the end. The transgression of Adam and Eve can be seen as a kind of civil disobedience that enabled human salvation. There are currents in Jewish messianic thought that have toyed with the ever popular heresy of “redemption through sin”. Christians have treasured the notion of a fortunate fall, a *felix culpa* or happy crime, and they have also treasured a long history of devotional depiction of their God in a bloody, beaten state. In contemplating an image of the crucifixion, the believer is supposed to see beyond the abuse and bruises to grace and mercy. The most degrading death can be, to a devout point of view, a sign of triumph and a sight of sweetest devotion. This ability requires a particularly cultural training and historical experience.

Søren Kierkegaard, the Danish philosopher, called Christianity the religion of irony, and he was thinking especially of this ability to rescue divine meanings from degraded facts. It is perhaps little wonder that he was a Scandinavian. Confidence in courting the abyss probably took its two strongest forms in Protestantism and in heretical strands of modern Judaism. Luther’s famous motto – *pecca fortiter*, sin boldly – might serve as the motto for free speech. It is no accident that Northern European painters, poets, and musicians have excelled at boldly, explicitly, and perhaps even shamelessly representing Christ’s agonies – Matthias Grünewald, J.S. Bach, although Italian and Spanish Catholicism can

be bloodier still in its depictions. What to some sensibilities would be the worst kind of blasphemy – detailing the blood and wounds of God – is for much of the Christian tradition a revelation of holiness. It is well known that such boldness among the Puritans – for instance, in their approval of anatomical dissection – helped give rise to modern science’s fearless explorations. When Flemming Rose defended the publication of the cartoons by proclaiming Europe’s long history of dangerous depictions of the divine, he was more right than he knew. Christian theology invites a certain kind of ironic reading – the ability to discover in the most abject forms of existence a special redemptive power, and this habit is unharmed by the relative emptying of Europe’s churches.

Milton’s defense of the free press in *Areopagitica* was based explicitly on the Christian theology of redemption. He treated free speech as part of the human drama of choice and testing in a fallen world. He defended the open battle of truth and falsehood on the grounds that the world, like the biblical parable of the field sown with both wheat and tares, was a testing ground that requires a real contest among options. Milton found it legitimate to “scout in the regions of sin” as an exercise that could strengthen and edify the soul, just as he found it legitimate in his epic poem *Paradise Lost* to linger in Hell and give Satan and his buddies the best lines and the best speeches. Just as Adam and Eve ate the fruit of the tree of knowledge, so Milton considered sin to be a necessary part of our education. Ideological antagonism was the condition of our moral perfection. This does not mean that he liked sin. Milton’s exaltation of liberty together with his campaign against wickedness was a difficult balancing act. Milton was a radical puritan republican whose belief in free speech rested upon his theological commitment to an ongoing battle of good and evil in which good would eventually triumph. The idea of a *felix culpa* is the theological backdrop for the liberal defense of free speech. Milton had little doubt that the truth (as he understood it) would triumph. Ever since, some advocates of liberty can take pleasure in allowing disruptive discourse on to the stage as if to provide a more robust test of their principles. Journalists and editors rarely belabor the intricacies of Milton’s prose or poetry, but they often argue in a similar way that it is better to publish something potentially inflammatory than to suppress it – in the confidence that the airing of alternatives is the best way to allow bad ideas to be criticized. The principle that time will reveal the truth and that the world is robust enough to discover the truth amid the falsehood I call the liberal theodicy. Just as Milton sought to show why sin and suffering are part of God’s plan, so liberals like to claim that the airing of offensive ideas is central to the triumph of truth. (It may well be, but it is an empirical question.)

Stoic Roots of Free Speech Theory: Homeopathic Machismo

A second key element in the intellectual framework of free expression was a classic-genteel picture of the self, soul, or ego. The citizen is modeled as a gentleman and as a soldier who is vigilant, tough, and self-transcending. Such

self-control is shown in the ability to endure exposure to pain and unpleasantness without flinching. This is clear in the martial metaphors of Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes, perhaps the most important architect of the legal understanding of free speech in twentieth-century America. His contrarian ethic is clear in his well-known statement that the essence of free speech is “not free thought for those who agree with us but freedom for the thought of those we hate” (Holmes 1929: 644-645). He saw the public sphere not so much as a open plaza for competing viewpoints, but rather as a Darwinian battlefield where different doctrines struggled for supremacy, including doctrines many would find deeply offensive. Indeed, his colleague on the Supreme Court, Justice Louis Brandeis, praised the power of free speech to sort out “noxious doctrine”. A later justice, defending the right of people to use vulgarities in public places, said: “the constitutional right of free expression is powerful medicine”.

In the older founding figures of British liberalism, such as John Locke, Adam Smith, and John Stuart Mill, there are even clearer traces of influence from ancient Stoic moral philosophy, especially from the statesman and orator Cicero, who they all quoted and refracted. For all three the model for public virtue was more or less the gentleman-soldier. Locke said that education should teach children, or rather boys, to endure pain, and that they should sleep on hard beds and eat hard bread to be toughened for the duties of public citizenship. Smith praised the great virtues of the soldier who, losing his leg to the blast of a cannonball, vents not a groan in consideration of his comrades’ feelings. Mill, citing Cicero, says that the real test of mastery of an argument is that you can argue the other side as well as your own; faced with offensive speech the good citizen does not see red but sees clearly. He also compared the citizen to a guardsman at a military post who was likely to fall asleep without the stimulus of open debate. In all these thinkers one senses the aftershock of the ancient discovery of pain as ecstatic self-transcendence. Good citizens should take the point of view of others and listen to strange doctrine just as they could withstand an injury without flinching. Their stance of what I call homeopathic machismo – exposing oneself boldly to the toxin in the hope of developing an immunity to it – went together with a self-disciplined openness to the other side. The Stoic legacy in free speech theory lives on in the notion that the risk of offense is the price we pay for freedom. This permissive attitude to scandalous speech gambles that hard words cannot harm us; rather they strengthen us by providing a kind of strenuous ethical exercise.

The ideal of the gentleman-soldier went together with the vision of the market as the site in which the good would stabilize. The heroic version of the liberal story about free speech continues to define much popular and academic thinking about the relation of democracy and communication. The story tells of courageous revolutionists and stout-hearted printers and publishers who risked life, limb, and profit by defying the censorship of crown or church. Doubtless, many did in fact sacrifice much. By ignoring inhibitions and edicts, they are said to have formed a “marketplace of ideas” where any notion, good, bad or ugly, could be evaluated on its own merits and whose price would be set by

nothing but free and open competition. This metaphor of the marketplace on ideas, we should note, only emerged in the 1950s and is an unreliable guide both to the history of liberal ideas and to the practice of democratic journalism (Peters 2004). This marketplace is supposed to be the motor of democratic life and the place where the public blossoming of the *logos* so central to democracy can occur. In some nations the printing press attained status as the world-historical agency of enlightenment and enabling institution of popular sovereignty. The free (i.e. commercial) press had in this story a privileged role in disseminating news and views; every citizen had the power to speak the word of truth. This story has roots in the radical Enlightenment, in thinkers such as Milton, Spinoza, “Cato”, Voltaire, and Thomas Paine. Censorship was an evil found in empires abroad, and English was the language of liberty (a convenient claim for a bourgeoning empire). Free speech was never only a philosophy: it always involved claims of supremacy.

The Global Prospects of Free Speech Today: Five Challenges

At least five challenges face our reconstruction of the philosophy of free speech today.

1. The first is the waning of classical antiquity and the genteel notion of the citizen-soldier (which in turn is tied to the waning of print culture). In Spain and Italy, the writings of Seneca and the influence of Renaissance humanism have long supplied a certain vision of the personality of the citizen: moderate, controlled, stoic, generous. In the Anglo-American world as well, gentlemanly ideals of honor and self-discipline have long provided a psychology of citizenship. By the early twentieth century, professional objectivity was starting to replace genteel self-control as the norm of decorum for the elite classes, but much of the same mental framework persisted: self-denial, abstraction from emotion or self-interest, the ability to make coolly rational judgments. By the late twentieth century, such a model for citizenship was under attack from a range of sources. Feminists decried the implicit masculinity of abstraction from feeling and community. Race theorists exposed the “white privilege” that undergirded the notion that “people” could retreat into an unmarked space of rationality or pure humanity – such a free space being denied historically to most people of color. And Marxists attacked the gentleman and the professional alike as elite positions in the class hierarchy (for representatives of this debate, see Calhoun 1992). Further, the hold of Greek and Roman literature in the training of public servants all but collapsed by the late twentieth century.

Much of this criticism is well taken. Modeling the public sphere on the battleground or relishing one’s toughness in the face of offense are clearly not globally viable in the twenty-first century. Liberals have not always offered a deep account of what it means to be a human and a person, and a sociologically more diverse citizenry requires a richer account of the psychology and everyday

rituals of citizenship that is accommodating of women, immigrants, the aged, the disabled, subcultures – in short, “the other” as French social theorists in the wake of Emmanuel Levinas like to say. The friends of liberty have a double task today: to develop a more democratic psychology of citizenship and to salvage what is still vibrant in the Stoic tradition. The most promising direction for this task, I believe, is to join the Stoic tradition’s emphasis on selfless public-spiritedness with the more recent multicultural call for respect for difference. From the Stoic tradition we can take the idea that the self is an other; from the Judeo-Christian tradition we can take the idea that the other is a self.

2. A second challenge is the lost confidence in moral progress and historical resolution. Much of liberal thought arose in the early modern period, a time famously confident of the power of truth to shine forth. The devout and the skeptical alike had extravagantly ambitious visions of the power of reason. Spinoza wrote that “truth reveals itself”, serene in his assurance of the transparency of the light, as did Jefferson and Tom Paine. Leibniz wrote a “theodicy” in which he tried to explain the problem of suffering (famously mocked by Voltaire’s *Candide*). Like Milton, when J. S. Bach gave Judas, Pilate, and the High Priest beautiful parts in the *Saint Matthew Passion* he had no fear that his audience would be seduced into finding them glamorous; he trusted the listeners to hear the whole story and know what part each figure played.

Something of this confidence in the educational and ethical role of a clash of opinions persists in the philosophy of free expression today, but in general, confidence that history and open debate will achieve the sorting of truth from error is much weaker in the early twenty-first century. Marxism, maybe the greatest secular effort to provide a theodicy and a destiny for human history, lies in tatters. And what can our trust be in any narrative of theodicy after a century’s worth of genocides? The nineteenth century earned much of its confidence in moral progress, with nearly a century of peace within Europe’s borders, the nearly complete elimination of torture, the abolition of slavery, the emancipation of women, and campaigns against cruelty to animals – a collection of historical trends Mill called “the softening of manners”. Needless to add, those outside of Europe had very different experiences, though their voices were rarely heard until the twentieth century. By the twenty-first century, we take our progress piecemeal if at all: rarely ever do thinkers believe in civilizational progress as a package deal. No doubt, we have progress in specific domains – in medical techniques or silicon chips, for example – but no one really believes in moral progress the way many Enlightenment or nineteenth-century thinkers once did. Given the collapse of the faith in truth to reveal itself, how is the philosophy of free speech to work without its customary buoyancy? We are in general much more pessimistic today about the enlightening powers of debate and the hearing of all voices. Indeed, empirical communication research about political communication has not given us a lot to be hopeful about, with its classic unflattering discoveries of limited effects, selective exposure, rational ignorance, and narcotizing dysfunctions, among

many others. Faith in the public sphere is a casualty of what Horkheimer and Adorno called the dialectic of enlightenment. The project of exposing error only ended up exposing the errors inherent in that very project. (Their student Habermas has spent his life trying to fix things.)

3. A third challenge is globalization. Virtually all governments on earth pay lip service to liberty of expression. But the geographical-cultural spread of a robust culture of free speech is largely limited to post-Protestant nations. Comparative modernization studies suggest that societies with strong support for free expression are clustered in northern Europe and America, plus Australia and New Zealand (Inglehart and Baker 2000). In elite opinion worldwide there are important differences. In postwar debates held in the United Nations, for instance, delegates from diverse countries had very different ideas about the social responsibility of the press, the right of reply, and the legitimacy of indecent speech; only the United States, Britain, the Netherlands, and Australia consistently supported robust press freedoms (Cmiel 2002). A more recent comparative study of public opinion among Americans, Muscovite Russians, Israeli Arabs, Israeli Jews, and people in Hong Kong (Andsager, Wyatt, and Martin 2004) reveals uneven patterns of support for free expression and media rights varying with demographic factors such as education, gender, and income. The rich and the educated consistently support free expression rights most vigorously, perhaps because they have the readiest access to the means of expression and security against the adverse social consequences of speaking out. Gender is the most robust predictor of support for freedom of the press: men are more likely than women to believe that the media should be able to publish whatever they please. As Andsager et al. (2004: 265) summarize their data, in sum, “people who are most secure within society are most likely to support expressive rights”. The cultural roots of free expression are strongest in countries that share a particular history – the Protestant reformation, legal-bureaucratic rationalization, and the civilizing process. Free expression flourishes among societies and classes that have attained a level of stability and prosperity. In a global arena, rich countries can seem offensively smug about their support for free expression.

The cartoon controversy illustrates the waning of cultural sovereignty in a global system of circulation. Muslim elites may have once been able to control representations relevant to Islam, but with the internet, there is no cork for the bottle. It was a loaded ethical and professional choice for editors in several prominent national newspapers in Europe and North America whether to publish the cartoons or not. Newspapers, including some editors who lost their jobs, took enormous heat for publishing the cartoons. But no one picketed Google or called for the resignation of its leaders for circulating the cartoons – although it is likely that more people saw the cartoons via this search engine than in newspapers. Old media bore the brunt of the attacks, leaving new media with a relatively free ethical license. An editor is in some way responsible for the decision to publish in a way that a search engine is not (Peters 2007). In today’s blogosphere, everyone is a journalist and nobody is an editor. What

role do experts and intellectual authority have in a world in which some kinds of sovereignty are waning and some are violently waxing?

4. This leads to the fourth challenge: the transformation of the infrastructure of media and communication. The classic story about liberty of expression concerned print media. The theory of free expression was born twins with the printing press. Literate adults were always the assumed audience for the public sphere – Mill in *On Liberty* excluded children and “barbarians” from public debate without batting an eye (Mill 1859: 11). The liberal philosophy of free expression presupposed educated rational people dealing with cultural materials contained on the page: what is it to do with volatile pictures and sounds? How is the philosophy of free expression to respond to the waning of critical literacy as the normative cognitive mode for citizens? The question, to be sure, is not completely one of media forms and formats per se. A world of digital pictures and sounds is not inherently any more scandalous than one of gossip and print. Eighteenth-century Paris, as we know from the fascinating work of Robert Darnton (2000), had a vibrant and often scurrilous multi-media communication system in which rumor and gossip circulated by word-of-mouth, song and manuscript, pamphlets and books. The twenty-first century certainly has no monopoly on communication out of control. But the flood of pictures and sounds certainly has changed public debate in ways that thinkers since the mid-twentieth century have been trying to figure out. Political candidates are marketed like breakfast cereals, as a presidential candidate lamented in the 1950s. Due to television, junk mail, automated telephone calls, and YouTube, political campaigns today are as colorful and expensive as they have ever been. Spectacle has always been a resource of political power, but instant photography has changed it from a matter of grandeur to intimacy: today political debate concerns sniffs, snorts, swaggers, hair styles and off-hand comments that, once caught by the camera, can sink people for good. The tipping point of the 2006 Virginia senate race seems to have been a video clip posted on YouTube of the losing candidate using the obscure ethnic slur “macaca”. Socrates complained that writing – by capturing the winged words of speech – was changing life in ancient Athens. We hardly know how image and sound media – by capturing the winged acts of leaders or by altering the language of civic rationality – have changed public life.

The question here is as much the social organization of communication as of the sensory properties of the media themselves. In the heyday of broadcasting from around 1930 to the 1980s, radio and television in the industrial countries addressed national audiences in the frame of public service broadcasting. There was a clear moral economy or division of labor in programming: the content of electronic media was always “decent”, i.e. framed by common tastes and values, whereas print culture was the carrier of minority tastes and values. “Decency” was a double-edged sword: while keeping broadcast programming away from the extremes of possible offensiveness, it also kept broadcasting away from extremes of artistic adventure or ethical exploration. The point is that there were

once more or less clearly demarcated channels for mainstream and specialty content. If you wanted existentialist philosophy, quantum physics, or pornography, you turned to low-circulation but high-differentiation media. Because radio, television, and newspapers were mass-circulation media, audiences received them with the knowledge that others were also receiving them at the same time. Collective scheduled consumption made an imagined community with whom one could later enter into conversation. The mass address of broadcasting created a set of moral inhibitions on interpretation, for good and evil. The collective moral regulation of media consumption has been largely waning for the last third of a decade. The fading power of network scheduling and the rise of multi-channel environments makes media choices more and more a matter of private discretion and inclination. Media consumption today inherits the older more disinhibited mode that once prevailed for private reading. Some predict that the future of TV lies in short mini-programs designed to be watched by individuals on mobile phones at their convenience. YouTube invites its users to “broadcast yourself”. This slogan concisely captures the reorganization of content delivery in the past decades. Broadcasting was once collective and impersonal: today it is a medium of individual self-expression (Katz 1996).

5. The final challenge is the resurgence of religion. One of the grand narratives of modern thought is secularization, the supposed withering away of religion. Scholars have shown us that this narrative was faulty in many ways, but it is particularly so now thanks to the political role played by believers – including Christians, Jews, Hindus, and Muslims – grouped under the awkward label of “fundamentalists”. The presence of religion on the world stage today is not a simple regression to a previous stage of history. Religion is in many cases a radical critique of and alternative to capitalist modernity. It offers forms of solidarity that undercut the neoliberal grain, and forms of experience and commitment to a vision of the virtues that undercut modern consumerism’s culture of individual fulfillment through pleasure. Faith, suffering, chastity, obedience, sacrifice – whatever else you say about modern life, it rarely supported such virtues (except perhaps toward the nation-state itself). The liberal public sphere rests upon a modern vision of the soul and a secular definition of reason. Private property and the privacy of conscience are its cornerstones. Much good came from privatizing property and belief, and separating state from church – space was made for toleration, religious dissent and innovation. This is a lasting achievement of liberal thought in early modern Europe.

But toleration of religious diversity rested upon a compromise: common life was secular. In an interesting turn from a proud Marxist defender of the Enlightenment which may owe something to his friendship with a former German professor who is now known as Pope Benedict XVI, Jürgen Habermas has recently explored the tax the liberal public sphere imposes on believers (Habermas and Ratzinger 2005; Habermas 2005). In the liberal public sphere, believers have a cognitive handicap: they have to speak in a second language because their mother tongue is proscribed. They assume an asymmetrical burden

of argument by having to translate their faith into a secular idiom. The civic ideal of self-division partitions a (faithful) way of being and seeing whose point is precisely to see things whole. Habermas, with his characteristic thoughtfulness, admits that certain forms of reason might discriminate against certain kinds of people. To create a public realm that is genuinely pluralistic, we need pluralistically flexible visions of the public realm itself. Liberalism wants to be the impartial mediator of public life, an umpire. By asking everyone to play by liberal rules, liberalism presupposes an answer to the chief question to be debated: just how should the debate be conducted? The idea of open-ended debate on all topics is itself offensive to some people, as we have seen.

Here too, liberalism has an opportunity for creative self-revision. It should argue its place instead of assuming its status as a taken-for-granted metalanguage. Liberals have to learn to be pluralistic, even about the question of pluralism. As Charles Taylor (1994: 62) notes, liberalism is not a neutral framework within which to conduct public life; it is a “fighting creed” with a particular vision of what public life should be.

Toward a Conclusion

Those challenges call for a more hospitable and capacious philosophy of free speech. One source for such a philosophy may seem surprising. Saint Paul was long a hero for the Reformation and has been all but the exclusive property of theologians until recently. In contemporary intellectual life many are turning to his epistles and finding them surprisingly relevant for the problems of our age, from Agamben to Žižek. Paul’s spiritual message of the cross went together with a social message about how to blend real differences – Jew and Gentile, male and female, slave and free – within a single community. He was a theorist of a multicultural society long before we learned to use such terms. He was also a theorist of liberty, no theme being as central to his texts as liberation and freedom. In his view, the liberated mind had the duty to avoid offending more tender minds. Paul would have hated censorship, but he also would have hated arrogance and lack of care. If the European value of open-ended debate is really better, he would say, then it should prove it not by selfish boldness but by love for the stranger. His message for free speech would be the old formula of absolute liberty within absolute responsibility.

In this essay I have provided a Eurocentric immanent critique of the philosophy of free expression. By concluding with Paul, I have landed on one of the founders of Europe, a man whose own plural identity – a Christian Jew, a Greek-speaking Roman citizen – unites the key ingredients in Europe’s formation. Given the complexities of the world we face in the twenty-first century, it might seem odd to suggest that we go back to the old texts, but that is exactly what I am doing. Moses, Confucius, Buddha, Paul, Mohammad are texts full of stories that invite our reinterpretation. We might return to the civilizational zero point – the words of apostles and prophets.

This call is a sharp break with the liberal idea that we need a sharp break with the past. The Enlighteners wanted to abandon what they saw as a mildewed authoritarian holy writ, and to shift interpretive authority from the edicts of dogmatists to the debates of citizens. They saw in the clash of rival prophets a proof of the hopelessness of trying to reach spiritual consensus. Claiming an authority that only God could possess, liberals declared that no one could possess any such authority. They wanted to make readers into scribes rather than prophets – to make the market or the vote the arbiter of truth. They tried to build a secular language of reason as the *lingua franca* of the public sphere. Today that language looks more and more, with apologies to my francophone friends, like French: a beautiful and marvelous language that can no longer claim to be a universal medium of communication though it is still spoken with great eloquence and self-assurance in many places on earth. Why should we cede the best old stories to the dogmatists? Why miss the opportunity to compete in the interpretation of fundamentals? There are abundant resources in the Jewish, Christian, and Muslim intellectual traditions that would guide thinking about the public sphere and free speech (for the Muslim tradition see, for instance, Abou El Fadel 2004). Such reading will doubtless be full of trouble (like all serious reading). Liberalism attacks the authority to fix meaning – which is precisely what some religious traditions seek to preserve. But as long as the texts are read anew, the potential for heresy – a new reading – is open. Even of a timeless text, all reading is in some way timely. The question is not liberalism versus religion: there are liberal currents within religion, and there is a certain kind of religious faith within liberalism as well, if we understand religion with Max Weber as a view of the world as a meaningful totality. A counter-prophet looks like a liberal to his rival – like one who does not preach the orthodox religion. Liberalism is perhaps just the heretical moment in the dialectic of religious interpretation. It's time to stop being surprised that we still have a riot of heresies in the twenty-first century. How to deal with the prophets is still on the agenda. Liberalism is best understood not as the termination of all religious debate, but as the enabler of its on-going vitality.¹

Notes

1. This essay borrows from two essays not published in English: *Det ironiske ved dagens ytringsfrihet*, Redaktørinstituttets status 2006: Årbok fra Norsk Redaktørforening (Oslo: IJ forlaget, 2006), 135-143, and *Libertad de expresión*, Cambio Social/Cambio Cultural, ed. José Maria Bastero de Eleizalde (Pamplona: EUNSA, forthcoming). Thanks to Risto Kunelius and Elisabeth Eide for editorial advice.

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In September 2005, a newspaper in Denmark published 12 cartoons depicting Mohammed, the holy Prophet of Islam. Soon after publication, these pictures became part of various events, political projects and diplomatic action. All over the world, the cartoons – or interpretations of them – were connected to discursive struggles that pre-existed their drawing and publication. The cartoon event thus extended well beyond its immediate dramatic phase of spring 2006, both into the past and the future, and became at least a small landmark case of post-9/11 global media history.

In this book, a community of international media researchers collects some of the lessons learned and questions provoked and offered by media coverage of the Mohammed cartoons in 16 countries, ranging from Denmark, Egypt and Argentina to Pakistan and Canada. The book looks at the coverage of the cartoons and related incidents through a number of conceptual lenses: political spin, free speech theory, communication rights, the role of visuals and images in global communication, Orientalism and its counter-discourses, media's relations to immigration policy, and issues of integration. Through this approach, the book aims at a nuanced understanding of the cartoon controversy itself as well as at more general insights into the role of the media in contemporary transnational and transcultural relations.

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