

# CURRENT THEMES IN IMER RESEARCH

NUMBER 13

THE DANISH MUHAMMAD CARTOON CONFLICT

Peter Hervik



MALMÖ UNIVERSITY



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**The Danish Muhammad Cartoon Conflict**

**Peter Hervik**

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*Current Themes in IMER Research*  
Number 13

EDITORIAL BOARD Björn Fryklund, Maja Povrzanović Frykman, Pieter Bevelander,  
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EDITOR-IN-CHIEF Björn Fryklund

PUBLISHED BY Malmö Institute for Studies of Migration, Diversity and Welfare (MIM),  
Malmö University, 205 06 Malmö, Sweden, [www.mah.se/mim](http://www.mah.se/mim)

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Printed in Sweden

Holmbergs, Malmö 2012

ISSN 1652-4616 / ISBN 978-91-7104-438-9

Online publication, [www.mah.se/muep](http://www.mah.se/muep)

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## ABSTRACT

The “Muhammad crisis,” the “Muhammad Cartoon Crisis,” or “The *Jyllands-Posten* Crisis” are three different headings used for the global, violent reactions that broke out in early 2006. The cartoon crisis was triggered by the publication of 12 cartoons in the largest Danish daily newspaper *Morgenavisen Jyllands-Posten* on 30 September 2005 and the Danish governments refusal to meet with 11 concerned ambassadors. However, *Jyllands-Posten*’s record on covering Islam; the ever growing restrictive identity politics and migration policies and the popular association of Islam with terrorism made it predictable that something drastic would eventually happen, although neither the form of the counter-reaction or the stubborn anti-Islamic forces were unknown. This collection of chapters seeks to fill out some of the most glaring holes in the media coverage and academic treatment of the Muhammad cartoon story. It will do so by situating the conflict more firmly in its proper socio-historical context by drawing on the author’s basic research on the Danish news media’s coverage of ethnic and religious minorities since the mid 1990s. The author uses thick contextualization to analyze this very current theme in IMER studies, which has consequences for most immigrants of non-Western countries to the Nordic countries.

**Keywords:** Muhammad Cartoons, *Jyllands-Posten*, ethnic conflict, freedom of speech, spin communication.

### BIBLIOGRAPHIC NOTE:

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Several institutions and individuals have contributed economically and academically to the preparation of this manuscript. My special thanks go to the remarkable Hitotsubashi University's Graduate School of the Social Sciences in Tokyo for giving me the unique opportunity to finish the manuscript while serving as a visiting professor. Grants from the Malmö Institute for Studies of Migration, Diversity and Welfare (MIM) and Malmö University College made it possible to become a visiting scholar at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill in the spring of 2008. At MIM the bookwork benefitted from comments at seminars and in daily exchanges. The Helsingin Sanomat Research Foundation and Professor Risto Kunelius provided a unique opportunity to participate in a research project on the global media coverage of the Muhammad cartoon conflict. Finally, my employer since April 2010, Aalborg University has provided me with an academic home, where I could finish the manuscript. My special thanks goes to the great colleagues and friends at CoMID (The Center for the Study of Migration and Diversity). A huge acknowledgement goes to these economic contributors and their researchers, who have taken time to discuss various arguments and findings of the book.

Parts of chapter one and two have been presented at various stages as guest lectures, public talks, and conference papers on many occasions, too many to mention. Chapter three is a revised and expanded version of a paper that was first discussed at the conference "Ethnic Conflicts" at the Department of Archaeology, History, Cultural Studies and Religion (AHKR), University of Bergen in 2008. Chapter four is a translated and revised version of an article first published in Japanese 2010 and originally prepared for an international conference in Malmö, "Conflict Resolution in the Age of Terrorism: What role will Europe play?" My gratitude to the participants in all of these events. All errors are of course my sole responsibility.



For direct research assistance I have been fortunate to be able to work with an outstanding group of younger students. Invaluable help has come from Zainap Alseraj, Maria Ettrup, Daniel Hervik, Thomas Hervik, Simon Hervik, Clarissa Berg, and Lise Binderup. I also want to thank the participants in focus group discussions and individual discussions for their generous sharing of time, memories, and reflections. Likewise students in Copenhagen, Malmö, Chapel Hill, Aalborg and Tokyo have provided priceless feedback. In addition to the above mentioned individuals I have benefitted tremendously from the comments, suggestions and support from Ronald Stade, Carolina Boe Sanchez, Ulf Hannerz, Elizabeth Eide, Mark Allen Peterson, Kajsa Olsson, Maja Povrzanovic Frykman, Björn Fryklund, Anders Hellström, Ulf Hedetoft, Gavan Titley, Alana Lentin, Jonathan Lewis, Nakamitsu Izumi, Haci Akman, and the late Marianne Gullestad.

Finally, an endlessly big thanks to my closest family, who are always provide me with a never-ending intellectual and personal support: Daniel, Thomas, Simon, and Lisbet.

## INTRODUCTION

The Muhammad cartoon crisis refers to the turmoil that arose in connection to the Danish newspaper *Morgenavisen Jyllands-Posten's* publication of 12 cartoons on 30 September 2005 as a result of its testing self-censorship and in response to the Danish Prime Minister, Anders Fogh Rasmussen's rejection on 22 October 2005 of a meeting with 11 concerned ambassadors about growing anti-Islamic rhetoric in the Danish public. For most Danes – except those directly involved – and the rest of the world, the cartoon crisis is associated with violent global responses in February 2006 to the anti-Islamic signals and stories coming out of Denmark. During the first months of 2006 and the news media around the world wrote about *Jyllands-Posten's* original publication of the cartoons some four months earlier using sources that had been shaped by polarized, competing discourses in the news coverage and further colored by the Danish government's successful spin strategies (Hervik 2008, 2011). In this process much of the original complexity and nuances were lost in what was increasingly represented as conflict between the Western and the Islamic world. To mention a few: *Jyllands-Posten's* history of anti-islamic representations; the government's cultural war of values strategy, and the inclusion of voices of ordinary Muslims in the media coverage. This issue of Current Themes in IMER Research will attempt to give more justice to this complexity by using a research-based platform that draws from 15 years of research. Only in this larger time perspective can we properly unfold the simplifying, distorting, politicizing representations and perceptions that prevailed so strongly in the cartoon affair and continues afterwards in the shape of the "22/7" attacks in Norway on Muslims, young social democrats, feminists and others.

The domestic Danish news coverage from the original cartoon publications in September 2005 to the coverage of the unfolding political and violent reactions is permeated by the opinions and values that characterize the Danish field of journalism (Hjarvard 2006). From *Jyllands-Posten's* hiring of foreign correspondent Flemming Rose, to head the newspapers new "cultural war of values" strategy in 2004 to Rose's acceptance of the Freedom of Speech prize by the radical right populist organization and the establishment of the Free Speech

Society (economically supported by the Jyllands-Posten foundation), the cartoon affair has been political, politicizing, and polarizing. In the moral prescriptions of right and wrong, good and bad, few commentators historicized the emergence of anti-Muslim beliefs in the Danish society, or pointed to the emergence of radical right-wing populism with its strong idea of cultural incompatibility (Hervik 2011, 2012). In my analysis of the Danish Muhammad cartoon crisis, I will deal with the immediate historical circumstances leading up to *Jyllands-Posten's* publication of the cartoons and the government's adherence to non-dialogue, which are crucial in understanding the complexity of the publication of the cartoons, stories about the cartoons, the government's negative dialogue strategy, and the stories about the government's handling of the unfolding cartoon story.

The structure and logic of the news genre rely on a model that insists on seeing two sides of a conflict, which on one the hand dovetails nicely with the narrative of clash of civilization (Peterson 2007), and on the other relies on a domestication of news which resonates with the readers' view of themselves and the Muslim world. In a study of the Boston Globe's coverage of the cartoon conflict Mark Allen Peterson concluded that readers are invited to see the events following the publication of the cartoons as a single global event in which rational Western actors engaged in a rational, democratic practice are met with a hostile global response by undifferentiated "Muslims" whose protests are not seen as forms of democratic expression but as irrational actions (Peterson 2007).

For the majority of Muslims around the world and many non-Westerners as well, the underlying causes of anger seem to stem more from their feelings of Western arrogance and lack of respect. The cartoons evoked the experience of inferiority and Muslims being the legitimate target of relentless criticism (Daniels 2007, Eide et al, 2008, Fischer 2009, Peterson 2007, Shaukat 2006).

The purpose of this book is to fill out some of the voids in the media coverage and academic treatment of the Danish Muhammad cartoon affair through the use of research that extends back to the mid 1990s. Most of these publications do not rely on primary scholarly analysis. Many commentators treat the cartoon story as a single event that in itself "caused" the crisis, while Muslims in Denmark are approached as foreign intruders that illustrates how globalization may enter and disturb the domestic Danish news scene. In the battle to win the argument and set the political agenda, the immediate context of the publication of the cartoons is virtually non-existing in the media coverage. Here, the driving force of the cartoon crisis is seen as

deriving from the perceived clashing identities between good rational Westerners and angry, dangerous, bad Muslims.

This book will provide the background, which is necessary to understand why the cartoons were published including the involvement of radical right-wing populism in Denmark (and Sweden) revolving around an anti-Islamic, anti-non-Westerner, and anti-communist platform. More specifically, I look closer at *Jyllands-Posten's* engagement in the moral upsurge called "The cultural war of values" (*kulturkampen* or *værdikamp*); representations of Muslims as terrorists; Muslim voices and perspectives in the media debate; and the focus on ethnic difference as the cause of conflicts rather than attitudes towards difference.

The news articles in the Danish press and the first wave of books about the cartoon story written by journalists and academics, revealed competing frames of understandings of the cartoon conflict. Although literally thousands of news articles and several books were written in Denmark about the cartoon conflict, they reveal serious omissions. Most chronologies have the publication of the Muhammad cartoons on 30 September 2005 as the starting point. No Danish news article or book took up cartoonist Kurt Westergaard's earlier drawings that associate Islam with terrorism, even if some of these were published only a few weeks prior to the publications of the notorious 12 cartoons on 30 September 2005. Others went as far back as 1997 (Hervik 2011). *Jyllands-Posten's* confrontational anti-Islamic editorials since 2001 were also largely ignored. Very few of the sources have included Muslim voices beyond a few imams and politicians, primarily the conservative politician Naser Khader. Foreign journalists and commentators echoed the distorting Danish sources.

Several books have come out in Denmark on the cartoon crisis. Academic analysis is scarce in these books, which tend to align themselves with the opinionated media coverage and public debate. Klaus and Mikael Rothstein (2006) are two brothers, one scholar and one journalist, who published the first Danish book on the cartoon crisis. Their book may be constructively used as a primary source, but the information given is based on newspaper articles with personal opinions of the authors, written without the benefit of academic analysis and broader perspective.

John Hansen and Kim Hundevadt (2006) provided helpful insight to some of the activities and documents particularly within *Jyllands-Posten*, where they work as journalists. But their book reads more like a defense of *Jyllands-Posten*. It is a mile wide but only an inch deep as it fails to provide substantial analysis that moves beyond the views and

discourse of *Jyllands-Posten*. It is written with economic support by *Jyllands-Posten* and published by *Jyllands-Posten*'s publisher.

Rune Engelbreth Larsen and Tøger Seidenfaden (2006) wrote the most comprehensive Danish book on the topic. One author is a regular columnist; the other was editor-in-chief of the large Danish newspaper *Politiken* until he passed away in January 2011. Much of the text has already been published in *Politiken*. Unlike Hansen and Hundevadt who are journalists working for the newspaper which published the target of much international rage, Larsen and Seidenfaden are not directly involved in the publications of the Muhammad cartoons, which gives them a broader space for their analysis. Yet, their critical reaction to *Jyllands-Posten* is based on a counter discourse that ends up enforcing the importance of the idea of free speech, which they argue is not what the conflict is all about.

Anders Jerichow and Mille Rode (2006) have compiled some of the key documents of the affairs. They do provide some lines of reasoning and arguments, but there is little analysis and no larger perspective.

Per Bech Thomsen (2006) is a journalist and communications expert, who wrote a comprehensive book about the Muhammad cartoon crisis. Besides the fairly detailed representation of the cartoon story, which reads more like a report than a thorough analysis, Thomsen interviewed key actors in the Danish scene about their roles. These actors were already used countless times by the news media and not much new material is conveyed.

Politician and later Minister of Integration, Birthe Rønn Hornbech published a small book on liberal values (2006), which includes a discussion of the Muhammad cartoons prior to February 2006. In this tendentious piece Hornbech (like Hundevadt and Hansen) is framing her opponents negatively before presenting their points of view, thus bearing witness to the opinionated character of the public debate. As such this genre of writing can best be used as primary material rather than a direct contribution to the deeper research based analysis of the cartoon crisis.

Jens-Martin Eriksen and Frederik Stjernfelt discussed multiculturalism in Denmark and included reflections and comments on the cartoon debate (2008), however, although they are scholars and researchers, they did not conduct primary research on the cartoon crisis for their book.

Danish Muslims Peter Ali Nicolaisen and Zahid Abdullah provided a brief bilingual Danish English overview of the cartoon case (2006). This small book is written in a question and answer style. It provides some helpful answers to readers that serve mostly as

a quick guide into the conflict. This book does not provide analysis or academic research either.

Mogens S. Mogensen is another consultant who wrote (in English) a small book to explain the cartoon crisis and the Danish headscarf debate (2008). Again, the purpose is more to provide some knowledge to the uninitiated about the conflict, rather than an analysis of the conflict.

Jerichow and Rode's publication is collection of documents without academic analysis. In contrast Jytte Klausen's recent book (2009) is truly academic and builds on a number of interviews with key political and religious leaders. This book has several detailed and interesting analyses and makes some daring points. The section on Egypt is particularly instructive and intriguing. The author provides some perceptive moments, such as the West's push for including disliked opposition groups in the elections without consulting the Egyptian government first, and leading to results that the "wrong guys" may end up winning the elections as the Hezbollah in Palestine, which the EU then chose not to accept. The strongest asset, however, is the daring move presentation of then Danish Prime Minister, Anders Fog Rasmussen, as carrying out "Activist Foreign Policy." According to this policy the Danish military's primary objective is international operations outside Nato's area and the idea that Denmark should play an active visible role in international politics.

Klausen's book is the only one that more systematically collected new material, mostly interviews with key actors. Yet it still does not add much in terms of those shortcomings in the coverage I mentioned earlier. Unfortunately, the title (*The Cartoons that Shook the World*) is misleading since it was not the cartoons but stories about the cartoons and the government's handling that triggered the cartoon crisis. Moreover, Klausen - apart from a great, thoroughly researched book - ends up interviewing only leaders failing to go beyond the top-down approach. Ordinary Muslims close to the conflict or affected by it are not included. This omission is serious, because they had experienced the anti-Islamic sentiments *prior* to the cartoon publication and they were forced to relate to the conflict already when the cartoons were published, whereas most others, including Klausen, entered the crisis through the violent and global reactions in February 2006.<sup>1</sup>

Carsten Stage's "Tegningskrisen" (2011) is a PhD turned into a book. Although much of the complex theoretization is taken out in this transformation the book is loaded with theoretical concepts and less experience-near resonance with each set of actors sponsoring the various positions. Stage takes over the media position that represents

the crisis as a single reified event that has a clear beginning that is the focal point also for foreign eruptions of violence. In the end the distinction between strategies of debate positions (debatpositions-strategier) is not discussed in relate to say frames, discourses, and stories, this book appears mostly as the author's struggle to find his own vocabulary and present to the readers his opinion about various critical aspects of the crisis. In this manner, the book appears as a testing game of historical actions and interpretations but still end up reproducing the structure and premises of the debate instead of finding a new separate language and platform for analysis. Such a point of departure would also have allowed him to introduce the perspective of ordinary Muslims in his treatment, which was also absent from the news media coverage he set out to analyze. Nevertheless and despite these reservations, I still find that this is one of the more thorough academic treatments.

The "Danish Muhammad Crisis" is not written as a single coherent piece, but consists of four chapters, each with its own theme, methodology, and analytical apparatus. This format allows chapters to be read as fairly separate entities and not necessarily in the order provided here. For the same reason some repetition cannot be completely avoided.

In the first chapter, I look at the events and processes leading up to the publication of the 12 cartoons on 30 September 2010. This includes *Jyllands-Posten's* earlier coverage of Islam, the paper's Islam critical priority as an integral part of a cultural war of values, and cartoonist Kurt Westergaard earlier work. None of these themes were taken up in the previous literature or media coverage of the Danish Muhammad cartoon crisis.

Chapter two enters the cartoon affair from the perspective of the Danish media coverage in January and February of 2006. As mentioned above this is also the entry point of most Danish commentators and most Danes. The chapter is based primarily on a frame analysis of the media coverage, which revealed three competing Danish frames of understandings "Freedom of speech as a Danish freedom"; "Freedom of speech as human right threatened by Islamism"; and "The demonization of Muslims and political spin is the issue not freedom of speech". The chapter shows that the nature of these competitors and the struggle for meaning are seldom revealed to the readers, since journalists tend to choose just one angle in their coverage or comments.

In chapter three, I focus on the argument that the Danish Muhammad cartoon crisis constitutes an ethnic conflict, or a conflict of clashing identities. The first part of the chapter consists of a critical

conceptual discussion of “ethnic conflict,” while the second half looks closer at what an ethnic conflict perspective can add to our understanding of the cartoon conflict.

In chapter four, I scrutinize the apparent paradox between the Danish government’s adherence to a non-dialogue strategy in Denmark, while it at the same time and in the midst of the crisis turns to a high-level group of Christians in order to support and fund their travel to Egypt to initiate dialogue there. The methodological focus of my analysis of the delegation’s visit to Egypt is the response provided by the Egyptian news media, which covered the visit extensively. In this analysis the connotations of the concept of “dialogue” plays a significant role.

I include a chronology of events as they occurred historically. This can of course be misleading when we deal with social memory and how media consumers remembered the events not chronologically but through what happened at 4-5 months into the history of the cartoon crisis.

I end with an epilogue that uses a Finnish newspaper editor’s surprise intervention in 2009 on a blog to disassociate her paper from a certain new controversial cartoon. She did so to avoid any association with the Muhammad Cartoon crisis, which by 2009 had become a negative association to be avoided, which again helps to explain the quick disappearance of the topic from the media and from social memory.



# CHAPTER 1

## THE CARTOON CRISIS AND THE RE-POLITICALIZATION OF THE DANISH NEWS MEDIA

The publication of the Muhammad cartoons in *Jyllands-Posten* 30 September 2005 and the Danish government's refusal to enter into a real dialogue with foreign and domestic Muslim leaders did not strike out of the blue. For more than a decade, Denmark has seen a rising tide of political nationalism accompanied by anti-immigrant rhetoric. This has been precipitated by significant political and economic changes, and facilitated by the politicization of Denmark's news media, including *Morgenavisen Jyllands-Posten*. Yet neither the news media nor the first wave of publications about the cartoons including eight Danish books (Hansen & Hundevadt 2006; Hornbech 2006; Jerichow & Rode 2006; Larsen & Seidenfaden 2006; Mogensen 2008, Rothstein & Rothstein 2006, Stage 2011, Thomsen 2006) incorporated the immediate historical context such as the Mona Sheikh story of 2001, to which cartoonist Kurt Westergaard (who drew the famous bomb-and-the-creed-in-the-turban cartoon) contributed with another Muslim-as-terrorist drawing, and *Jyllands-Posten's* record of anti-Muslim discourse predating the Muhammad cartoon story. The cartoon story must be placed in a proper context, if we are to better understand the conditions and circumstances that led up to the publication of the cartoons and led to more violence, carelessness, and political activism after the publications.

This chapter treats Danish socio-cultural history, the Mona Sheikh story, and *Jyllands-Posten's* recent history of anti-Islamism in the years prior to 30 September 2005. The rise of anti-Muslim rhetoric in historically tolerant Denmark is particularly puzzling in the light of the small numbers involved. The number of Muslims in Denmark is estimated to be about 200.000 out of a population of 5.5 million. Of those, only 25.000-30.000 is practicing believers, regularly praying, attending Mosque and seeing a confessional imam. Muslims in Denmark represent more than 50 different countries of origin with

Turkey, Iraq, Lebanon, Pakistan, Somalia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, and Afghanistan being the largest, each with more than 10.000 Muslims (Jacobsen 2007). Approximately 2.500 native Danes have converted to Islam (Jensen and Østergaard 2007). How, then, can we explain the rise of anti-Muslim rhetoric, often expressed as fear that Danish culture will be swamped by Islamic ideologies? This chapter links anti-Muslim, anti-immigrant rhetoric to the socio-cultural and political-economic challenges to Denmark in the wake of globalization and Europeanization, arguing that anti-Islamic discourses are idioms through which new Danish nationalism is asserted and articulated.

Arjun Appadurai has recently warned against the danger of the idea of the modern nation-state in what he calls the period of “high globalization” and large-scale violence (2006). The road is relatively direct, he says “from national genius to a totalized cosmology of the sacred nation, and further to ethnic purity and cleansing” (2006:4). The danger of nationalism comes with a second idea, the idea of social uncertainty, or ontological insecurity (Giddens 1991, Laing 1968[1959]), which he contends can drive ethnic cleansing and other predatory endeavors. Uncertainty can arise when agents successfully set the media debate through issues such as: “How many persons of this or that sort really exist in a given territory? Or, in the context of rapid migration or refugee movement, how many of ‘them’ are there now among us?” (Appadurai 2006:5). Nationalism can perhaps best be done through constructing an excluded other (Gingrich and Banks 2006, Wimmer and Glick Schiller 2002, Hervik 2006, Miles 1993) with (neo)nationalism and (neo)racism intimately linked as categories of exclusion particularly in already established nation-states. Appadurai argues that majoritarian identities are created through national policy and public debate, which pursues the utopian goal of establishing the purity of the national whole. Regardless of how small the number of minorities, they remind the majority of its incompleteness. A focal point of analysis is the historical moment when social identities turn into “predatory identities,” which may occur when people begin to see themselves as a threatened majority with the inherent potential of becoming a minority in its own country. Appadurai uses the Holocaust as one of his examples of what a shift to predatory identities can lead to. From this historical example it may seem that the concept of “predatory” is too value-laden when applied to contemporary Denmark, but the analytical issue is to identify the predatory character of policy, opinion, and everyday talk in its earliest stages. As such the idea of the predatory captures the showing of a disposition to injure or exploit others for

personal gain or profit often phrased as a just act of self-defense to silence, neutralize, or expel an enemy.

The anxiety of incompleteness about Denmark's sovereignty and its perceived threat posed by a small number of newcomers, epitomized by the fear of terrorist acts committed by Muslims of diverse background living in Denmark, are important for understanding the Danish government policies and *Jyllands-Posten's* publication of the Muhammad cartoons.

*Jyllands-Posten* was criticized by another government-friendly newspaper *Berlingske Tidende* for the publication of the 12 cartoons, which it saw as an unnecessary irresponsible provocation. In the next section I will turn to the 19<sup>th</sup> century to clarify the depth of the alleged anti-authoritarian character of the Danish "people" and the governing, cultivating urban elite, which was played out in competing Danish news frames during the cartoon crisis (Hervik and Berg 2007).

### **Denmark becomes unified**

The historical emergence of Danish nationalism coincided with the loss of a multilingual, multicultural empire. The Danish constitution (*Grundloven*) was passed in 1849, institutionalizing the end of absolute monarchical rule. A few years later in 1864, when Denmark was defeated in a war with Germany, the Danish empire had lost Norway, Sleswig, Holsten and Lauenborg. For the first time, (almost) only Danish speakers lived within the borders, while leaving a group of 170.000 Danish speakers right outside its territory. In 1920 most of these Danish speakers became Danes when the lost territory in southern Jutland, located on the German side of the border, was voted back in a referendum. This referendum came as part of the negotiations of borders following Germany's defeat in World War I, and ended up moving the national border further south, reflecting the linguistic border as close as possible.

During the last third of the nineteenth century nation building efforts spread from the elite to the peasants, workers, and smallholders. This shift in balance of power was the outcome of shifting success of three competing political programmes that are crucial for understanding competing political forces in Denmark even today (Linde-Laursen 2007). The elitist-oriented National Liberals promoted a political type of nationalism that believed in a popular sovereignty based on citizens who were "deemed cultured and educated enough to exercise democratic rights" (Hansen 2002:57). Hansen notes that National Liberals did not hold any romantic visions about of an authentic peasantry, but maintained a general discontent for everything

that took place outside of Copenhagen. In their view the Danish state did not need to be limited to the Danish nation but can be extended (ibid.57-58).

A second line of thinking emerged from the work of Nikolai Frederik Severin Grundtvig,<sup>2</sup> which resembled Herder's idea of the Kulturnation and sought to put "the people" and their rights to self-determination at the core of its nationalism. Accordingly, a linguistic criterion was the proper division in southern Jutland separating Danish and German speakers (ibid.: 58-59). To counter the National Liberals' grip on power through education, Grundtvig sought to give peasants without education a chance to exchange ideas and organize themselves politically. During the winter peasants would come to "folk high schools," whose informal settings and absence of rigid teaching methods appealed to the Danish populace through a strong sense of community, public speakers, singing, dancing, gymnastics, and so on. By its emphasis on the "the living word" there would be entertaining yet instructive exchanges, further contributing to educating the peasants, building a national consciousness, and training them for political office.

A third line of political thought had journalist and politician Viggo Hørup as its spokesperson. The people of this persuasion championed an anti-power politics. Denmark should pursue a pragmatic friendship with Germany in order to gain the most influence, and should even be willing to settle for a state smaller than the linguistic boundaries (ibid.).

The Danish popular movement of peasants and workers created a separate public sphere and a civic society independent of the state, which came out of the nation's failure to establish norms for all citizens (Linde-Laursen 2007). Danish nationalists at the time were motivated by the hostile relationship to Germany and using it within the country for gaining social and political power.

To more fully capture the peculiar Danish popular relation to the state it is helpful to contrast it with the strikingly different historical situation in neighboring Sweden. In Sweden the government reacted in a more balanced manner, (for the Swedish approach to the Muhammad cartoon crisis (see Wallentin and Ekecrantz 2007), which could be seen most clearly in the second crisis around artist Lars Vilks' provocative drawing of a roundabout dog with the head of the prophet Muhammed. During the Vilks' controversy, when the Swedish government was quick to enter a dialogue with Muslim leaders and distance itself from the drawing.<sup>3</sup> In 19 and 20<sup>th</sup> century Sweden Social Democrats pursued nation building through a modernist utopian ideal by uniting popular

movement with an alliance of peasants and workers with the state<sup>4</sup>. In the origin myth of the Swedish nationalism, the free Swedish yeoman peasant and the King build an intimate alliance fighting against foreign powers and domestic nobility. Eventually the success of the alliance grew into a strong idea: “the state and the people were joined in a common endeavour to safeguard the two freedoms, that of the nation and that of the individual” (Trägårdh 2002:133-134). The Swedish state and people are inseparable embedding an alliance of the friendly, strong, egalitarian state to whom enlightened autonomous people willingly give up individual liberty and free choice (ibid.:142-143). The Danish tension between the responsible, educated, cultivate elite of the capital and the Grundtvigian view of the superior position of “the people” (Folket), whether it is comprised of peasants or the workers (but not both at the same time), is indeed present in the debate about the use of free speech in the Muhammad cartoon coverage. Thus, the Århus based *Jyllands-Posten* was scolded for its uneducated use of free speech by competing government-friendly *Berlingske Tidende* in Copenhagen.

### **(Re)Politicizing the media**

The critique of *Jyllands-Posten* by *Berlingske Tidende* reflects not only the continuance of 19<sup>th</sup> century nationalist narratives in contemporary political debate but also what Danish media historian Stig Hjarvard has called the “re-politicization” of Danish media in the late 1990s and 2000s.

When newspapers were established more than 200 years ago, they were closely tied to political parties. The political party system developed in the 1870s along with newspapers *Berlingske Tidende* (1789), *Politiken* (1884), and *Morgenavisen Jyllands-Posten* (1871). The tabloid press came shortly after the turn of the century. *Ekstra Bladet* (1904) and *B.T.* (1915).<sup>5</sup> *Berlingske Tidende* was the organ of the “Right” (*Højre*, from 1915 “The Conservative People’s Party” (Det Konservative Folkeparti). *Politiken* (founded by Viggo Hørup) was tied to The Social Liberals (Det Radikale Venstre) with an image as a paper for intellectuals. *Jyllands-Posten* was tied to The Conservatives, with a readership of independent business owners and white-collar workers. *The Social-Demokraten* (1872) belonged to the Social Democratic Party, but does not exist anymore.

Under economic pressure and the introduction of new technologies in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century the opinions of newspapers were no longer an asset. Papers began losing their role as agitators. Some went out of business, while other papers adjusted and merged as de-politicized

local media monopolies that served a town or region. According to Hjarvard the print media began to operate as a public service model with media institutions being independent of politics and guided by journalistic criteria. Most declared themselves independent of particular party interest. “News replaced views” (Hjarvard 2006:48).

*Jyllands-Posten* continued its expansion from Eastern Jutland to Jutland and by the 1930s to include the island of Fyn. In connection to this last expansion it declared itself an “independent civil” (or “bourgeoisie”) (in Danish: *uafhængig borgerlig*) paper, still with strong opinions articulated against the domination of news from Copenhagen (“*københavneri*”), the intervention of state, and economic liberalism (Jensen 2000:33). In 1969 the name was changed to “*Morgenavisen Jyllands-Posten*,” when it became a truly national newspaper that included Copenhagen. The daily circulation is around 150.000 with 6-700.000 daily readers (2007). *Jyllands-Posten* presents itself as an independent liberal newspaper it but has historically cultivated close ties to the leading party of the government The Liberal Party (Venstre).<sup>6</sup> Today, *Politiken*, Denmark’s second largest newspaper opposes the present government and, as such, is closer to The Social Democratic Party (Socialdemokratiet) and The Social Liberals (Det Radikale Venstre) with a leaning towards the later. Its circulation is 134.000 copies. The third largest paper is *Berlingske Tidende*, which is a conservative government friendly newspaper that officially pursues an unbiased position towards the government. Its circulation is 124,550.

*Ekstra Bladet* is the larger of two tabloid papers in Denmark, known for its provocative, aggressive, sensationalist journalistic research. Its daily circulation is 110.880. The second tabloid paper *B.T.*, has a circulation of 93.942 and sees itself as a popular family newspaper. Both of the tabloids were strong supporters of both *Jyllands-Posten* and the government and against “the Muslims” during the Muhammad cartoon crisis.

Hjarvard explains that to understand the contemporary re-politization on newspapers one must not only look at the development of Danish politics, but also the major changes in the commercial conditions for Danish news production. The re-politicization of the press during the last decade can be explained by increased economic pressure due to the rapid expansion of the electronic news media, a general decline in advertisement, and changes in competition for that advertising. Before the re-politicizing of the news media, newspapers had resembled each other in the mid 1990s, when they competed mostly on traditional journalistic criteria. In 2001 two free

newspapers, *MetroExpress* and *Urban* made their debut. By 2006 free dailies captured close to 60 % of the market. The free newspapers sought to reach a general audience with short fact-based news stories and consumer information financed by advertisement. In response to this challenge, the largest established newspapers emphasized values and opinions as a way to sell their papers. Offering an opinion in the editorials, on the front page, and in the editing of opinion pieces, leading newspapers came to echo the political parties, even if nuances and variation could be found in all papers (Hjarvard 2006). The newspapers have become political actors who try to make a difference in politics by taken clear stances on popular issues. On such issue is the presence of immigrants and refugees, which has attracted strong opinions and evoked nationalist rhetoric.<sup>7</sup>

Both the de-politicization of news media in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century and its re-politicizing at the close of the century came in response to commercial pressures, including falling circulation of newspapers. This is particularly clear in the case of the tabloid papers *Ekstra Bladet* and *B.T.* that would lead to the *Ekstra Bladet's* unprecedented and highly politicized campaign against foreigners and immigration policies in 1997. Its campaign was intimately tied to the upcoming Danish People's Party who in *Ekstra Bladet* had a formidable dance partner (Hervik 1999; 2006; 2011).

*Jyllands-Posten's* confrontational and Islam critical style emerges at least as far back as 1997.

### **Amin - Jyllands-Posten's Story**

In early April 1997, during tabloid newspaper *Ekstra Bladet's* infamous campaign "The Foreigners" (Hervik 1999), *Jyllands-Posten* published a story about a ten-year-old Danish Muslim boy named Amin. For newspapers, a "good story" about immigrants must fit into the thematic category "immigrants as a problem" (Hussain, Ferruz, O'Connor 1997). Amin's story is one such story that appeared in *Jyllands-Posten*. According to Signe Toft (1999), this was the biggest and most comprehensive story covered by this newspaper in the beginning of 1997. From the very beginning *Jyllands-Posten's* leadership invested editorial space in the story, which underscores the importance assigned to it.<sup>8</sup>

Amin was expelled from a private school in Frederikssund because he refused to bathe with his peers. The story ran for three weeks, with daily articles and letters to the editors. The first headlines were "School Accused of Racism" (2 April 1997) and "Talk Solves Bathing Problems" (*Jyllands-Posten* 3 April 1997), and some of the articles

could be seen as an attempt to solve the situation in a practical manner. On the story's second day, *Jyllands-Posten* published an editorial titled "The Magic Word". Its author was upset that the school authorities had been accused of racism, which would preclude any further reasonable argument. According to the editorial, the boy's shyness, rather than his religion, was his reason for not wanting to bathe naked. Therefore, his expulsion from school was reasonable (Editorial, *Jyllands-Posten* 3 April 1997). In other words, he was expelled for being shy.

In the following days, the newspaper published articles and letters to the editor that responded positively to this editorial. The focus changed into an issue about the harm an unwashed body could do to Danish swimming pools. The water in the pools came to serve as a metaphor of Danishness; the unwashed body would infect the water as foreignness would infect Danish cultural values (Toft 1999).

Amin's story reflects the problems of foreign culture in the midst of Danishness. The dominant elements in all of the related articles are the rules for bathing, the hygienic of Danish pools, and the obligation of Muslims to adapt to Danish culture of bathing. Authors of letters to the editor were provoked by Amin's insistence on being different in the midst of Danish celebrations of casual nude bathing. There were seventeen such letters to the editor, and not a single one would take Amin's Islamic beliefs into consideration. According to *Jyllands-Posten's* letters editor, these were selected because they were representative.

*Jyllands-Posten* intervened in the news story by using its editorial space to point out what it saw as the essentials of the story; the editorial appealed to shared Danish understandings of the problems associated with cultural diversity and argued that accusations of racism were an insult. The editorial referred to Amin and his family as lacking any sense of social refinement. By the same token, *Jyllands-Posten* denied that Amin was expelled for racist reasons. Yet, the denial of racism may be a significant part of neoracism (Hervik 2004). Racism is an emotionally and politically charged concept; neoracism has a more subtle contestation of cultural difference, one in which "culture" rather than "race" is the basis of judgments of moral, social, and intellectual inferiority. In Amin's case, his not wishing to wash himself, or not being permitted to wash himself in his own way, is the problem, and it becomes a sign of his not wanting to integrate. This focus on "Danish" bathing culture and "the potential danger of allowing unwashed Muslim behinds to infect Danish bathing water" becomes a practical symbol of the gap between Danish and foreign



culture—the idea and fear that “our culture” is in danger of being run over, and so on. Simple practical solutions could have been reached, as they are at many schools: Amin could arrive ten minutes before his peers, or the school could put up a small bathing cabin. But by the time *Jyllands-Posten* had finished covering the story, it was too late. Amin had already become an icon, a symbol of an unwanted presence that can be discussed as a problem of hygiene rather than as an issue of racism (Toft 1999). Maintaining his difference got Amin expelled from the school.

A few years later and a few months before 9/11 *Jyllands-Posten* engaged itself strongly in a story that I named after main object of contestation, Mona Sheikh.

### **The Mona Sheikh story of 2001 and *Jyllands-Posten*'s editorials**

A huge story by domestic standards broke on 17 May 2001 with the evening news broadcast of *TV-avisen*, the Danish national television (*TV-avisen* 19 May 2001). Three young Muslims, Mona Sheikh, Tanwir Ahmed and Babar Baig, who were born in Denmark of Pakistani parents, were running for political office as members of the small Social Liberal Party (*Det Radikale Venstre*). One of them, Mona Sheikh, was seeking the party's nomination as a candidate for the parliamentary election. The three Danish Muslims were framed as “being planted in” and “infiltrating” the Social Liberals. By virtue of their membership in subunits of the Pakistan-based but globally extensive Minhaj-ul-Qur'an<sup>9</sup> movement, they were accused of supporting the death penalty, the Taliban regime, the Iranian regime of late Ayatollah Khomeini, and simply being fundamentalists. A set of articles two days later in *Berlingske Tidende* gave the accusations a further boost, when two journalists interpreted an interview with Mona Sheikh as supporting the death penalty, when in fact she said the opposite (Madsen and Termansen 19 May 2001).

The party's spokesperson on the Mona Sheikh story, Johannes Lebeck, reacted to the national television news portrayal of candidates as Islamic fundamentalists by telling the media that the Social Liberal Party could not accept such values. Accordingly, a few days into the story *TV-avisen* could tell the viewers that one candidate seeking nomination for a seat in Folketinget, Mona Sheikh, would, all things considered, not be elected as the party's top candidate for this seat (*TV-avisen* 19 May 2001). Rather than engaging in dialogue with the candidates themselves, the party officials went to the media to make the three Muslims' alleged fundamentalist connections and aspirations known to a broad audience and at the same time show that the party

was acting to control their power. In this manner the Social Liberal Party representatives denied Muslims access to the crucial nomination to the upper echelons of the political system, Folketinget, on the basis of their stigmatization as supporters of the death penalty, fundamentalists, and distrustful (Hervik 2002).

In the weeks following 17 May hundreds of articles and opinion-pieces filled the newspapers. *Jyllands-Posten* published more editorials and more anti-Islamic articles than any other Danish newspaper (Hervik 2002, Hervik 2011), which in light of the Muhammad cartoon conflict reveal significant resemblances in its crass language and its characterization of Islam. Here are two examples.

In “Islam’s dirty face” (*Islams beskidte ansigt*, 22 May) *Jyllands-Posten*’s editors treats the claim that the Taliban wished to mark (or brand) all Hindus. The Taliban is described as engaged in a practice of “human degrading”, expressing an approach to human life that can hardly be distinguished from that of Germany’s Nazis, “the most despicable in the world”, and who represent a spiritual darkening of such abomination that the regime has become an international pariah - only officially recognized by Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, and Pakistan. Only military invention could change things, the editorial claimed, but who would offer a drop of blood on this land of no value?<sup>10</sup>

To bring this story home to his Danish readers, and to make a political point, the author builds a series of links with Pakistan. He emphasizes that this country “gives weapon to the Taliban, but also indirectly via the organization Minhaj-ul-Qur’an moral support to the extreme suppression that the Taliban is using against the Afghani people”.<sup>11</sup> By linking Pakistan to the Taliban, and Minhaj to Pakistan, the editorial suggests that the three young Danish Muslim politicians of Pakistani parentage are the same kind of “bad people”. In this process the internally suspicious minorities are consubstantiate with the imagined globally threatening terrorists. The national rhetoric of contestation draws on global threats to enhance the seriousness and the danger of having the domestic space polluted with foreign contamination. In the end the politicized media has given a hand to the “predatory” effort to fend off the three Muslim Danes chance to run for political office.

The Danish Press Council ruled six months later that *TV-Avisen* had to retract this connection between Minhaj and the Taliban, since there was no journalistic validity to the claim. *TV-avisen* did this<sup>12</sup>, but *Jyllands-Posten* did not cover the retraction or apologize for its own use of this unsupported link. Taliban is a powerful tool for

*Jyllands-Posten* as “showing the world the dirtiest side of the dirty face of Islam”. Although the Taliban regime was not recognized by the governments of most Muslim majority nations, and although its theology has been widely criticized within the Muslim intellectual tradition (Olesen 1998, 2001), In its editorials *Jyllands-Posten*'s imposed upon the reader a series of connections that equate the fundamentalists of the Taliban with the three Muslims in Denmark, which is an out-of-proportion fear of a small number of Muslims, who would threaten the integrity of Danish society and values.

The second example is “Forces of darkness” (*Mørkets kræfter*), which came five days later on 27 May. Without revealing her name, this editorial appropriated and domesticated a point of view presented by Helle Brix on the previous day in *Politiken*. Brix, who worked for a subgroup within the Social Liberals looking for evidence against the young Muslims’ activities (Svane 2001, Eskholm 2001),<sup>13</sup> had asked why feminists do not get involved in fighting the suppressive values of Muslim men. In its editorial, *Jyllands-Posten* calls on Danish feminists to:

Why don't they protest against foreigners, who come to our country to argue noisily and self-righteously that women should wear the headscarf and preferably be mummified behind a veil, that girls should be circumcised, and young women should be married in “forced” marriage to unknown cousins in foreign countries, and that women in all aspects are inferior to the men? (...) Why don't they stand up and let their voices be heard, when representatives of foreign cultures readily pronounce young men's unlimited right to sexual intercourse with women, while the women should be virgins at the night of the wedding, knowing that such an argumentation can only make sense, when you feel entitled to distinguish between women and whores? (27 May 2001).<sup>14</sup>

At first there is no direct mention of who these “representatives of foreign cultures” are, just that they are “despicable” and seek to intimidate Danes with arguments described as noisy and self-righteous. Later, this enemy image of people with indulgent norms and practices is labelled a “fundamentalist Muslim group” and finally named: Mona Sheikh, Tanwir Ahmed, and Babar Baig. They are described as being aggressive and “unknowingly do Danish culture a big favour by appearing too self-justified, so darkened, and so aggressive, that they evoke an open discussion about the values this country has achieved in the centuries after the Reformation”. Thus, in the end the editorial has turned an attack on a set of particularly abhorrent practices into a direct character attack on three Danish born, Danish educated young politicians because they practice Islam.

In these two editorials as well as in many others on 2001, Muslims are not only essentialized as the same category of people, whether Taliban or members of the Social Liberal Party in Denmark, but the category is also rhetorically placed in a different phase of development. The loaded vocabulary applied by *Jyllands-Posten* to capture the activities and ideologies of Islam and Muslims shows both antagonistic categories and an enemy image. Some of the most frequently applied words in *Jyllands-Posten*'s editorials, and articles about Islam are "abomination" (*vederstygkelig*), "darkening" (*formørkelse*) and "Middle Age-like" (*middelalderlig*). "Taliban represents a spiritual darkening of such abomination" (24 May). The young Muslim "fundamentalists" are said to speak from the platform of "Middle Age religious value norms", and the Danes – in all their obvious naivety let "darkened forces work freely on introducing Middle Age conditions in this country" (27 May). "Middle Aged conditions" are used several times in this editorial. The Muslim resistance against the Big Bang theory "is ominous talk that evokes the thought of obscurantism (*åndsformørkelse*) and dark Middle age" (15 August). Muslims let themselves be represented in Denmark by "active debaters, who demand basic changes, so that Denmark is adjusted to Muslim groups, who wish Middle Age-like, close to Afghani conditions, even though Islam is not necessarily synonymous with reactionary and Middle Age darkening" (17 August). In Denmark we have "made it beyond the Middle Age phase and the accompanying scientific- and legal mentality"<sup>15</sup> (13 September). In "Dirty face of Islam" 22 May the editorial describes the unnamed three Muslims in Denmark as wanting "near Afghani conditions", since they allegedly support the Taliban. Thus, the editorial describes their presence in the Social Liberal Party, as people whose values belong in the Middle age, but not have come to Denmark. Again and again, the editorial places the three domestic Muslims outside of the Danish society and in a dark distant past.

One of the consequences of representing Muslim minorities as belonging to the past (to a different phase of development) is that dialogue is not possible. Modern Danish values merge as being relaxed, open-minded, common sense, rational, and extroverted, while Muslims are evil, middle age, wishing Afghani conditions, have no will to be integrated, have learned "from home" the words "demands", "rights" and "social welfare", and generally leave no room for the Danish values. Their differences are represented in the editorials as incompatible with Danish values.<sup>16</sup> In other words, Muslims are inferiorized, Denmark and the Danish society is placed on a higher level of development in *Jyllands-Posten*'s socio-evolutionary and ethnocentric scheme.

Much later – in October 2005 - 11 ambassadors' send a letter to the Danish Prime Minister requesting a meeting. This letter included a statement 25 September 2005 by Minister for Culture Brian Mikkelsen. Mikkelsen had explained “contemporary Muslim culture is evolving in Denmark with Middle age norms and anti-democratic ways of thinking”. (Mikkelsen in Larsen and Seidenfaden 2006:18). Thus, the rhetoric and the socio-evolutionary idea it builds upon is not new to the cartoon crisis but extends back to 2001 at least.

Mikkelsen continued his statement just quoted by saying that this is “the new front of the culture war” (Mikkelsen in Larsen and Seidenfaden 2006:18). The idea and practice of cultural war against domestic political enemies on their “soft” immigration policy is part of the context that is important for understanding *Jyllands-Posten's* publication of the 12 cartoons. The publication is an integral part of the morality based cultural war of values.

### **Cultural war of values**

Shortly after winning the parliamentary election in November 2001, the Danish Prime Minister, Anders Fogh Rasmussen launched a political strategy which was afterwards coined “culture war” (*kulturkamp*), or debate of cultural values of the Danish society. The culture war started in a New Year speech on 1 January 2002, when Rasmussen attacked elite “judges of taste” (*smagsdommere*) and soon followed by closing a number of committees and boards accused of elitism, but it wasn't until January a year later that he more fully elaborated on the ideology of cultural wars.

It is actually my opinion that setting the agenda in the debate of values changes society much more than those changes of the law. When I speak broadly about culture: It is the outcome of the culture war that decides Denmark's future. Not the economic policies. Not the technocratic changes of the judicial system. What is decisive is who has the fortune of setting the agenda in the debate of values. (Hardis and Mortensen 2003).

Undoubtedly inspired by the culture wars that gained strength in the US in the 1990s, Rasmussen's government attacked the values of its opposition, the 1968 generation, the elite judges of the state, and the politically correct, instead insisting on a long overdue uncompromising celebration of “Danish values” (Lykkeberg 2008). As implied in Rasmussen's statement, these values were expressed in policy, such as zero-tolerance towards the unemployed, who were penalized for not trying hard enough applying for jobs. Ensuing discussions about what values the Danish society should rest upon were intimately linked to an

anti-immigrant statements and policies generally regarded as already among the most restrictive in Europe.

*Jyllands-Posten* joined the “culture war” strategy in the summer of 2003. With the new emphasis on values and “culture war” *Jyllands-Posten* decided to widen the concept of culture from high culture to include “habits, ways of thinking and life ways” and to debate culture (Elkjær and Bertelsen 2006b). Journalistic chief-editor Jørn Mikkelsen was turned on by “culture war” stories based on the focal points of the government’s “culture war:” Denmark’s Radio (Public service station), Islam, and ex-communists (ibid.).

To carry out the shift from traditional coverage of high culture into value-based cultural journalism, *Jyllands-Posten* brought home its correspondent in Moscow, Flemming Rose, in April 2004 to serve as cultural editor. Under his leadership, Islam received more articulated critical attention than it had during the Mona Sheikh story of 2001, and regardless of the fact that Rose had already written powerful editorials as part of the “culture war” against left-wingers.<sup>17</sup> Rose’s promotion was a further shift to the right, noted in an internal survey made by *Jyllands-Posten* in 2004. One hundred employees out of 167 answered the question: “Do you feel that *Jyllands-Posten* has become more rightwing in its way of prioritizing journalistic stories?” Eighty-one percent answered in the affirmative. According to Bent Jensen, a member of the Board of the *Jyllands-Posten* Foundation, *Jyllands-Posten* sharper profile on Islam and support of private property rights explains this perception (Elkjær and Bertelsen 2006a).

Facing increased competition from free dailies, *Politiken* and *Jyllands-Posten* merged into a single media corporation, with two holding companies on equal footing. The activities of *JP/Politiken*’s *Hus* include the publication of the large morning papers *Jyllands-Posten* and *Politiken*, tabloid *Ekstra-Bladet*, and the free daily “24timer” (“24 hours”). The two papers ended up separating the market between them and each pursuing their own political interests. *Politiken* took the “green segment” of the market, consisting of the Social Liberals and Social Democrats and focusing more on the eastern part of Denmark. *Jyllands-Posten* covered the “blue segment”, supporting the ruling Danish People’s Party and focusing primarily on the western part of the country. Thus, *Jyllands-Posten* supported the government’s proposal to send troops into Iraq, while *Politiken* furiously opposed it. A study of the front page and editorial of *Politiken* and *Jyllands-Posten* during the Muhammad cartoon crisis confirmed this division. From 5 to 28 February 2005 *Politiken* carried 12 leading front page stories and 19 editorials critical of the government’s handling of the crisis, while *Jyllands-Posten* brought only 1 front-page story and no editorials (Barfod 2006). In the end, the administrative collaboration

has solidified the polarization between government-supporting and government-critical papers (Hjarvard 2006).

Even though fear of immigrants in Denmark and uncontrolled immigration was registered in the wake of *Ekstra Bladet's* campaign in 1997 (Hervik 1999, 2011), the securitization of Muslim culture came out explicitly in *Jyllands-Posten* in the late 1990s and early 2000s.

### **Incompatible cultural differences**

In September 2005 senior journalist Orla Borg warned that publication of the cartoons, particularly the Kurt Westergaard's cartoon (Muslim man with the bomb and the Muslim credo in the turban cartoon) was too controversial and offensive for many Muslim families that he knew (Hansen and Hundevadt 2006). Yet Borg's own articles in *Jyllands-Posten* helped establish the context that encouraged Rose to sponsor the cartoons by articulating growing majoritarian warnings about the threat of small numbers and the need to take action.

Years earlier *Jyllands-Posten* had published a major article by Borg, in which he presented as one of the most important stories since Denmark entered the EEC (later EU). Borg wrote: "In a few decades Danes will cease to be a uniform population with roots in the same religion, culture, language, tradition and value norms" (Borg 1999). The quote echoes the words of the main academic source in the story, demographer, P.C. Matthiessen, whose rhetoric evokes images of *Ekstra Bladet's* anti-immigrant campaign of 1997 (Gade 1997)

I don't think that the Danes have been told the truth. The contemporary immigration is without historical precedence [...] Many Danes are not aware about this historically unique situation. They have been reading that we have taken in immigrants earlier. But this is a new situation because of the number, and because there is a cultural and religious difference. And that is not something that will go away. (Matthiessen in Borg 1999).

On the same day an editorial in *Jyllands-Posten* endorsed Matthiessen's concern and warnings.

[A] growing number of people will have a widely different other culture and religion, which will be difficult to assimilate unlike the group of people, the country has received over time. [...] This summer we have only scratched the surface and as a warning about conflicts of coming years, experience the so-called headscarf case and the discussion about halal-meat in schools and institutions for children. No politician has however seriously paid attention to these cases as symptoms of an underlying, almost silent revolution; The Danish society is already changing its character vitally (Editorial 29 August 1999).

Differences such as in wearing a headscarf and eating halal-food are seen as in themselves causing conflict. This logic assumes that cultural difference generates conflict. Those who wear the headscarf and ask for halal-food create problems for themselves and risk evoking negative feelings among their Danish hosts. They are unruly guests, thereby creating their own problems including racism (Hervik 2004). Racism in this construction is a result of the immigrants' insistence on being culturally different and being different is seen as incompatible with modern Danish cultural values.

According to Matthiessen and *Jyllands-Posten's* editorial the solution for the majority to cope with the (imagined) threat of increasing numbers of culturally different people is to strengthen Danish values. *Jyllands-Posten* assures readers that such an enforcement of Danish values cannot be racist since it is simply a question of maintaining sovereignty: "No one becomes a racist by demanding and enforcing development within his own house" (29 August 1999). To carry forward this project, *Jyllands-Posten* and Matthiessen called for a think tank that could "think through" the consequences of this evolving danger of encroaching cultural and religious differences. A few months later, on 2 November 2000, Minister of the Interior Karen Jespersen announced that Matthiessen was one of the members of a new of a think tank that would look at "the future development in the number of foreigners in Denmark and describe the social consequences of this".<sup>18</sup>

In the summer of 2001, *Jyllands-Posten* published another major article by Borg, called "The New Denmark", which reinvigorates the fear of small numbers as outlined by Appadurai and the perception of the incompatibility of the culturally different migrants. The arrival of historically new migrants (read: Muslims) negatively transforms the development and composition of the Danish people. Similarly, the 2001 article has a veiled Muslim woman in the middle of a graphic illustration, which shows which culture and people that are to be feared.

Racialization of this cultural difference is overt in Borg's summary of the new prognosis: "That mousy hair and blue eyes does not necessarily signal that you are standing in front of the average Dane. It could as well be black hair and brown eyes" (Borg 2001). The article ends with a quote by historian: "Immigration will change the Danish national identity. Immigration is of a different kind than earlier immigration, since many people arrive with a different culture and religion (ibid.).

The following day, *Jyllands-Posten* asked a number of politicians to comment on Borg's article. Spokesperson on legal issues, Birthe Rønn Hornbech (The Liberal Party), who would in 2007 become Minister of Integration said, "If this tendency goes on, our country



will be battered” (Langager 2001). Hornbech was speaking about the prognosis showing an increase of refugees; asylum seekers from the Third World thus become a threat to Danish national identity. Political spokesman Lene Espersen (The Conservative People’s Party), who in 2001 became Minister of Justice, emphasized the power of national values to overcome difference: “We must hold on to Denmark as a nation-state and those values that bond us together. Can we do that then it doesn’t matter, if people have a different ethnic background. They only need to understand the Danish culture, language and religion” (ibid.). Thus, a strengthening of Danish values is the answer to what could dissolve the anxiety over small numbers. A third politician responding to Borg’s article was political spokesperson, Jytte Andersen (Social Democratic Party). For her it is not the number but the outline of an enemy image that surfaces: “No Islamic teaching shall decide, what Denmark is going to look like” (ibid.).

None of the these politicians questioned the premises leading to the new numbers, but reached readily for a nationalistic rhetoric in which Danes need to “hold on to our values” in order to defend themselves against being “battered”, by minority rule in Denmark.

A central premise of the statistics on threatening numbers is “once ethnic, always ethnic;” the argument assumes not only that immigrant values are all the same, but that they do not change over length of residence, and that Danish-born children of immigrants continue to have these monolithic alien values (Espersen 2001; Ølgaard 2001). Accordingly, the number of “cultural others” can only increase in the future, unless of course, these “others” leave the country.

Shortly before the publication of the Muhammed cartoons, *Jyllands-Posten* published a series of articles and editorials that explicitly linked the dangers of immigration with Muslims and Islam. On 11 September 2005, 4 years after the suicide attacks on World Trade Centre and Pentagon, a time marker noted all over the Danish press, *Jyllands-Posten*’s published a new front page story by Borg: “Islam the most belligerent [Religion]”. The subheading goes: “A Danish linguist has during three years analyzed 10 religions’ basic texts and concludes that the texts of Islam encourage terrorism and violence more than in other religions” (Borg 2005).

The story is based on a PhD dissertation by Tine Maggaard, whom the journalist explains has a recent approved dissertation at Sorbonne University in Paris. Borg ignored the historical foundation of Maggaard’s research, which doesn’t automatically apply to contemporary Islam. Maggaard had for instance looked in the Qur’an and counted words referring to violence and compared the result with other sacred texts.

For the story he also got statements by imams in Denmark, rather than by experts in the ancient text analyzed by Maggaard.<sup>19</sup> As a result, the story explicitly ties contemporary Islam to violence.

Two days later *Jyllands-Posten's* editorial officially supported Maggaard's findings and Borg's story, tying the issues they raise to fundamentalism, and to the danger of cultural others to urban Western life:

Today the fundamentalists have gained influence. They have acted in the shadow of the wish for new Arab greatness, and they have succeeded in demonizing the Western world. Fundamentalists must at any cost be isolated and fought down. Here and elsewhere. Their opinions are only making the problems worse, and they are the architects behind the parallel communities, which besets Western cities [...] The Qur'an must also be discussed. It has been so earlier, and it must be today [...] In the Western society it is common to interpret the Bible. Some reads it literately, but that is not the majority. That is the way it should be in Islam, but that is a long way off (*Jyllands-Posten* 13 September 2005).

Gone is the historical foundation of Maggaard's research. In is the contemporary anti-Islamic priority of *Jyllands-Posten's* editorials.

The two influential articles by Borg, the work of the think tank, the commentaries by the three politicians, and Borg's front page story about the belligerent Islam embrace an ideological dichotomy between "Us" Danes and "Them", the visibly different non-Western foreigners, who are seen as inherently dangerous, since these differences are unbridgeable, unchanging and unchangeable. A clash of differences is unavoidable except, unless "we" Danes stop the culturally threatening others at the border. Those who are already within the border must be contained in any way necessary including ridicule or intimidation. These articles convey that the culture of the Muslim migrants is different, incompatible, and a threat, which must be acknowledged and controlled.

*Jyllands-Posten's* anti-Islamic discourse can also be seen in the stereotyping of Muslims as terrorists. Some of the less outspoken Danish imams saw the depiction of the prophet Muhammad as a terrorist as being the most offensive element of all the 12 cartoons, particularly obvious in the bomb-in-the-turban cartoon by Kurt Westergaard.

### **Kurt Westergaard's "terrorist" drawings**

Thousands of pages were written about Muhammad cartoon crisis by Danish journalists and commentators. None of them dealt with Kurt Westergaard's previous drawings with Muslim terrorists associa-

tions. The earlier drawings suggest that the association of Islam with terrorism, or terrorists with Islam, is not an arbitrary coincidence in Westergaard's drawings. In my view including these drawings provide a more full picture of *Jyllands-Posten's* anti-Islamic discourse and support the argument that the Muhammad cartoons of 30 September 2005 cannot be separated from the immediate historical context of *Jyllands-Posten* and Denmark.

The first time I encountered this connection in a cartoon by Westergaard was 12 April 1997. Westergaard was asked to illustrate an article on the accusations of the Iranian priesthood's engagement in state-terrorism. The drawing is that of a religious madman with a beard and a round head that turns out to be a bomb and holds the caption: "Clergy rule pointed out as guilty of state terrorism" (*Præstestyret i Iran udpeges som skyldig i statsterror*). (*Jyllands-Posten* 12 April 1997).

During the Mona Sheikh story in 2001 Westergaard drew an article by opinion-writer, spokesperson for educational issues, Bertel Haarder, which is an assignment requested by *Jyllands-Posten*. The figure is easily recognized as Babar Baig, one of the three contested young Muslim politicians. Their situation is the occasion that makes Haarder write his opinion-piece. Baig is wearing Afghani clothes and militant symbols spell out the supposed connection with the Taliban. The drawing strengthens the article's message about invading, distrustful Muslims, who are concealing their inner, real self symbolized by the decapitated Taliban head under his arm. (*Jyllands-Posten* 27 May 2001). Baig is represented as a terrorist, which ultimately cost him his possibility of being elected for political office.

Only five weeks before the publication of the bomb-in-the-turban cartoon, on 27 August 2005, Westergaard's illustrated a co-ed piece written by a radical right winger, Henrik Gade. Gade writes about the "'meaning-parasites' who paralyze public debate" by not telling the truth. Truth tellers are the radical right-wing Danish People's Party, Karen Jespersen, and Kåre Bluitgen, who are known for their anti-Islamic involvement. What the "truth" is is not told, since it is the debate that Gade is addressing.

Westergaard's next drawing is of yet another religious mad man, or terrorist, with a concealed bomb. Presumably, the man is a Muslim and a ticking bomb represents "the truth". If not stopped the bomb will explode. A text is added to the cartoon illustrating the author's core argument: "How immoral: The naked truth. How decent: The pure lie".

Westergaard, who grew up in a Christian Right (*Indre Mission*) in Northern Jutland in the 1930s and during the Nazi occupation 1940-45 (Hansen and Hundevadt 2006: 16, Lykkegaard and Westergaard 2010), explained the bomb-in-the-turban cartoon: “The idea for the drawing was to illustrate that terrorists receive their spiritual ammunition from the fundamentalist part of Islam. It wasn’t directed at Muslims and Islam in general, but against that part which inspires to and exploits through death and destruction”<sup>20</sup> (Westergaard in Thomson 2006:42).

Kurt Westergaard makes this statement that the terrorist association in the cartoon is restricted to “terrorists” and “fundamentalist parts of Islam”. Westergaard seem out of touch with his readership. A Swedish survey revealed that most Swedes associate the features of a terrorist with that of a young, fanatic, male Muslim (Knutagård & Scaramuzzino 2005). At the same time 85% of the instances Muslim or Islam were used in the Swedish news media, they related to violence, crime, and terrorism (Hvitfelt 1998). There is no reason to believe that these numbers would be much different in neighbouring Denmark, where “terrorism” and “Muslims” are intimately associated in popular consciousness as the result of the news media’s coverage. Westergaard’s drawing of Muslim madmen and ticking bombs, even in the bomb-in-the-turban cartoon reflects this bias, where all Muslims are most often lumped together in one category of fundamentalists, since take the words of the Qur’an literally.

In Egypt the saying is repeated daily as a way to say hello and goodbye, so when person says, “take good care”, (*la ilah illa Allah*), another responds “I will” (Mohammad rasool Allah). Egyptians use it everywhere on the road, in schools, in the shops, and on the phone. Therefore Westergaard and *Jyllands-Posten* do not only attack the most important symbol of Islam (Mohammad) through cartoons degrading to his personality and message and insisting everyone accept the degradation by reference to free speech, but they also attack the everyday greetings known also as the announcement of Islam, which is contesting ordinary Muslims as well.

Westergaard’s drawing connects the symbol, the religion and the culture to terrorism. He therefore did not only help breed islamophobia in Denmark, but also succeeded in humiliating and disrespecting an important religion that is part of the Danish society.

The linkage of terrorism with Islam in general is compelling in Westergaard’s latest drawing; a drawing his employer, *Jyllands-Posten* refused to publish. The cartoon is instead published by the radical right Free Speech society. The burqa clad woman with a bomb as a belly suggests Muslim fertility as a breeder of terrorism. (Snaphanen 2008)

## Conclusion

*Jyllands-Posten's* cartoons did not emerge in a vacuum as a test of freedom of speech, but as part of an ongoing set of anti-Islamic discourses within a broader political nationalism and a re-politicized field of journalism. In the late 19<sup>th</sup> century Denmark's five largest national newspapers, *Morgenavisen Jyllands-Posten*, *Politiken*, *Berlingske Tidende*, *Ekstra Bladet* and *B.T.* were all integrated elements of the political parties with competing stances on the relationship between popular movements, the cultural nation and the state. Denmark went through a transformation that reduced it from being a multi-lingual and a multi-nation state to one nation with a single language. During the transformation one crucial battle to define Danish cultural nationalism popular social movements of peasants and workers arose against the state and the social, educated, cultivated and political leadership associated with the capital of Copenhagen. In the early 20<sup>th</sup> century newspapers began freeing themselves from the political parties, but remained ideologically in the neighbourhood of their nursing political party's ideology. After this de-politization, where traditional journalistic criteria for news making replaced political agitation, newspapers was re-politicized again starting in the late 1990s. When commercial competition and new technology reduced the number of newspapers sold and reduced revenue of advertisement significantly daily commercial newspapers turned away from competition getting "the good story" on the basis of journalism's core criteria for news making and onto value-based journalist with "Danish values", moral positioning, and anti-immigrant rhetoric being some of the upgraded tendencies. The story of the Muslim boy Amin illustrates this emerging tendency in *Jyllands-Posten* during tabloid paper, *Ekstra Bladet's*, campaign in 1997.

Whereas Germany and Sweden historically had performed the role of external others in Danish nationalism, the new nationalistic post 1989 bursts (and calls for using Danish values as weapon of the state) build its strengths through anti-Immigrant policies meant to curb Islamic influence. *Jyllands-Posten* has played a significant role in this process at least since 2001, which also builds on a historical deep common sense appeal to the non-expert, non-academic audience far from the capital against the dominant role and elitist position of Copenhagen. In this chapter, I have shown four examples of *Jyllands-Posten's* developing anti-Islamic discourse since 2001.

First of all the editorials written during and right after the Mona Sheikh story revealed a particularly confrontational stance. Danish Muslims were reified into the same category as the Taliban and the

Islamic rulers in Iran. Dialogue was ruled out. Their voices were never heard or loyally represented. Those who would argue against this interpretation were doomed political correct and misunderstanding telling the truth for racism. In the second example, *Jyllands-Posten* adopted the government's cultural war strategy (putting Flemming Rose in charge of it). The battle of values took on political enemies, often called elite judges of taste, as well as the country's Muslim minorities. In the third example of *Jyllands-Posten's* senior journalist used a series of similar articles based on demography and fear of small numbers to present Denmark and Danish values as being threatened by the newcoming Muslim immigrants with higher fertility. *Jyllands-Posten* endorsed the article calling for politicians to do something. They did. A think tank is established to look into some of the consequences of higher numbers of immigrants. In the fourth example the populist association of Islam with terrorism was (and continues to be) reproduced by *Jyllands-Posten's* senior cartoonist Kurt Westergaard. When he entered his own newspaper's cartoon project, Westergaard had a unique opportunity to complete a task, where his own ideas were the object not the illustration of someone else's text. But rather than coming up with anything new, his drawing reflected the popular association of Muslims and terrorism prevailing in all Scandinavian countries and thereby unduly amplifying the problem from a few Arabic and Afghan men's abuse of Islam for terrorist purposes to all Muslims.

The cartoon crisis continues *Jyllands-Posten's* anti-Islamic discourses. This is not to say that everything *Jyllands-Posten* is writing about Islam is shaped by this discourse or that the cartoon crisis' trajectory is reducible to *Jyllands-Posten's* value journalism. But it is saying that the anti-Islamic position and discourse dominate the editorial leadership of *Jyllands-Posten's* cartoon project and its editorials and becoming more and more "predatory" in the process. In other words, the anti-Islamic trajectory overshadows explanations that use freedom of speech activism as the key source of the cartoon crisis. This process is not the outcome of an isolated process *Jyllands-Posten* is undergoing but must be seen in the growing competition in the domestic news market. In the following chapter, I will look closer at the mutually enforcing discourses that rose during the peak of the cartoon crisis in January and February of 2006.

## CHAPTER 2

### A STRUGGLE OF NEWS AND VIEWS: ENTRY-POINTS TO JYLLANDS-POSTEN'S CARTOON STORY

The popular Wikipedia free dictionary has listed some of the consequences of the cartoon crisis. A consumer boycott of Danish goods took place in the Middle East; the embassies in Damascus, Beirut and Teheran were set on fire; death threats and rewards for killing the responsible for the cartoons were made, forcing cartoonists into hiding or receiving protection; Danish flags were burnt in Gaza City and elsewhere; and the Danish Prime Minister Anders Fogh Rasmussen called the controversy Denmark's worst international crisis since World War II. Wikipedia used *BBC news* to inform that Danish total exports in the first half of 2006 had been reduced by 15.5%. The *Guardian* is the source for saying that fervent rightwing Americans have started to buy Danish Bang & Olufsen stereos and Lego toys as another result of the cartoon crisis. In 2007 a terrorist suspect in what is known as the Vollsmose case,<sup>21</sup> testified that *Jyllands-Posten's* cultural editor Flemming Rose was the target of a terrorist bomb plot. Other threats were made against Danish MP Naser Khader. And in February of 2008 Danish police arrested three men for planning to assassinate cartoonist Kurt Westergaard. Many Danish newspapers republished one or more of the cartoons to make a statement of resistance against the threats posed by the bomb-plan against Kurt Westergaard to the freedom of the press and the freedom of speech. Also in February 2008 public disturbances took place in the Nørrebro district of Copenhagen. Cars were burnt and a school set on fire assumed by much of the press to be a response to the re-publication of the cartoons, although local informants explained that the events were mostly unrelated to the cartoon controversy but had to do with police harassment of ethnic minorities in designated visitation zones. In June 2008 Pakistani police reported on an attempt to blow up the Danish embassy in Islamabad (Hervik, Eide & Kunelius 2008)

The sources used by Wikipedia to list some of consequences of the cartoon controversy are taken out of the news stream. Such web-posted overviews emerged in late January, February and March of 2005, several months after *Jyllands-Posten's* initial publication of the 12 cartoons on 30 September 2005.

If violent global reactions and consequences are considered the end point of the Muhammad cartoon story, where does it begin? Who is responsible? What are the driving forces and agents behind the cartoon stories? Stories need a beginning, but there are competing attempts to define and control when to start and who to blame. The stories about protests against Danish, Norwegian, French, British, Swedish or American leaders, buildings, and companies did bring information about what triggered the violence, whether the publication of the cartoons, the Danish prime minister, Islamic regimes, local opportunists and so on. Along with the trigger came various explanations offered by the global news media. These explanations were particularly vulnerable of distortion, since they were offered five months after the publication of the cartoons in Denmark. Thus, daily international news coverage and opinion pieces frequently applied generalized language such as protest “against the Danish newspaper”, “*Jyllands-Posten's* publication of the cartoons”, or “a response to the Danish cartoons”. From an internal Danish perspective, *Jyllands-Posten's* cartoons are not referred to or perceived as being “Danish”. When foreign coverage refers to the “Danish cartoons” and responses to the “Danish publication of the cartoons” it ignores the internal variation, since there are – as we will see shortly - three competing discourses of the media coverage in early 2006 (Hervik and Berg 2007).

The global media coverage of the Danish Muslim reactions to the cartoon publication came in the shape of Al Jazeera news coverage on October 10, 12, and 15 and *Le Monde* on October 18. However, the global news coverage didn't make any major impact on the Danish news coverage until early 2006, when it was commented on extensively. When the cartoons and the stories about the cartoons traveled internationally, these events were described and interpreted by the press in Denmark. Such interpretations are all communicative acts, designed among other things to send a message to Denmark and the Danes about what hundreds of thousands of Muslims around the world think about their having insulted the prophet. While globalization is about flows of media from sites of origin into new contexts for which texts were never intended (Peterson 2003) so too is it about the constant auditing of those media flows. In the contemporary world, we live in “audit societies” (Power 1999; Strathern 2000) marked by assessment



rituals designed to determine what, exactly has happened, how it has happened, and who is responsible. Thus even as the cartoons, and stories about them are circulating around the globe, being appropriated by local actors and reinterpreted by local audiences, accounts of these acts, and assessments of their consequences are being constructed in Denmark, day by day, event by event.

Control over how these events and actions will be defined and evaluated is a powerful political stake, and the most significant actors in the struggle over these stakes are those very people who played significant roles in the initial evolution of the cartoon crisis in Denmark. They are thus struggling not only to define what is happening in the wider world and assess its consequences for Denmark, but also to establish their own responsibility for their roles in the conflict. Their vehicles for this struggle are the same politicized news media described in chapter one. Thus we find multiple Danish frames emerging as actors seek to explain, appropriate, and assign responsibility for the international crisis, and journalists interpret and represent their actions and discourses to their audiences. Although one discourse dominates both in Denmark and internationally, Berg and Hervik's research show there are three major competing discourses that each place responsibility on different agents for the cartoon story's violent trajectory and compete in setting the news agenda.

One basic sign of these differences is the choice of label for the Muhammad cartoon crisis. The dominant label is "The Muhammed crisis", (Muhammed-krisen), which is the conventional term used in Danish journalism. The counter discourse prefers "The caricature crisis", (Karikaturkrisen), or "The cartoon crisis" (tegningskrisen). Choosing "The Muhammad crisis" places the focus of attention on the Prophet, Muhammad, and therefore on issues connected to Islam more generally, while the choice of "Caricature crisis" suggests that the issue is about the publication of the cartoons by *Jyllands-Posten*.

The differences also come out in the newspapers' choice of headlines. When Fogh Rasmussen on 30 January 2006 declared that he personally never would have published cartoons that offended religious people, the three largest newspapers placed this news on the front page and suggested three different messages in their headlines:

*Jyllands-Posten:*

Fogh: We don't apologize (*Fogh: Vi undskylder ikke*).

*Politiken:*

Fogh distances himself from the Muhammed cartoons. (*Fogh tager afstand fra Muhammed-tegningerne*)

*Berlingske Tidende:* Pressured Fogh put himself at some distance from the prophet cartoons. (*Presset Fogh lægger luft til profet-tegningerne*). (Valeur 2007, see also Larsen and Seidenfaden 2006:270-271)

The prime minister did separate himself from the cartoons, but he did not apologize. The reader of *Jyllands-Posten* experienced a headline that denoted support of *Jyllands-Posten*'s publication of the cartoons. *Politiken* was the polar opposite and chose the verb distance (*tage afstand fra*). This is a stronger interpretation than *Berlingske Tidende*'s "put himself at some distance" (*lægge luft til*). *Berlingske Tidende* was not as polarizing as *Jyllands-Posten* and *Politiken*, but appears more careful and nuanced assessment that Fogh is under pressure.

After a meeting on 13 February 2006 with "Democratic Muslims of Denmark" a newly formed association, the headlines differed once again significantly.

*Jyllands-Posten:* Service check of Integration. (*Integration til service eftersyn*)  
*Politiken:* Fogh's meeting with favourite Muslims (*Foghs møde med yndlingsmuslimerne*)  
*Berlingske Tidende:* Fogh received fruitful suggestions (*Fogh fik frugtbare forslag*) (Valeur 2007, see also Larsen and Seidenfaden 2006:270-271).

*Berlingske Tidende* conveyed optimism and *Jyllands-Posten* politeness. Both papers saw Fogh as open-minded and a prime minister who wanted to learn about possible improvements, which these Muslims could help him do, since they knew what was going on in the Muslim community. *Politiken*'s headline relied on sarcasm with its emphasis on "favourite" Muslims. These "good Muslims" were the ones he wanted to talk to. For *Politiken* he was talking to those whom he agreed with and did not cause problems. The reader would read the headline as if he was talking to the wrong Muslims.

Just as totalizing discourses emerge in various ecological niches of the global mediascape that reify the very different actions and discourses of Muslims around the world as a single event driven by "Muslim rage", so do much of European, North American and Arabic news coverage tend to reify "Danish" discourses and actions, treating "Denmark" as a unitary actor (Danish Muslims being simply recast as

Muslims). In the rest of this chapter, I will explore the ways in which the cartoon crisis was assessed in Denmark and interpreted both as it unfolded and afterward. I argue that the choice of name for the crisis; the choice of discourse (whether intentional or not); and the choice of newspaper in the politicized Danish field of journalism risk simplifying, distorting, and de-contextualizing what happened how and why locally. One way to avoid lifting the story out of the context is to make all sides of the choices available for analysis. Only then can we hope to understand which parts of the cartoon story that moved successfully on to the global scene and which remained local. Another argument is that the cartoon story unfolds as a process with multiple causations and a complexity that seem to escape, what the news media is able to convey within its structures and practices, yet the story is still globalized. The question then is which story is told?

First I will deal with two significant actors in the first phase leading up to the publication of the cartoons and the birth of the cartoon crisis. One is the Danish author Kåre Bluitgen, who most narratives of the cartoon crisis begin with. The other is the editorial leadership of *Jyllands-Posten*, whose spin-off project led to the cartoon publications of the Prophet Muhammed were about and their own role in the cartoon story strictly within a domestic Danish setting. I then move five months forward to the three Danish discourses on the media coverage of the cartoon controversy inferred from the news coverage 15 January to 15 March of 2006 in the major Danish newspapers. These discourses blame the imams, the islamists, the government, and the nature of public debate for making the cartoon issue global and violent with important consequences for Denmark.

### **The beginning of the cartoon story**

Kåre Bluitgen was unable to find an illustrator for his forthcoming children's book in Danish on the story of Muhammad "The Qur'an and the life of the Prophet Muhammad" (Koranen og profeten Muhammeds liv). According to Bluitgen, every illustrator he contacted refused to work with him in fear of repercussions given the fact of the customary ban against drawing the Prophet.

Bluitgen believes in - and actively supports - aggressive provocations arguing that we, the Danes, should approach multiculturalism in a revolutionary way and overturn Muslim religion. We should be daring and aggressive, maintaining that we have the right to make fun of and reject "all religious crap" (Thøgersen 2003:8). Marxist skepticism is crucial in his socialist orientation, yet he is critical

of socialism in Denmark and wishes that it would openly support “Danish ideals” such as being open minded, tolerant, and democratic (Bjørnvig 2002:15).

Bluitgen narrates his identity as a socialist, atheist, and as someone who can tell the true story of Islam for Danes and Muslim immigrants without irony and in an informative exciting way (Ravnø 2006). *He positions himself as being neither racist nor islamophobic, as he subscribes to the (pseudo)logic that if you “know a Muslim”, then you cannot be racist against Muslims.*

An alternative way of casting Bluitgen’s position than a communicator of sober information for schoolchildren about the history of Islam is as a man, who provokes Muslims and combats Islam and any other religion. “If you want to understand the third world, there is only one way: to understand religion. All social and political conflict in the third world originates in religion. And the third world has come to Denmark” (Bluitgen in MetroExpress 20 January 2006). Writing the history of the Qur’an and the Prophet Muhammad, and insisting on drawings of the Prophet’s face gives further substance to this alternative understanding of Bluitgen’s role. If Bluitgen had any problems finding an illustrator, he could as well have turned to a Muslim illustrator).

In an earlier publication, he went far in order to make a wake up call to the left wing about what he saw as a naive and political correct stance toward Islam. Among other things he suggested:

The Left needs to go on the offensive. Stage a procession down Nørrebrogade in Copenhagen wearing burqas, chadors, and long, dragging jackets, with strollers and baby carriages, all the way to Blågård’s Plads. Then they should throw everything into the trash and splash the Qu’ran with menstrual blood. (Bluitgen 2002:70)

A journalist of the national news agency, Ritzau’s Bureau wrote a story, “Danish artists fear criticizing Islam” (Danske kunstnere bange for kritik af Islam) about Bluitgen’s problems, which *Politiken* (and *Information*) chose to print on 17 September 2005 but with a different headline: “Profound anxiety about criticizing Islam” (Dyb angst for kritik af islam). Several newspapers picked it up the story and moral panic was about to break out.

A story that breaks out on such a fragile basis suggests that the topic is already highly politicized. We must also conclude that the explanation of this story’s energy lies beyond Bluitgen’s overstated problems of finding an illustrator for his provocative writing project.

Another important actor in the narratives of the origin of the cartoon story is *Jyllands-Posten* with its decision to publish 12 cartoons as a sign that these 12 cartoonists didn't back down from fear of Muslim intimidations.

### **Jyllands-Posten's project**

Few narratives could ignore Bluitgen's contributing role to the cartoon story, but *Jyllands-Posten* plays the decisive role when it published its reaction to the outcome of its own project testing the self-censorship of Danish cartoonists. The Danish media coverage and literature treating the cartoons are filled with discussions of *Jyllands-Posten's* testing project, whereas much of the foreign writing spends little space on the invitation to draw the Prophet Muhammad.

In this section I argue that the original cartoon publication story is entirely media-instigated.<sup>22</sup> As such it must be understood in relation to the politicized Danish field of journalism with its value-based competition for readers (See chapter one).

On the basis of *Politiken's* story *Jyllands-Posten* decided to launch its own project, fearing what journalists coined "a creeping self-censorship" was at play. It did not ask if the cartoonists chose not to participate because they disapproved of Bluitgen's project, but moved forward with their own story using freedom of expression as a provocation to find out, if cartoonists in Denmark held back on their decisions to draw the face of the prophet Muhammad.

Flemming Rose's letter to the cartoonists emphasized that *Jyllands-Posten* is "on the side of free speech. We therefore would like to invite you to draw Mohammed, as you see him. The result will be published in the newspaper in the coming weekend" (Rose in Hansen and Hundevadt 2006:15)

The test produced a negative result, Rose had foreseen, since the 12 cartoonists submitted cartoons to be published (on 30 September), which indicated that self-censorship did not apply. There is 25 active cartoonists in Denmark, of these 12 did the assignment, while some didn't answer for contractual reasons, others were engaged in other assignments, or simply didn't answer. Three answered and did not draw. Two of them were critical of *Jyllands-Posten's* project. According to Flemming Rose, *Jyllands-Posten's* cultural editor, only one person (of the three) declined to draw referring to fear of violent reactions from Muslims. (Rose in Kjersgaard-Hansen 2006). But since Rose sensed of a broader phenomenon due to the instances mentioned in the story about Bluitgen's problems, he went on with the story.

The editor-in-chief, Carsten Juste, admitted that the survey lacked validity and the story fell short of sound journalistic basis. Rather than abandoning the project he chose to publish the cartoons in the opinionated cultural section appearing on Fridays, since “the project was more a manifestation of an ideology than a journalistic story”. (Hansen and Hundevadt 2006:18).

At this point there is only one illustrator who feared the consequences drawing for Bluitgen, only one person who feared participating in *Jyllands-Posten*'s project, and Rose' sense of a broader phenomenon. A handful of additional facts underscores *Jyllands-Posten*'s desire to provoke and insult Danish Muslims exceeded the wish to test the self-censorship of Danish cartoonists.

Instead of repeating Bluitgen's call for illustrators, *Jyllands-Posten* asked satirical cartoonists to draw caricatures of the prophet Muhammad “as they saw him”. Satirical cartoonists are by definition more provocative than illustrators.

Secondly, two of the twelve cartoonists drew Bluitgen as an integrated part of their interpretation of the drawing assignment. Bob Katzenelson drew Bluitgen using an old Danish proverb for expressing excessive luck: “Receiving an orange in the turban”. Bluitgen's orange in the turban had the text written: “Publicity stunt” (*PR-stunt*). Cartoonist Annette Carlsen assigned him a similar role as the number 7 in line-up of possible suspects of stirring up the claims of self-censorship. The suspect is obviously Kåre Bluitgen, who is the only one carrying a sign. The sign says “Kåre's Publicity. Call and get an offer” (*Kåres PR. Ring og få et tilbud*). A third cartoonist, Peder Bundgaard, who drew face of Muhammad with the Islamic star and crescent felt provoked by the aggressive nature of those cartoons that were drawn by illustrators already working for *Jyllands-Posten*. “I feel that my colleagues and I have been lured into the swing by a newspaper, whose motives have been self-assertion and provocation for the sake of provocation. Pushed to the extreme it looks like as if mine and my colleagues harmless drawings have been used as hostages to legitimize *Jyllands-Posten*'s own permanently employed illustrators, who have delivered other widely different militant and provocative drawings (Tuxen and Lerche 2005 quoted in Larsen and Seidenfaden 2006). The three interpretations emphasize the cartoonists' recognition of the provocative nature of Bluitgen's claims and *Jyllands-Posten*'s project. Bluitgen supposedly wanted to get attention to his forthcoming book on Islam, while *Jyllands-Posten* wanted to provoke Muslims.

A third indication turned up when rival newspaper *Politiken* made a round of call to the cartoonists. The journalists found that 15 out

of 29 cartoonists, who did not draw for *Jyllands-Posten*, said that they were against the idea itself and did not fear Muslim reactions. One cartoonist found it a bit suspicious that Flemming Rose gave little time to respond. He had received the letter of invitation in the mail on Wednesday and had to respond by noon Friday – two days later. Cartoonist Lars Refn, who drew a second generation migrant schoolboy named “Muhammed” pointing at a Persian text on the board: “The editorial team of *Jyllands-Posten* is a bunch of reactionary provocateurs” (*Jyllands-Postens redaktion er en flok reaktionære provokatører*), found cartoonists 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).

A fourth indicator of *Jyllands-Posten*’s role in deliberately provoking Muslims can be seen in the fact that four cartoonists were tied in different ways to *Jyllands-Posten*. Three of them were directly employed: Kurt Westergaard (bomb-in-the-turban), Poul Erik Poulsen (man with turban with halo and possibly a pair of horns), Rasmus Sand Høyer (man with grey beard, eyes covered by a black bar and flanked by two women in niqabs), while a fourth Erik Abild Sørensen had retired from *Jyllands-Posten* (five times repeated schematic figures with the text “Prophet, you crazy bloke! Keeping women under yoke!” (Profet! Med kuk og knald i låget som holder kvinder under åget!)). None of these responded with any irony to the assignment itself and are generally regarded as among the most controversial. This is unlike five other drawings, which to various degrees poke fun of *Jyllands-Posten*’s initiative.

Fifthly, in spite of the dubious character of the project, Editor-in-chief of *Jyllands-Posten* decided officially to back up the project by investing the 30 September editorial on the project called “The Threat of Darkness” (*Truslen fra mørket*).

A provocation against one of these self-important imams or mad mullahs is immediately laid out as a provocation against the Prophet himself and the sacred book, the Qur’an and then we have the trouble.

Then the Islamic spiritual leaders feel the need to grumble and from this follow an army of less spiritually equipped people that feel an urge to follow what is interpreted as the prophet’s commands and in the end killing the presumptuous [...] Across the world satire is done on film, theater and in books, but no one allows themselves to make fun of Islam. That is due to 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).

If I read *Jyllands-Posten's* editorial right, *Jyllands-Posten* wishes to provoke Muslims who represent Islam in the Danish public. The 12 cartoonists dared having their provocative cartoons published in *Jyllands-Posten*, which is not to imply a provocation of the Prophet and the Qur'an, but a necessary provocation and a good opportunity to make fun of Islam's hoards of imams and Mullahs. *Jyllands-Posten* does not engage in an explanation of how this distinction is meaningful. Moreover, the headline of the text accompanying the cartoons is "The Face of Muhammad" and in Rose's letter of invitation to the cartoonists the task is described as drawing Muhammad "as you see him", which makes it difficult to maintain that the purpose is to insult imams not the Prophet.

In the end my argument is that *Jyllands-Posten* is not covering a "real" world event outside the media such as an accident at a nuclear plant, a serious traffic accident, a politician caught lying, and so on, but initiated and instigated the cartoon project itself and used it to make its own statement about Muslims and Islam.

Most people associate the cartoon crisis with the violent, global reactions around the world, which they witnessed on television news in February. In the next section I want to look closer at the Danish news media coverage at this point, which is the point of entry for journalists, readers, viewers, and listeners. With the outburst of violent reactions and political reactions in Muslim countries, journalists and commentators had to explain the background to these protests. Many of them turned to the previous Danish media coverage. How then was the cartoon crisis covered by the Danish news media?

### **Three Danish Frames of Interpretation**

In a previous study of the Danish media coverage of the cartoon violence in early February 2006, we (Berg and Hervik 2007, Hervik and Berg 2007) found that Danish news journalism had become re-politicized and not following traditional criteria for good journalism when it comes to stories on Muslims and Islam. The study examined 232 Danish news articles with "Muhammed" (12.115 articles) "Freedom of Speech" (6.295) as code words for the period 15 January to 15 March 2006. We reached the workable number of 232 articles by selecting 7 nationally circulating daily newspapers (*Morgenavisen Jyllands-Posten*, *Politiken*, *Berlingske Tidende*, *Ekstra Bladet*, *B.T.*, *Kristeligt Dagblad* and *Information*) and limiting the genres to editorials, columns, feature articles and op-eds by Danish intellectuals and politicians directly related to the publication of the 12 cartoons.



On the basis of a frame analysis inspired by Robert Entman (1993) and Claes de Vresse (2002), we examined news article applied to 232 Danish news article (Berg and Hervik 2007, Hervik and Berg 2007) and found the sample to fall into three fairly clear frames of interpretation, or more broadly discourses<sup>23</sup>, which we called: “Freedom of speech as a Danish freedom;” “Freedom of speech as human right threatened by Islamism”, and “The demonisation of Muslims and political spin is the issue not freedom of speech”. (See fig 1)

Figure 1. The three frames – a struggle of news and views (Hervik 2011)

<b>FRAMES</b>	<b>Freedom of speech as a Danish freedom</b>	<b>Freedom of speech; A Western universal human right threatened by Islamism</b>	<b>Demonisation of Muslims and political spin is the case; not freedom of speech</b>
<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	Jyllands-Posten, 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 Jyllands-Posten, 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 dichotomized terms: “us” and “them”, a “black and white” world perspective	Orientalist language	Didactic, aggressive, frustrated.

“Freedom of speech as a Danish freedom” echoes the government’s prime spin strategy, “to insist on freedom of speech” (Hervik 2008). By focusing on free speech in late October 2005 the government was able to transform the cartoon story into a question of which countries have freedom of speech and democracy (Denmark and the Western

world) and those who do not (primarily countries of the Middle East). According to this frame Islam is the core problem, and represented as a religion of violence and intolerance (see for instance *Jyllands-Posten's* headline on 11 September 2005, chapter one). Fear is further evoked by reference to tragic events, such as the murder of Dutch film maker, Theo van Gogh, the fatwa against Salman Rushdie, and more generally through the use of words such as “threat”, “fear”, “pressure”, “self censorship”, “war”, and “battle” as against the positive words associated with the Danish society: “freedom”, “trust”, “democracy” and “Danishness”. A tabloid editorial argues:

In Islamic role-model societies such as Saudi-Arabia women are kept in hoards as veiled slaves. People are beheaded at the market. Whipping is a common form of punishment. Stoning of unfaithful women is an approved form of sanction. Other religions are forbidden. Freedom of press does not exist (*Ekstra Bladet* 1 March 2006).

The main actors of the frame are the Danish imams, Islamic dictators and regimes, and the 11 ambassadors, who send their letter of concern to the Danish prime minister. Within the simplifying “black and white”, “good and bad” world view, those people who are critical of the government and *Jyllands-Posten*, and those, who are more generally responsible for what is argued to be Denmark’s earlier “naïve” acceptance of immigrants, including other Danish newspapers, particularly *Politiken*, left winged politicians, relativists, the politically correct, and intellectuals. But more than anyone, the Danish imams are held responsible for the global reactions, which is based upon “their lies and spreading of misunderstandings”. The two groups of imams that traveled to the Middle East in December 2005 are regarded as mobilizing international discontent, violent demonstrations, and boycott of Danish goods.

Attention is generally diverted from Denmark, except to the extent that the journalists and libertarian politicians see themselves as heroic defenders of democratic ideals and do-gooders, who send try to export “our” democratic ideals.<sup>24</sup> Criticism of the Danish government is virtually non-existing.

The second frame resembles the first, but holds more nuances. “Freedom of speech as a universal human right threatened by Islamism” is salient in another government friendly newspaper *Berlingske Tidende*. Freedom of speech is a universal human right, but it has legal restrictions and should not be used for unnecessary provocations like *Jyllands-Posten* did. This frame became particularly strong during the globally reported cartoon violence, when “West against

Islam” narratives replace the importance of the national context. The sponsors of the frame have identified “Islamism” as the real enemy regardless of where it is.

The Muhammed-crisis is something else and more serious: A global confrontation with fascism in the shape of Islamist extremist and the mistreated people in Middle East regimes, which is a safe haven for following religious fascism (Editorial *Information* 2 March 2006).

The point is that the fight against totalitarianism in the current context has to be conducted as a fight against the totalitarian thinking’s specific forms of repressions rather than against diffuse ‘Islamism’: The fight must include the repression of women, of speech-, faith- and freedom of assembly, of other human rights (*Information* 4 March 2006).

Accordingly, the frame supports the victims of Islamism in Muslim countries, to whom it employs a language of sympathy. The imams, who lead the Islamists, regardless of whether they are in Denmark or in Muslim countries, are seen as the guilty ones in suppressing and misguiding fellow Muslims.

On closer scrutiny it is not clear who the “Islamists” precisely are except that the category seems to absorb all unwanted Islamic beliefs and identity markers, hence suggesting that it is synonymous with Islam, or more accurately the distinction seem more to refer to whom one considers “good” and “bad” Muslims, those Muslims “we” like and those “we” don’t (Mamdani 2004). In fact this is an instance of the Bush-doctrine, a doctrine that divided Muslims into “good Muslims” anxious to detach themselves from the 9/11 disaster and support “us” in the war against “them”, which left “Bad Muslims” to be all those who had not been proven good, thus under the obligation to prove their credentials (Mamdani 2004). This second frame, much like the first one, puts the blame on Danish imams, Islamists, and suppressed people. It is characterized by discourses of sympathy, human rights, respect and tolerance, but through the Orientalist language, where the suppression of women, stoning, and human rights violations, Islamism becomes a totalitarian ideology to be fought and dialogue is not desirable. There is no attempt of presenting “the Other’s point of view”. Instead it is preoccupied with placing immediate blame on the imams and more profoundly on Islamists, while avoiding the role and responsibility of the Danish government.

The third frame “The demonisation of Muslims is the issue, not freedom of speech” runs counter to both the other frames. Adherents, (*Politiken* and many intellectuals), try to re-frame the antagonistic

categorization of Danes/Westerners and Muslims, “them” and “us”, “good” and “bad” by presenting Muslims as co-citizens and by arguing that this is not a case about freedom of speech, since no-one denied *Jyllands-Posten* the right to publish the cartoons. “*Jyllands-Posten* has the right to be stupid” is repeated again and again. Instead, this third frame argues that the cartoon crisis has become the expected outcome of an islamophobic newspaper, a government who has sold its soul to the radical right, Danish People’s Party, and failed to handle the crisis properly particularly, when it came to rejecting a meeting and dialogue with concerned ambassadors.

The cartoons and the debate following it reflect how Islam and Muslims are perceived and treated in Denmark:

Islam is under attack in Denmark and has been for some time, especially after September 11. Muslims have been prevented from building Mosques, from making burial places, from wearing scarves and holding meetings. Muslims have been pestered in the streets with words and with slaps. Muslim stores and clubs are vandalized. Muslims are kept under surveillance, are being arrested and are being portrayed in the press as uncivilised and “abnormal”, if not terrorists. The cartoons were the last straw. Let us kick those who are already lying down. Islamophobia is raging. Muslims in Denmark must react; anything else would be unnatural (Sune Skadegaard Thorsen 2006).

Since Denmark has such clear freedom of speech, freedom of the press, and a government that clearly cannot intervene in the editorial process of *Jyllands-Posten*, this frame would ask, why can’t the government go out and criticize *Jyllands-Posten* of unnecessary provocation and intentionally insulting, mocking and ridiculing Muslims in Denmark? (Wæver 2006).

The frame chooses to avoid words such as “fight”, “war” and “defence” and writes instead about “respect”, “dialogue”, “responsibility”, “civilized behaviour” and “co citizens”. The solution to the cartoon crisis and problems of integration lie in dialogue, citizenship and respect.

The two frames, “Freedom of speech is a Danish issue” and “Freedom of speech; A universal human right threatened by Islamism” have recently merged in blaming imams, Islamists, and “bad” Muslims as the reason for the drastic development of the cartoon story. In February 2008 three men were arrested for having specific plans to kill cartoonist, Kurt Westergaard, who had been under police protection since the fall of 2005. Most Danish newspapers re-published his cartoon on 13 February 2008 as an act of resilience and solidarity. Chief editor Lisbet Knudsen of *Berlingske Tidende* was interviewed

on National Public Radio and appeared much like a government spokesperson, when she explained *Berlingske Tidende's* wish to defend Danish values such as free speech. In 2005 before she became a head, *Berlingske Tidende* had refused to publish the cartoons, arguing that it was an unnecessary provocation on the part of *Jyllands-Posten*. In the meantime Knudsen had become the new chief editor of *Berlingske Tidende*, and now the paper wanted make a statement about free speech. In her blog Knudsen evokes the clash in a bipolar world which has taught us: "that we could not maintain the illusion that we, with our more than 5 million Danes and perhaps 400 Christian-cultural friends in Europe sail in a different boat than the 1.2 billion Muslims".

*Berlingske Tidende* did not print Kurt Westergaard's drawing recently in order to ridicule or mock anyone's religious feelings. We printed it to emphasize that we insist on living in a country with free speech, where Kurt Westergaard has the right to draw like he does, without his life is being threatened, and where we as a newspaper, in the name of freedom of the press, can choose to print the drawing, knowing that we can risk being met by debate and criticism for doing it. We insist that religion and religious questions not being exempted from being challenged and debated, when they are used for political purposes (Knudsen 2008)

Also, government critical *Politiken* published one of the cartoons.<sup>25</sup> None of the papers explained how it is possible and necessary to publish the cartoon without further ridiculing or mocking the feeling of many Muslims and why written statements would not suffice to make a statement. Knudsen's statement and the re-publication illustrate the political nature of the Danish news media and the anti-Islamic undercurrent of the Danish public debate. Many Muslim imams have received death threats and been harassed as well, but did not receive the same attention as Kurt Westergaard (See for instance TV2 news, 6 February 2006). The freedom of speech, freedom of expression, and rights of Danish Muslims are not dealt with. Journalists and others that I spoke to abroad argued that Knudsen's message could equally well be interpreted as "we insist on the rights to insult, mock and ridicule ordinary Muslims and treat them as potential terrorists", which once again underlines the political nature of the Danish news editors and newspapers in Muslim and migrant issues. More than 17 newspapers chose to re-publish the cartoon on 13 February 2008.

In the following, I will show how two competing packages of "blames" have been played out in the news media by looking at the blame of imams and Islamism on the one hand, and on the other hand,

a set of interwoven blames directed at the Danish government and *Jyllands-Posten* for shaping the story's violent path as it did.

### **Blaming the imams**

Again and again the adherents of first and second frame blamed the imams for causing the cartoon crisis.<sup>26</sup> While all imams are blamed, only four imams are treated at any length. Already prior to 30 September 2006 *Jyllands-Posten* and tabloid paper *Ekstra Bladet* had criticized some of the imams with critical personal attacks. *Jyllands-Posten* ran for instance news articles critical of the radical and controversial imam at the Grimshøj mosque in Århus, Raed Hlayhel who is a Wahabist scholar with a degree from the Sharia Faculty in Medina.<sup>27</sup> Journalist Orla Borg quotes him for saying in a Friday prayer that “women can be the instrument of Satan against men” and that he encouraged the listeners to take the message home to teach everyone to follow the sharia laws (Hansen and Hundevadt 2006:25-26).

### **“The Troublemaker and the Prophet”**

The “Blame the imams” strategy is played out in the publication (“The Troublemaker and the Prophet. The Muhammed Crisis behind the Scenes”) (Provoen og Profeten. Muhammed krisen bag kulisserne) by John Hansen and Kim Hundevadt (2006).

As I mentioned in the introduction these authors are journalists working for *Jyllands-Posten*; the book is published by *Jyllands-Posten*'s own publishing company; economically supported by *Jyllands-Posten Foundation* and referred to as *Jyllands-Posten*'s official version of the Muhammad cartoon crisis. “Provoen og Profeten” is a subjective account of two journalists who are motivated and committed to give their contribution to the larger debate. The subjective, quality can be seen in the character description in at least two ways. While the “bad guys”, the Danish imams, are described through their more or less “bizarre” statements and suspicious characters with personal flaws, then key actors working for *Jyllands-Posten* are described in positive terms. These characterizations precede the event to describe, providing them with a loaded value frame, which is another artefact of their discursive strategy.

Most people in Copenhagen had not until Friday 14 October [2005] been thinking about *Jyllands-Posten*'s cartoons, but those, who coincidentally passed by the big demonstration in the Town Hall Square and read the banners realized that lines in a newspaper can evoke strong feelings (ibid.:40)

At this point the reactions to *Jyllands-Posten's* publication had been exposed in the Danish press for at least eight days. But Hansen and Hundevadt write that it is only with the sight of the Muslims, who is lead by the imams, Copenhageners would make them wonder what went on behind the scenes.

The big demonstration revealed that in only two weeks the imams had succeeded in mobilizing a broad band of Muslim organizations, and Abu Laban and other imams, which initially hesitated, was now more or less forced to throw themselves into the Muhammad case in order to keep their position and meet any accusation that they did not defend the Prophet with sufficient enthusiasm (Ibid.:42)

Powerful imams recruit other imams and form alliances that organize their protests against *Jyllands-Posten*. Danish opinion-makers, it is argued, only begin to criticize *Jyllands-Posten* after the demonstration in Copenhagen. Imams are to blame. Hansen and Hundevadt also seek to provide some nuances in their approach to Muslims in Denmark. "The debate showed, that there were others on the Muslim side besides 'a few hypocrites'" (ibid. 44), but instead a number of "Muslim believers and cultural Muslims, who supported directly or indirectly the publication of the cartoons" (ibid.). The use of this strategy is widely used in Danish politics. During the cartoon crisis, a new organization emerged called "Democratic Muslims in Denmark" with ethnic politician of The Social Liberal Party, Naser Khader as a controversial chairperson. Khader is severely disliked by many immigrant Muslims for being a religious and cultural apostate, yet popular among many Danes for his enthusiasm for Denmark and his hard-line criticism of what he sees as radical Muslims in Denmark. A supporting association shadows the association, which is the meeting ground for a number of anti-Islamic personalities. The idea of "good" Muslims, whom "we" will talk to, and "bad" ones, who are undemocratic, and someone "we" don't want is all over the Danish debate. "Bad" Muslims were responsible for the cartoon crisis, like they were responsible for terrorism against the US, England, Spain and elsewhere. "But" argues Mahmood Mamdani "this could not hide the central message of such discourse: unless proved to be "good", every Muslim was presumed to be "bad". All Muslims were now under obligation to prove their credentials by joining in a war against 'mad Muslims.'" (2004:15)

### **Middle East Quarterly**

Another example of the "Blame the imam" strategy appears in an account of the cartoon crisis written by Pernille Ammitzbøll and

Lorenzo Vidino “After the Danish Cartoon Controversy” (2007). The authors blame particularly Raed Hlayhel for being the creator of the cartoon crisis. Due to *Jyllands-Posten*’s spring 2005 series, Hlayhel, “had an axe to grind with the Danish press and with *Jyllands-Posten* in particular” (2007:2). Thereby, a motive has been established. Another imam, Ahmed Abu Laban is branded as a terrorist, since he has connections to Osama bin Laden and the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt.<sup>28</sup> The authors rely on controversial radical right-winger Tine Magaard, for analyzing a sermon delivered by Hlayhel in which, he sees his position in Denmark as similar to that of Muhammad in Medina, when he was doing alliances with tribes of polytheists and Jews. Moreover, the story goes, Hlayhel is being visited in Århus by wealthy Saudi business men indicating that big money is behind as well as radical Islamism.

This article appeared in the journal “Middle East Quarterly”, which is published by The Middle East Forum. The Forum is devoted to promoting “American interests in the Middle East” with neo-conservative, anti-Islamic, historian, Daniel Pipes as director and publisher.<sup>29</sup> Pernille Ammitzbøll is a journalist with *Jyllands-Posten*. It hardly comes as a surprise then, that the “Blame the imam” strategy is uncritical of the government’s rejection in October 2005 of a meeting with ambassadors and the role of *Jyllands-Posten* in the development of the cartoon publications into a crisis (Hervik 2008).

### **International News**

The International news media also produced and reproduced the “Blame the imam” strategy. *The Independent* in the United Kingdom carried a story on 10 February 2005 “How a meeting of leaders in Mecca set off the cartoon wars around the world” and a similar article appeared in the *New York Times*, “At Mecca Meeting, Cartoon Outrage Crystallized” 9 February 2005, see also *Le Figaro* 9 February, and *Libération* 3 February). These newspapers are quoted and paraphrased by several academic papers as a reliable source saying that there Danish imam’s activities in the Middle East, here in Mecca at the emergency meetings of the Organisation of the Islamic conference (OIC), are what caused the cartoon story to become a crisis.

*The Independent* and *The News York Times* quote Danish imam, Ahmed Akkari, for saying that Muslim leaders had worked for more than two months in Denmark without eliciting any response.

We collected 17.000 signatures and delivered them to the office of the prime minister, we saw the minister of culture, we talked to the editor of the *Jyllands-Posten*, and we took many steps within Denmark, but could get no action. (Fattah 2006).



*The Independent* and *New York Times* do thereby distinguish themselves from the Danish debate in bringing a possible reason for the Muslim delegations travel to the Middle East.

The Danish press spent many pages covering the anger and criticism of two Muslim delegations to the Middle East. Politicians – mostly from the right – demanded that the imams should have their residence permit scrutinized. “I feel bad about people to whom we have given residence permits in our country going out and do harm to our country in this way” (Denmark’s Radio 2006). Leader of the Danish People’s Party calls the imams’ activities “treason” (Kjærsgaard in Larsen and Seidenfaden 2006:151). Tabloid *Ekstra Bladet* is relentless in their comment:

We ask the devil to punish every dishonest Muslim, who travels around with false messages about the Danish nation. And we ask Allah to export all evil Muslims, who have taken shelter in the Danish democracy, while the use their efforts to smear it. Let them get some space in one of the 56 Muslim dictatorships, which they are so busy travelling to – even if they once fled them (*Ekstra Bladet* 13 January 2006 cit. in Larsen and Seidenfaden 2006:151)

### **“Bloody Cartoons”**

The success of the “Blame the imams” strategy can also be seen in the “Bloody Cartoons” film made by Danish journalist Carsten Kjær and shown worldwide in the fall of 2007 as part of the “Why Democracy” series as Denmark’s contribution. “Bloody Cartoons” is presented as” “a documentary about how and why 12 drawings in a Danish provincial paper could whirl a small country into a confrontation with Muslims all over the world” (Why Democracy n.d.). To open the film Kjær says, “Here is the man who started it all”. According to most narratives that would be author Kåre Bluitgen, cultural editor of *Jyllands-Posten*, Flemming Rose, cartoonist Kurt Westergaard, or even the Danish prime minister, Anders Fogh Rasmussen. But the man in question is imam Raed Hlayhel, who, Kjær notes, is no longer in Denmark.

The point of departure for the documentary is the imam, whose collaboration with other imams and their travels to the Middle East is what caused the “sudden” outburst of violence. “How did it happen to Denmark?” asks Kjær, framing Denmark as an innocent little victim. Most of the documentary is filmed outside of Denmark. Only at the end does the Danish Prime Minister speak, yet he is exempted from critically questions like those posed to the foreign Muslims of the Middle East. He is approached as a high-level commentator, not as a part of the crisis.

Instead of covered the story from several perspectives the “documentary” gives a politicized, platform for presenting the cartoon crisis that represent *Jyllands-Posten*’s and the government’s strategy for handling the crisis by blaming the imams and insisting on free speech being the issue, while neglecting the role played by the newspaper and government.

The “Blame the imam” strategy comes out particularly clear in the claim that nothing occurred in Denmark until the imams went to the Middle East. Spokesperson of The Liberal Party (Venstre), Troels Lund Poulsen, claimed, for instance, that there were practically no international reactions during the first three months after the cartoon publications until the two imam delegations travelled to the Middle East to stir up support (Larsen and Seidenfaden 2006:62). Such statements ignores that Al Jazeera followed the story in early October; Saudi paper Al Hayat mentions the cartoon publications shortly after; a letter of concern comes from the 11 ambassadors; from the Organisation of the Islamic Conference (OIC) in mid October; Islamic Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (ISESCO) begins to cancel joint activities, and the cartoon story receive coverage in various newspapers internationally in November. The story is more domestic than global in the beginning, but the international engagement and coverage is present soon after the publication of the cartoons.

In January 2006 additional blame goes to the Norwegian Christian paper *Magazinet*, who decided to publish *Jyllands-Posten*’s cartoons. Hansen and Hundevadt argue that the story was quieting down and considered mostly a domestic issue until this re-publication took place by *Magazinet*.

Blame is also put on the powerful imam Abdul Rahman Alsidis, who was speaking on 10 January in Mekka, on the Eid al-Adha, which is the conclusion of the Pilgrimage to Mekka. The authors refer to the large television audience on Arab satellite channels, which they estimate will enable him to reach more than a hundred million viewers.

Without mentioning neither Denmark nor *Jyllands-Posten* by name he encouraged Muslims to oppose, what he called ‘an intentional campaign against the prophet Muhammed.’ It was hardly noted in Denmark, but constituted the first ill omen that strong interests would breathe new life into the case of the 12 cartoons: The religious priesthood in Saudi -Arabia, has an enormous influence in the entire Muslim world (Hansen and Hundevadt 2006:126-127).

Mixing a powerful imam’s speech to a large audience in Mecca and in the Middle East with the background information that the priesthood

in Saudi Arabia is influential is interesting. The blame resides with “strong interests” and the power of the religious priesthood to influence people in the Muslim world and deflect attention from *Jyllands-Posten*’s media-instigated “insult, mockery, and ridicule” and the governments rejection of dialogue.

Danish Newspapers, Danish books on the cartoon issue, global news and the wikipedia embrace the publication of the cartoons by the independent Egyptian newsweekly, *Al Faqr*, based in Cairo to blame the imams and suggest Arabic double standards. On 17 October 2005 *Al Faqr* analyzed six of the cartoons with the headline “Continued Boldness. Mocking the Prophet and his wife by Caricature”. On 10 February 2006, *Jyllands-Posten* reported that the cartoons had been published in an Egyptian paper, *Al Faqr*, on 17 October 2005, noting that there had been no protests at that time. Most sources that refer to *Al Faqr* note that its publication of the cartoons did not provoke any uproar or protests, which inadvertently is taken as evidence that nothing happened until the Danish imam delegations came to the Middle East.<sup>30</sup>

The absence of a response does not lie with the Muslim delegations travelling to the Middle East. Overviews and time-tables of the cartoon crisis were mostly written in January 2006 and onwards, four to five months after the original publication and after the Danish prime minister denied meeting the 11 ambassadors about the public debate ethnic minorities in Denmark. The cartoon story wasn’t called a crisis from the beginning. And the publication of the cartoons by *Jyllands-Posten* was strictly speaking not in itself the cause of reactions. *Jyllands-Posten*’s publications are interpreted and communicated through various filters. Al Jazeera brought short news pieces October 10, 12 and 15, as the popular news channel follows the unfolding story. Al Jazeera also brought news about the Danish Prime Minister, who refused to meet with the ambassadors, again as part of the same story. From the vantage point of the Middle Eastern audience, I will argue that interpretations of what the publication of the 12 cartoons represents *and* the Danish government’s rejection of a meeting that includes talking about the cartoons is missed in the puzzlement about why Egyptians didn’t react violently to *Al Faqr*’s analysis of the six cartoons. The mixture combines a publication that represents Muslims as terrorists and a government, which refused to talk to concerned citizens and ambassadors about these representations. It is this mixture, which enabled the cartoon crisis to reach global proportions – a mixture that was not mixed until five days after *Al Faqr* had published its analysis.

There is no doubt that the delegations travelling to the Middle East did play a significant role in shaping the trajectory of the cartoon crisis. However, their travel was also used for a “Blame the imam” strategy that blow the importance out-of-proportion. But more importantly, it serves to deflect attention from the domestic scene leading the delegation and the 11 ambassadors to consult their country’s authorities and network for support of their cases. A domestic scenario where many Muslims in Denmark feel disrespected and aggressively attacked in media, policies, and public intimidation.

### **The Hostile Danish Debate on Minorities**

According to the adherents of the third frame “Demonisation of Muslims and political spin is the issue; not freedom of speech”, Rune Engelbreth Larsen and Tøger Seidenfaden, Denmark became the site of publication of the cartoons because of Danish government’s “lack of basic respect and recognition” of Muslims and the hostile Danish debate. This is the second set of blames. The anger felt in the Muslim world cannot be reduced to domestic circumstances in Denmark and accordingly the Danish government cannot be made responsible for this (Larsen and Seidenfaden 2006:318).

But the fact that it became precisely Danish newspaper cartoons that triggered this crisis has *entirely specific Danish causes*. *Jyllands-Posten* is first and foremost responsible for this and second to that the government and the prime minister have a considerable and more fatal responsibility as they did (Ibid 318-319). (Emphasis original).

Tøger Seidenfaden is chief editor of *Politiken*, the third largest newspaper and Rune Engelbreth Larsen is a historian of ideas writing for *Politiken*. The two authors published “The Caricature Crisis” (Karikaturkrisen) in 2006 with the large publisher Gyldendal and include much of their writing in *Politiken* on the cartoon crisis. They are core exponents of the third frame, which is not well covered in the foreign news coverage. Their comprehensive book is written in a polemic argumentative style – critical of the government, the supporting Danish People’s Party, and *Jyllands-Posten*.

“The Caricature Crisis” meticulously follows *Jyllands-Posten* and the government’s arguments on a day-by-day basis countering them throughout the different phases of the cartoon crisis. I will focus on two key areas, where they invested a special effort, which is the government’s handling of the story and it is the material carried by the imam delegations to Muslim and Arab leaders in Lebanon, Syria and Egypt. In both cases *Politiken* asked experts to go through the critical texts and give their assessment of their content.

### **The Prime Minister's refusal to meet with ambassadors**

A vigorous essentially domestic cartoon narrative sees the Danish government's handling of its refusal to meet with 11 Islamic ambassadors in mid October as a key factor explaining behind cartoon story. The ambassadors represented Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Iran, Pakistan, Egypt, Indonesia, Algeria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Libya, Morocco, and the Head of the Palestinian General Delegation to talk about the Danish public debate on Muslims. The Danish media is divided on this issue whether the prime minister should meet with the ambassadors, since this could be seen as giving in to Islamic pressure, while other journalists argue that meeting national authorities is an essential part of what ambassador's work is about. This split of opinion falls along the lines of three major frames of interpretation, so that those who blame the imams and Islamists argue that the prime minister shouldn't hold a meeting, while those who blame the government uses the denial as a constitutive part of their argumentative strategy.

Prime Minister, Fogh Rasmussen's refusal to meet with the ambassadors has been scrutinized and broken down into bits and pieces by *Politiken's* journalists. *Politiken* called in language experts to interpret the answer and went on to engage the ambassadors for their comments to the denials. Here, I will only deal with the letter itself and Prime Minister's refusal to meet and leave out further contextualization.

The ambassadors wrote:

Excellency,

The undersigned Ambassadors, Cd'a.i. and Head of Palestinian General Delegation accredited to Denmark take this opportunity to draw your attention to an urgent matter.

This pertains to on-going smearing campaign in Danish public circles and media against Islam and Muslims. Radio Holger's remarks for which it was indicted, DF MP and Mayoral candidate Louise Frevert's derogatory remarks, Culture Minister Brian Mikkelsen's statement on war against Muslims and Daily *Jyllands-Posten's* cultural page inviting people to draw sketches of Holy Prophet Mohammad (pbuh) are some recent examples.

[...]

We deplore these statements and publications and urge *Your Excellency's government to take all those responsible to task under law of the land in the interest of inter-faith harmony, better integration and Denmark's overall relations with Muslim world. We rest assured that you will take all steps necessary.*

Given the sensitive nature of the matter, *we request an urgent meeting at your convenience.* (Larsen and Seidenfaden 2006:326-327)(My emphasis)

The letter of concern is not exclusively about the Cartoons but rather three other recent separate incidents. A local radio station, Radio Holger, operated by neo-Nazis, had used anti-Islamic rhetoric on the air and was later closed by the authorities. Another racist incidence involved Member of Parliament, Louise Frevert, who compared Muslims in Denmark with a cancer tumour that had to be removed from Danish society. A third incident referred to in the letter concerned Member of the cabinet and Minister for Culture Brian Mikkelsen, who maintained that contemporary Muslim culture is evolving in Denmark with Middle Age norms and anti-democratic ways of thinking. This is "the new front of the culture war" (Mikkelsen 25 September 2005 in Larsen and Seidenfaden 2006:18, see also chapter one). Mikkelsen is also responding to an increasing number of Danish groups, such as Christian ministers (see also chapter four and Mogensen 2008), former ambassadors (Hansen and Hundevadt 2006, Larsen and Seidenfaden 2006, Thomsen 2006), pedagogues, psychologists (Sanday and *Information* December 2005) doctors, and authors (Brøgger et al.; Andersen 2005; Lerche 2005) (for a general treatment of these protests see also *Information* 30 December 2005, Borg and Olesen 2006, Nicolaisen and Abdullah 2006), had raised their concern for the development of the Danish debate about immigrants, descendants, and refugees.

The Prime minister answered:

The Danish society is based on respect for the freedom of expression, on religious tolerance and on equal standards for all religions. The freedom of expression is the very foundation of the Danish democracy. *The 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)

As shown the Prime Minister ignored the request for a meeting. The answer emphasized, "that the government has no means of influencing the press". Notwithstanding the considerable use of political spin to influence the press, the Prime Minister repeated in press interviews that he had no legal means to interfere with the *Jyllands-Posten's* choice of stories and editing. That is of course not what the 11 ambassadors representing 730 million people were asking for (Larsen and Seidenfaden 2006).

Freedom of speech is precisely what allows the Prime Minister (who is also Minister of the Press) to criticize the publication of the

cartoons without interfering in the legal rights. There is nothing that prevents the Prime Minister in using freedom of speech to condemn or endorse the publications from a political perspective. As it were he used his freedom of speech not to speak at all.<sup>31</sup>

### **Fogh Rasmussen in *Jyllands-Posten* 30 October 2005**

On 30 October the Prime minister did come out to explain his position further, namely in an interview given to the government friendly *Jyllands-Posten* called “Fogh: Freedom of speech must be used for provocation”. The Prime Minister told that readers that it can be necessary to use free speech for provocation, when the timing is taken into consideration and the public criticism of his refusal to meet the ambassadors, and the newspaper chosen for the interview, he is obviously referring to the evolving cartoon story. In fact he gave the interview with *Jyllands-Posten* as part of a larger spin strategy that could divert attention from critique of the government’s decision not to meet with the ambassadors and for associated the government’s policy on refugees, immigrants and their descendants (Hervik 2008).

Certain countries lack basic insight and understanding, for what a true democracy is [...] A Palestinian political representative criticized the drawings for being an attack on Islam and Muslims. Anders Fogh Rasmussen responded to the criticism by attacking the representative for not understanding what the principles of a true democracy are and what free speech is about Lerche (Svane and Maressa 2005).

Fogh Rasmussen argued that using freedom of speech, as a provocation is okay and sometimes even necessary. To give in on the principle of freedom of speech is to help terrorists who want to scare us into restricting basic values of our society (ibid.). He is, in other words, endorsing *Jyllands-Posten*’s project (Berg and Hervik 2007), which gives further strength to *Politiken*’s criticism of both the government and the *Jyllands-Posten*.

### **The Muslim delegations 43 page dossier**

One Muslim delegation travelled to Egypt 5-11 December. Another delegation left on 17 December and stayed the rest of the month in Lebanon and Syria. There is only one imam among the five men travelling to Egypt. Mohamad Al-Khaled Sambad is imam in Odense and the prison in Nyborg. Zeki Kocer is head of the umbrella organization of Turkish migrant associations (DMGT). Sarwar Shoudri of Minhaj-ul-Qur’an that is based in Pakistan. Egyptian born business man Ahmad Harbi and Nour-Edin-Fattah of Islamisk Trossamfund

(The Danish Islamic Society) completes the five-person group. The delegation that went to Lebanon was all of Lebanese background: Kassem Said Ahmedd and Mahmoud Mansour of “The Islamic Society in Denmark” (*Islamisk Trossamfund*) in Copenhagen, imam Raed Hlayhel and his “right hand” imam Ahmed Akkari from Århus.

While the debate was heated and statements confrontational only one politician evoked delegations democratic rights of the to travel. “It is their right and their freedom of speech to travel around agitating their case. That is a condition of democracy” (Elizabeth Gerner Nielsen, *Politiken* 7 January 2006, Larsen and Seidenfaden 2006:153).

The experts consulted by *Politiken* concluded that even if there were some errors in the delegations’ dossier these errors were mainly sloppy mistakes, not making up any serious misrepresentation or spreading false information. One of the more critical assessments was: “It is clear that the dossier and newspaper writings in Egypt make an effort to push the case to the border without crossing the border, which is called misinterpretations, but they take it as far as they can”. (Larsen and Seidenfaden 2006:153).

The dossier contained images that were not published in *Jyllands-Posten*, which provoked a heated debate. One such image was a man with a pig’s snout and pig’s ears and represented as Muhammed. Tabloid paper *Ekstra Bladet* calls the material fraud and *Jyllands-Posten* was also upset. Larsen and Seidenfaden explained that the photograph was part of the hate material that the Muslim organizations have received after the publication of the cartoons. The photograph itself has nothing to do with Islam, except that it was mailed to intimidate Muslims in Denmark, but is a photograph from a ritual celebration in a village in southern France. (ibid.: 153).

Larsen and Seidenfaden counters the blame of imams by emphasizing the circumstances that made the imams travel to the Middle East facilitated by the ambassadors. They argue that it is only a natural reaction of the Muslim ambassadors to turn to the home-government for consultation, when the government decline to meet and listen to their concerns and for Muslims to network with Muslim organizations to help gaining moral, theological and political support. Sponsors of this strategy seek to resist antagonistic, mutually exclusive categories that treat Muslims generally as enemies, and instead humanize their activities and identities, for instance by emphasizing their obvious and rightful wish to find support for their case, wherever they could. The reason for acting as they did must be seen more broadly in the fertile background that does not recognize the Muslim as co-citizens in Denmark and at the same time deny dialogue. For this counter frame



“Demonisation of Muslims and political spin is the issue; not freedom of speech” there isn’t a single cause, but a process with several causes. One of these is the general tone of debate in the Danish public sphere, a tone that has *Jyllands-Posten* at the forefront. The publication of the 12 cartoons is a sign of this. The Danish government contributes by making a political blunder and even refusing to acknowledge its own blunder.

### **Conclusion**

The Danish media frame “Freedom of speech as a Danish freedom” is *the* source used globally and appropriated by much of the foreign media, which happens also to be the version employed by the Danish government and *Jyllands-Posten* and not the versions of *Berlingske Tidende* or *Politiken*. Choosing one rather than the other misrepresents and simplifies a story that is far more complicated and nuanced than the news media has conveyed. It also tells us that some stories are more successful in the global public sphere more readily than others.

We inferred the three frames in the Danish media coverage in early 2006, when the cartoons and stories about the cartoons had traveled internationally. These frames include telling the Danish audience about how millions of Muslim felt and responded to the cartoons and the government’s refusal of dialogue, but also telling the readership about their response to the global events and global coverage connected to the cartoons. “Blame the imams” is one such strategy that deflects attention from *Jyllands-Posten* and the Danish government’s role in the cartoon crisis. The tone of debate and the government’s handling of the cartoon crisis are intensely criticized in the frame “The demonisation of Muslims and political spin is the issue not freedom of speech” sponsored by *Politiken*. *Politiken*’s counter-frame seeks to document that the imams and Muslims should not be blamed as sole responsible for the evolution of the cartoon story. Instead the tone of debate which *Jyllands-Posten* is seen as a contributor to, the government and the supporting cast of the Danish People’s Party create the cluster of agents responsible for the violent response abroad and the boycotts of Danish goods. Both of these frames must be accounted for if distortions are to be minimized. This is particularly relevant for news coverage and academic treatment that enter the story five months after the domestic course of events and interpretations had taken place.

One way to summarize the layers of arguments of the discourses and analytical counterarguments is to pose some simple questions of what came first and second, or (“if event x, then action y”):

- Would there have been a cartoon story, if Bluitgen had not had problems finding illustrators for his book? Definitely. Bluitgen's problems were not much more than a pretext for *Jyllands-Posten's* political engagement and anti-Islam discourse.

- Without the publications of the Muhammed cartoons, would there have been a diplomatic call for a dialogue meeting with the prime minister? Certainly. The ambassadors raised several other items. Their letter extended the concerns expressed by other groups of people, who have argued that the Danish debate had gone too far and that it had been discriminating and intimidating the ethnic minorities, particularly Muslims and migrants of non-Western origin.

- Without publication of the cartoons, would there be a globalized Muslim protest? Unlikely, protests were already taking place in Denmark in all kinds of ways, yet not a salient feature in the Danish news media. A couple of the cartoons, the accompanying text and *Jyllands-Posten's* editorial were too controversial. The editorial and political leadership of *Jyllands-Posten* pushed their story too far.

- Had a meeting between the prime minister and the ambassadors taken place, would ambassadors have consulted their home governments and would the "imam" delegations have travelled to the Middle East? Most likely not. Two news cartoon stories in Denmark and Sweden are particularly interested. In October 2006 the free daily *Nyhedsavisen* published images from the meeting of the Danish People's Party's youth organization. The meeting included an internal competition to see who would go farthest in vulgar representations of the prophet Muhammed. A member of a group of artist called "Defending Denmark" had infiltrated the group and documented the competition. One of the drawings depicted Muhammed as a beer drinking urinating camel; another drew him as a terrorist attacking the capital of Copenhagen (*Nyhedsavisen* 2006). Unlike the Muhammed cartoon crisis, the Danish Foreign Office immediately invited Muslim ambassadors in Denmark to a meeting that explained the case. The Prime Minister sent out a press release in which he distanced himself from the drawings (Espersen 8 October 2006). When Swedish artist, Lars Vilks, published another controversial cartoon, as a provocation the story didn't develop, since the Swedish government was quick to consult and engage Muslim leaders in dialogue.

Narratives of the origin of the controversy frequently begin with author Bluitgen's assertion that he couldn't find an illustrator to his book, since illustrators were afraid of Muslim anger. Bluitgen's story was only another inspirational source for *Jyllands-Posten's* already divisive and polarizing approach to Muslim practitioners and Islam.

An approach that treats Muslims more like enemies to be fought rather than co-citizens to be lived with peacefully. On September 30 when *Jyllands-Posten* explained its project, Bluitgen's quandaries were eaten up by the newspapers larger discourse.

The inflammatory rhetoric of politicians' speech reported by the news media (Muslims are like cancer tumors, we need to approach Muslim culture as a culture war) became a government problem in mid October 2005, when it refused to meet with 11 ambassadors to talk about their concerns about the derogatory anti-Islamic rhetoric. With the government attracting the media spotlight a set of spin moves were launched to move the focus away from the bad image of anti-Islamic discourse to a winning spin image of a government that heroically stood firm on free speech without giving any acknowledgement to the enemy, who either hadn't understood democracy or wanted to impose censorship (Hervik 2008). Instead of participating in free speech arguments about *Jyllands-Posten's* cartoons and the constitutionally established limits of free speech, the debate was successfully transformed into a question of having free speech as such or not having it. The free speech spin was chaperoned by an equally successful "Blame the imams" spin. With the transformation of the issue to free speech, the Prime Minister's endorsement of *Jyllands-Posten's* publication of the cartoons in *Jyllands-Posten* on 30 October, and the embracing of the "Blame the imam" strategy, the government and *Jyllands-Posten* sponsored the same frame "Freedom of speech as a Danish freedom".

During the Danish media coverage of the Muhammad cartoon crisis, we looked at cultural differences were increasingly represented and perceived as the prime generator of conflict, with Danes being the reasonable good guys and Muslim imams supported by Muslims as those, who fail to understand democracy free speech. Such was also the political spin, but how does "culture", "ethnicity", "identity", "civilization" and "conflict" relate? This is the topic of chapter three.

### CHAPTER 3

## THE DANISH CARTOON CRISIS AND THE DISCOURSE OF ETHNIC IDENTITY CONFLICT

Many Danes, including Muslims, perceive the Danish Muhammad cartoon controversy as an issue of clashing identities. On the one hand one can find “indigenous” Danes, who see themselves as democratic, rational, modern, and even post-cultural, and on the other hand, “Muslims”, who reacted violently towards Danish and Western symbols, thereby revealing what has been represented as “their true identity” as “un-enlightened beings” guided by “easily ignited tempers” and “ignorant people” with a “democratic deficit”. We saw earlier how the Danish prime minister spun his damage control strategy as an issue of who has freedom of speech and who does not, thus aggressively rejecting Palestinian criticism of *Jyllands-Posten*’s publication of the 12 infamous cartoons as a failure to understand democracy and free speech. Others have consistently used the clash of civilization narrative to explain the sequence of events following the cartoon publication as a clash in the fault line between civilizations or religious identities as it were. In one instance of this spin a Muslim representative is put into a strait-jacket by the Prime Minister (*Jyllands-Posten*, 30 October 2005), when he explained what the crisis is about and that her voice was neither appreciated or – so it seems – not relevant to listen to. In fact Muslim voices were seldom heard in the media coverage or in the academic treatment of the cartoon crisis except for a few Muslim leaders and outspoken Imams.

Samuel Huntington himself sees tensions between the Western and Muslim civilizations as the backdrop of the escalating crisis (Huntington 2007). For Ahmed, a Muslim participant in a focus group we recently conducted as part of another research project, publishing the cartoons with Rose’s accompanying text (2005) explaining how Muslims, because of their Muslim identity alone, should accept being “mocked, ridiculed and insulted” is precisely the kind of identity frame that made him, many other Muslims, and Muslim organiza-

tions protests against *Jyllands-Posten* from the very beginning (Hervik 2011). During the Muhammad cartoon crisis, Muslims seemed to be perceived as being amenable only to direct, confrontational, cultural (non-linguistic) communication. In other words the Muhammad cartoon story is perceived and narrated as an identity conflict, or an ethnic conflict in the popular sense of the term.

When many journalists, politicians, and many academics, above all political scientists and international relations scholars, see nationalist and ethnic conflicts as the most common type of conflict after the big ideologies vanished with the fall of the Berlin Wall and the collapse of the Soviet Union, other scholarly approaches steadfastly maintain that even if ethnicity and religion are dimensions of a conflict, they do not cause so-called ethnic conflict (Schlee 2007:15-16). In many ways “ethnicity” and the idea of visible differences, “roots”, “ancient hatred”, and “cultural difference” are regarded as the sources of conflicts and “problems of integration”. This view has permeated the mass media and popular consciousness in much of Western Europe and beyond. Accordingly, the terms “ethnic conflict” and “identity conflicts” merit critical scrutiny in order to disclose their accidental baggage and to overcome the embodied polarizing “Us/”Them” narratives that unfold as vicious schismogenetic spirals of increasing violence, crime, carelessness, political activism, and recruitment for radical purposes of all sorts on the “Us” side as well as “The Other” side.

In this chapter I discuss how an “ethnic” identity conflict focus can help us understand - or lead us to misunderstand - the Muhammad cartoon case, which is perceived and represented by many as an identity conflict. We can ask: “What can the cartoon crisis teach us about ethnic conflict?” Before this question can be answered, we need to look closer at how influential intellectuals have dealt with identity conflicts. I will use insight from this theoretical scrutiny to challenge the view of the Muhammad cartoon conflict as a simple issue of clashing identities. In addition, I will include a section on Muslim voices drawing from individual interviews and focus group interviews held in the fall of 2008.

### **The ambivalent use of the terms “ethnic” and “ethnicity”**

The terms are blurred from the outset. In fact I will argue that conceptual confusion risks distorting and simplifying the understanding of conflicts. What academic studies broadly describe as “ethnic conflict” or “ethnic tolerance” easily ends up in an inclusive concept of ethnicity that comprises foreigners, immigrants, guest

workers, blacks and whites as in Togeby (1997); nationalism as the territorialisation of persistent, earlier senses of subjective ethnicity (Smith 1986), i.e., the ethnic core of modern nations; Catholics and Protestants in Northern Ireland as ethnic (Eriksen 2003); or Chinese, English, Arabs and French (Connor 1994).

One source of confusion is the absence of a distinction between everyday (including populist) uses of the terms and the use of the terms within a theoretical framework. According to the Oxford English Dictionary the term is still used by many educated people to describe all political units that are not of the familiar nation and nation-state kind (Chapman et al. 1989). Studies in Denmark, Sweden and Norway (see Hervik 2003) have revealed that the schematic features evoked by local connotations of “ethnic” and “ethnicity” refer to of visible and audible features of minority groups, who are usually not part of the nation. The majorities in each country do not see themselves as truly ethnic (see also Frankenberg 1994), although the term is increasingly used to separate majority from minority. Such a use has the often unintended effect that the “Us/”Them” division once again reproduces mutually excluding categories, since an “ethnic Dane” cannot also be a person with “ethnic minority background” (Hervik 2003, 2011).

Sometimes “ethnic” is used synonymously with “national” groups fighting each other, such as Serbs, Croats, and Bosnians (also called “Muslims”) in the early 1990s. Sometimes racial or racialized groups such as African-Americans are approached as ethnic groups, who are comparable to immigrants and whose social problems are reduced to problems of integration. Besides the erroneous approach to African-Americans as immigrant groups rather than a racial group consisting of numerous ethnic groups, this “immigrant analogy” can be found in Gunnar Myrdal’s *An American Dilemma* (1944, see Omi and Winant 1994) and American neo-conservatives in the 1980s, which approach African-American social problems as the problem of integration of migrants. In these cases the focus is primarily on the African-Americans and little on the relations of power between them and the hegemonic social groups and the state.

On other occasions “ethnic” is used instead of “Muslim”, and then associates with “civilizational” or “cultural”. In Denmark Muslim cultural identity is used as interchangeably with “non-Western migrant”. Such associations make sense primarily in terms of its racializing features (Petersen 2009), since these segments of the population are comprised of people who speak hundreds of languages, come from several continents, and have little in common besides being visibly different and of non-native descent. On the other hand, such associa-

tions make sense in terms of the routine practice of the news media, for instance, when news about “terrorists” in Saudi Arabia is accompanied by footage of women wearing burqas (Denmark’s Radio 25 March 2010).

### **The identity turn**

In the post-1989 world - the era of the “identity turn” - it is a common (mis)perception that Muslim identity is in itself incompatible with European culture and must be defended through compulsory socialization in “shared national values” (Titley 2009:148), or through a strengthening of national core values (Huntington 2006:491).

According to many peace and conflict scholars, most intra-state conflicts after 1989 are “ethnic” (see for instance M. Brown 1993:81). Political scientist, high-level political consultant and commentator Samuel Huntington (Crozier et al. 2005)<sup>32</sup>, whose work is the embodiment of the “identity turn”, asked what would be the biggest source of conflict in the post-Soviet era. “Culture”, “civilization”, and “identity” were the answers (Lewis 1990).<sup>33</sup> And civilizations are basic “and far more fundamental than differences among political ideologies and political regimes” (Huntington 1993:4). Danger lurks when identity is in play, since “enemies are essential” and you cannot love what you are unless you hate what you are not:

In the post-Cold War world flags count and so do other symbols of cultural identity, including crosses, crescents, and even head coverings, because culture counts, and cultural identity is what is most meaningful to most people. People are discovering new but often old identities and marching under new but often old flags, which lead to wars with new but often old enemies.

One grim Weltanschauung for this new era was well expressed by the Venetian national demagogue in Michael Dibdin’s novel, *Dead Lagoon*: *‘There can be no true friends without true enemies. Unless we hate what we are not, we cannot love what we are.* These are the old truths we are painfully rediscovering after a century and more of sentimental cant. Those who deny them deny their family, their heritage, their culture, their birthright, their very selves! They will not lightly be forgiven.’ The unfortunate truth in these old truths cannot be ignored by statesmen and scholars. For peoples seeking identity and reinventing ethnicity, enemies are essential, and the potentially most dangerous enmities occur across the fault lines between the world’s major civilizations. (Huntington 1996:21, emphasis added)

Huntington evokes Dibdin’s novel “Dead Lagoon” from 1994 to emphasize the necessity to hate someone in order to know who you

are, but as I have argued elsewhere, the inspiration is rather German law professor and political theorist Carl Schmitt's idea of the political, according to which you treat your adversary as either "friend" or "foe" (Hervik 2008, 2011).

Huntington invests academic capital in the terms "culture", "civilization" and "identity" and ends up with a self-fulfilling prophecy. But also with an analytically vague concept of identity and civilization to some extent relying on elder historians of civilization like Toynbee and Spengler he cannot decide whether Africa is a civilization or not (Hannerz 1999:366). Nonetheless, Huntington's political ideas become a successful narrative circulating the global public space, where it is listened to and repeated in various ways by the mass media and saturates popular consciousness largely by blaming those who are "different" from "us" for causing problems. To be sure, the narrative of clash of identities is *not* the outcome of expert knowledge of "civilization", "identity", and "differences"; rather it states security concerns that enable an ideological focus on the "danger" of certain, but not all, cultural and religious differences.<sup>34</sup> Embodied in the ideology of incompatible identities is an idea of how to react towards the incompatible other. While Huntington does not spell out what set of actions his ideology should produce, neo-conservatives use it to advocate the use – even duty to use – of military superiority to overcome conflict-creating, incompatible rogue states. Neo-conservatives like Daniel Pipes (a well-known, American writer active on the Danish scene) strongly argue that the only solution to the conflict in the Middle East is Israeli military victory. On a micro-level, strategies against the incompatible other, the poor and the unemployed are zero-tolerance and negative dialogue (Hervik 2011; Hervik 2012; Wacquant 2004). Negative dialogue relies on a belief that certain conflicts are unavoidable and certain cultural encounters are impossible to resolve. "It is destructive because it constitutes an active refusal to engage in dialogue, even in those instances when it employs a dialogical vocabulary only to mask what is actually a monologue" (Hervik 2011:246).

In analyses of "ethnic conflicts" and the concept of ethnicity, Huntington is not the academic expert to turn to.

### **The analysis of "ethnic" conflict**

One of the most cited sources for the study of ethnic conflicts is political scientist and security advisor Michael E. Brown, particularly his article on the causes and implications of ethnic conflict that first appeared in 1993. When it comes to defining "ethnic community", Brown turns to sociologist Anthony Smith, who define it as: "a named human population with a myth of common ancestry, shared memories,



and cultural elements; a link with a historic territory or homeland; and a measure of solidarity” (Smith in Brown 1993:28-29).

Smith argued that there must be an “ethnic core” to all nationalism(s) and that core is by no means arbitrary, as historians like Ernest Gellner have claimed they often are. Even if this core is molded through history, there is still a shared sense of community, ancestry, culture, and attachment that explain the perseverance against historical changes. Mexican sociologist Natividad Gutiérrez worked on both Smith and Gellner’s approaches, which she saw as interdependent. By asking whether present-day nations have historical and ethnic origins, or if these phenomena are created only by modern objective conditions, rendering the historical background irrelevant (Gutiérrez 1999:2), she made it clear that the two opposing approaches could not be dismissed, but had to be complementary. Although Brown calls for “serious academic studies”, he picks the primordialist-leaning Smith and leaves out Gellner and other prominent ethnicity scholars most of whom are constructivist-oriented. In fact, he aptly bypasses much of the theoretical research on the concepts of ethnicity and identity that could have provided him with a more complex approach.

Such an approach could be that of anthropologist John Comaroff, who has repeatedly argued that:

the substance of ethnicity and nationality can never be defined or decided in the abstract. And why there cannot be a theory of ethnicity or nationality per se, only a theory of history capable of elucidating the empowered production of difference and identity (Comaroff 1996:166, see also Comaroff 1987).

In his own top-down approach to ethnicity, political scientist Victor Le Vine inadvertently provides an example of what happens when you try to decide ethnicity in the abstract. Summarizing how “ethnicity” is currently being used, Le Vine claims that ethnic refers to “a subgroup living among others in a foreign country” (Le Vine 1997:46). While we can agree on the attribute “subgroup” or even interest group, but not the idea of being in a foreign country. The Mayan and Aztec people in Mexico, for instance, may sometimes feel that they are in another country, but they are not. They are ethnic groups, original inhabitants and citizens of the nation-state Mexico. Likewise, the Sami of Norway, Sweden, Finland, and Russia share a similar status within their respective nation-states.

### **The relational aspect of ethnicity**

Norwegian anthropologists Fredrik Barth (1969) and Thomas Hylland

Eriksen (1993) are influential pioneers in the study of ethnicity, particularly in their emphasis of ethnicity as an aspect of a relationship rather than an attribute of a group. Barth argued against Clifford Geertz's and Max Weber's view of identity as an intrinsic, essentialist core from which ethnicity springs, which comes under threat of disappearing when groups encounter other groups and modernization. Barth and his colleagues found that it was precisely in the contact with other ethnic groups that ethnic identity was constructed most vividly. Accordingly, they move away from Smith's view without dismissing the ethnic content entirely.

According to Brown's systemic explanations of ethnic conflict one requirement is that "two or more ethnic groups must reside in close proximity" (1993:6). This criterion carries the assumption that ethnic conflict is a conflict involving ethnic groups, not unlike Barth's (1969) emphasis that ethnicity requires the explicit identification vs. another ethnic group with whom it is in some degree of contact. After Barth published his famous book research has shown that the ethnic group's "other", or the relational aspect, may not refer exclusively to encounters between one ethnic groups and another, but also between an ethnic group and the nation-state, the market, modernization, hegemonic social groups, and globalization, which contribute to the production of ethnic identities (Cohen 1978, Handelman 1977, Williams 1989, Wilmsen and McAlister 1996).

Comaroff helps us direct attention the study of ethnicity towards the relations of power.

Ethnicity typically has its origins in relations of inequality: ethnogenesis with hierarchical social division of labor. Ethnic identities are always caught up in equations of power at once material, political, and symbolic. Seldom simply imposed or claimed; more often their construction involves struggle, contestation, and, sometimes, failure (Comaroff 1996:166).

Ethnicity and ethnic conflict must therefore always be analyzed as an issue of identity *and* as a relationship of power, which is usually asymmetric with the group defined as "ethnic group" as the weaker part of this relationship.

### **Ethnicity and migration**

Barth (1969) and Geertz (1973) originally developed their anthropological theories of ethnicity among non-Western groups primarily in Afghanistan and Indonesia. But in American sociology the term ethnic has been used for European migrants to the US since the 1920s. The empirical basis of American ethnicity theory was immigration to the

US. European migrants coming to the US were approached from the perspective of immigrant groups assimilating or becoming part of cultural pluralism.

The origins of the concepts of 'ethnicity' and 'ethnic group' in the US, then, lay outside the experience of those identified [...] as racial minorities; Afro-Americans, Latin Americans, Native Americans, and Asian Americans (blacks, browns, reds, and yellows, (Omi and Winant 1994:16)

Later, when migrants began entering into Western European labour markets, they were approached through the ethnicity paradigm. Migrants were increasingly seen as ethnic in the sense of being visibly different than the native people. From a native perspective, migrants were talked about as "ethnic" and "minorities" which meant the attributes of these groups such as language, clothes, gestures, belief in shared ancestry, and traditions. The term was not used to denote distinct groups as it is done in anthropology; groups were lumped together and talked about as "ethnic", if they were different from norms of the "host" population.

### **Ethnic groups as "ethnicized" minorities**

The Barthian and the Smithian lines of thinking are remarkably weak when it comes to noting and inferring the hidden aspect of power relations beyond social interaction and always present in the relational aspect. Scholars like Walter Connor and Anthony Smith do not see an ethnic group as a subgroup within a larger society. "This definition makes ethnic group synonymous with minority", Connor objects, and he goes on to assert that the Chinese are not a subgroup (Connor 1994:43).

Wilmsen & MacAllister (1996) have argued strongly (along with Comaroff) *against* pretending to build universal top-down theories of ethnicity and nationalism and *for* seeing ethnic groups precisely as minority groups. Groups of people with "perceived commonalities of religion, race, language, or territorial homeland" (D. Brown 2007) do not simply build ethnicity and awareness of themselves from intrinsic properties, but through an interactive relationship with the market, hegemonic groups, the nation state, nationalism, and the idea of the nation. This view takes us back to Gutiérrez, who argued that ethnicity could not be reduced to either identity or the modern conditions, but both of them set within actual and situated social practices and cultural production of ethnic groups. In her view, there is a dominant identity that is capable of imposing high culture and social cohesion on the minorities and there is a collection of small ethnicities exposed to

various degrees of assimilation or disappearance (Gutiérrez 1999:23). Pieterse sees such articulation as minority groups being “ethnicized” or “dominated” by outsiders with such an effect that new ethnic groups may be produced by different ethnic groups (Pieterse 1996). Ethnicity is a multi-sided social construction, but not an arbitrary invention.

One example of imposed ethnicization comes from Denmark. Here, the approximately 10000 Somali refugees became “ethnicized” by the news media and local political leaders in early 1997, when they as a group were considered to be too different to be integrated into Danish society (Hervik 1999, 2011). In the “too different to be integrated” discourse, the meaning of “culture” merged with the meaning of “race” and the idea of incompatible traditions and values.<sup>35</sup> How did this happen?

Within a few weeks the newspaper coverage revealed a new genre: Somali stories (Fadel, Hervik and Vestergaard 1999). These stories emerged as a thematic coverage of problems connected to the cultural difference of Somali refugees in Denmark. The coverage build entirely on the overwhelming and puzzling difference.

The regional newspaper, *Fyens Stiftstidende*, can be used to illustrate this ethnization by external forces. The newspaper published nineteen articles about the Somali refugees between 11 February and 11 March 1997, eleven of them written by the same reporter, Mikala Rørbech. The articles used a total of forty named sources, particularly three local politicians. In eight of the articles local politicians were the only sources, suggesting that these stories are *about* the Somali refugees, but without Somali perspective or participation. Nineteen stories conveyed critical comments about the Somali refugees by experts and people working with the Somalis, but the Somalis’ own voices were absent from the articles. In fact they were seen to be so different that experts, such as ethnographers, were called upon to bridge the communication gap and speak for them (Fadel, Hervik and Vestergaard 1999). Furthermore, the purpose was not to convey information as such but to inscribe the newspaper into the national political debate about the difficulties faced by the local authorities and natives in meeting these “difficult Somalis” (*besværlige somaliere*). Two politicians said, “The Somalis do not belong in these latitudes. They should be sent home” and “[The Somalis are] undeniably the most culturally strange and also the most demanding” (14 February 1997). The statements became the basis for further news articles, whose key message was that the Somali refugee problem is a problem that can be solved only through more restrictive policies and by sharing the burden via a more just distribution of the Somalis in Denmark.

The stories also revealed that news journalism is moving further away from critical journalism into journalism where journalists become conductors of a cacophony of political statements.

Without seeing ethnicity, and identity more broadly, as relational, definitions of ethnicity end up stressing attributes of an ethnic community while ignoring relationships to others the wider political field including the nation state, the market and globalization.

### **“Weak states” and the study of ethnic conflict**

In an article about causes of internal conflict Michael E. Brown (2001) does incorporate some of these relational aspects of power. In his review of the literature on internal conflict, he includes political factors such as “discriminatory political institutions” and “exclusionary national ideologies”. Central to these are the use the concept of “weak state”, which, he argues will experience violent conflict and “individual groups within these states feel compelled to provide for their own defence; they have to worry about whether other groups pose security threats” (Brown 2001:6).

While I do not dispute that there is a link between “weak states” and the eruption of “ethnic” violence, I do question the instrumental use of the “state” as the legitimate and unquestioned unit of analysis, while at the same time employing a rigid conceptual analysis of the terms “internal conflict” and “ethnic conflict”. International Relations scholars employing the “weak state” concept rarely ask what global relations actually produce “weak states”. How come the “weak states” most often are locked in post- or neo-colonial relationships with economically powerful states, alliances of states, and international corporations?

Awareness of the methodological nationalism (Wimmer and Glick-Schiller 2000) could have helped Brown to include a more critical treatment of the literature on internal conflicts. However, Brown does note that in some places nationalism is based on “ethnic distinctions” (rather than a “civic” one), which he sees as more prone to conflict. He uses this division between “civic” and “ethnic” nationalism to maintain that “civic” nationalism is the good (Western) one, while “ethnic” nationalism is bad as it surfaced in the Balkans, Eastern-Central Europe, and the former Soviet Union. Civic nationalism appears in well-institutionalized democracies. Ethnic nationalism, in contrast, arises spontaneously when an institutional vacuum occurs. By its nature, nationalism based on equal and universal citizenship rights within a territory depends on a supporting framework of laws to guarantee those rights, as well as effective institutions to allow citizens to give voice to their views.

Ethnic nationalism, in contrast, depends not on institutions, but on culture. Therefore, ethnic nationalism is the default option: it predominates when institutions collapse, when existing institutions do not fulfill people's basic needs, and when satisfactory alternative structures are not readily available. (Snyder in Brown 1993:8-9).

The opposition used by Brown between "civic" and "ethnic" nationalism simplifies and distorts the specific practices both in Europe and outside of Europe. Moreover, such a rigid division comes from the vantage point of the ethno-centric Western view of itself as mainly civic, and even civilized, in a sense that is often interpreted (again by Westerners) as superior to other civilizations again echoed in the theory of weak states.

Speaking against this view, and the view that only "weak states" lead to internal conflict is the fact that nationalism has been unfolding rapidly in the post-1989 world, not least in well-established, small, affluent and strong states such as Denmark, Norway, Belgium, Holland and Austria (Gingrich and Banks 2006).

### **Ethnicity as an explanation?**

The term "ethnic" is used most frequently in Scandinavian languages about non-Western people in Scandinavia. Often it is used interchangeably with "difference" and "culture", in roughly equivalent to the English "race". "Race", in turn, is not equivalent to the Scandinavian "race" (same spelling different meanings) for people with different skin complexion, language, and habits. Ethnic groups become the aural and visible minorities (Andreassen 2005). The Scandinavian everyday use of the term is not much different from the original Greek meaning of non-Christians and groups of undifferentiated people outside of the nation. The use of the concept is seen from the normative vantage point of the nation-state. In this way asymmetric relations of power are built into the very use of the term.

Emphasizing the minority element and the constructedness of the "ethnic" as in ethnicity and ethnic conflict is not to say that ethnic identities cannot and will not become salient in people's motivation for action, as John Comaroff describes it.

Once constructed and objectified, ethnic identities may take on a powerful salience in the experience of those who bear them, often to the extent of appearing to be natural, essential, primordial. Our task is to establish how the reality of any identity is realized, how its essence is essentialized, how its objective qualities come to be objectified (Comaroff 1996:166)

It follows that ethnicity can never be a truly independent explanatory principle. This is not to deny that action is regularly conducted in its name or that such action has implications for everyday relations.

Studies of ethnic conflict have as I have argued paid insufficient attention to the relational character of ethnicity, or group identity more broadly, failing to encompass the often uneven dialectic between the imposed and the embodied, which is crucial for understanding identity conflicts. Instead these studies have described and analyzed identity markers of single ethnic groups.

### **Muhammad cartoon conflict of 2005/6 as an “ethnic” conflict**

After the critical discussion of the term “ethnic”, we can now turn to the Danish Muhammad cartoon conflict. The crisis, as mentioned in the beginning, is conventionally referred to as “the Muhammad crisis” in Denmark. Among Muslims and some others it is known as “The *Jyllands-Posten* crisis”, since the crisis was never about the prophet Muhammad (mpuh). These terms suggest that the conflict is about identity *and* power, respectively. Both aspects must of course be examined in the double approach to ethnicity and identity as suggested earlier.

Thus I approach the cartoon conflict from two dimensions: the politicized Danish news media and the response of some media consumers, including young Muslims. I argue that the conflict cannot be reduced to an aspect of Muslim or ethnic identity.

In chapter two I showed that even though the identity-oriented, Muslim-bashing discourse is dominant in Denmark, which came out through the frame analysis as “Freedom of speech as a Danish issue”, a counter-discourse, prevails and rejects the polarizing “Us/Them” dichotomy. In addition, this counter-discourse blames *Jyllands-Posten* and the government’s anti-immigrant policy and xenophobic appearance as the prime motor in the escalation of the cartoon conflict. I called this discourse (sponsored primarily by the daily *Politiken*) “Demonization of Muslims and political spin is the issue; not freedom of speech”. A third discourse of the Danish media coverage that appeared in the early months of 2006 is “Freedom of speech; A universal human right threatened by Islamism”. This discourse saw the publication of the cartoons as an unnecessary provocation, but later merged with the first discourse when the sponsor, *Berlingske Tidende*, changed leadership and published the bomb-in-the-turban cartoon as a show of solidarity with the cartoonist Kurt Westergaard in 2008, when a couple of North African immigrants were caught with a plan to assassinate him (Hervik 2008, Hervik and Berg 2007, Berg and Hervik 2007).

“Freedom of speech as a Danish issue” was coined by Clarissa Berg and my self (Hervik and Berg 2007) on the basis of newspaper articles written during the peak of the Muhammad cartoon crisis in early 2006. This discourse had originally come out particularly strong in an interview in *Jyllands-Posten* with Prime Minister, Anders Fogh Rasmussen, on October 30 2005, which is three months prior to our survey period. In this article the prime minister successfully launched a political spin that transformed the issue from an internal Danish question to a question about “who understands free speech” and “who does not” and an insistence – regardless of arguments and facts – that the cartoon affair is a question of free speech.

Earlier research (Hervik 2008, 2011) revealed an emerging network relationship and a sharing of core values by a cluster of radical rightwing anti-Islam writers in Denmark and North American neo-conservatives particularly revolving around controversial Daniel Pipes. Members of the Danish semi-secret study group, the Giordano Bruno society and the Free Speech Society (that hold more than a handful of members of the Danish Parliament, another handful of journalists and communication experts, and some academics) wrote hundreds of news articles and authored more than a dozen books on what they saw as the dangers of Islam. Members of these networks share the idea that Islam and the Western world are involved in a clash of identities. Thus, the Danish Muhammad cartoon conflict was presented as a manifestation of this clash, where Islam and Islamists had to be met by zero-tolerance and confrontation (Hervik 2008, 2011).

According to this ideology, Muslim cultural identity is irreconcilable with Danish/Western culture. The difference in itself produces an identity conflict between “us” and “them”, and confrontation is regarded as the only solution.

But analytically speaking “identity” can be approached as something to be imposed upon others, i.e. subject positions, or looked at as the cultural understandings that people consider themselves emotionally attached to (Holland et al 1998). In the case of the clash of civilization type of ideology, the discourse is about cultural difference not how actual differences are perceived and managed. The idea of being incompatibly different is imposed upon Muslims and followed by various forms of confrontational talk and policies. It does not represent the embodied values and shared understandings of Danish Muslims. Not surprisingly, Danish Muslims do not recognize themselves or identify with the Muslims in the news media (Hervik 2002, 2011).



The conflict is also constructed as an “ethnic” conflict, when Muslims are talked about as ethnic. But this connotation of the term ethnic is exclusively the native Danish (emic) term that racializes and ethnicizes Somalis, Algerians, Turks, Pakistanis, Iraqis and Iranians in Denmark into one single “Muslim” or “ethnic” group, who are seen as largely non-Europeans. In this usage Muslims from several continents and more than 100 different groups have in common that they are different from the native Danes. In practice “we” and “they” are separated by the key principle of neoracism or cultural racism: They are recognized as different and deemed incompatible.<sup>36</sup>

### **Media consumers’ response**

In 2008 I conducted some focus group interviews with younger people undergoing higher education about the Muhammad cartoon conflict and other issues relating to the media treatment of ethnic and religious minorities in Denmark. I selected people assumed to be the more tolerant, moderate, informed and educated than other people in their age group. Most of them were in their twenties and had completed three to six years’ of higher education.

### **Muslims are irrational, dangerous people**

Most of the non-Muslim interviewees in the focus groups said that they remembered the cartoon crisis was about free speech. However, they also told us that their memories were re-collections that came in retrospect. The violent global reactions were their real introduction to the cartoon affair.

Muslim reactions around the world were seen as confirming that Muslims are irrational, dangerous people, who are misinformed about the cartoons, Denmark, and free speech and they were seen as suppressed by their regimes, and ignorant because they lack democracy. Danish imams, Muslims in Denmark, Muslim society, and Muslim cultural identity were blamed for turning the conflict global and violent.

To start off the discussion in the focus groups, we showed a picture of a Danish *kolonihavehus*, i.e., allotment gardens with cottage-type houses, which are popular places to spend time, grow vegetables and socialize. The small houses are often used as a key symbol of Danish culture, but this photograph showed a little house built in Ottoman tradition, with a small tower with the crescent at the very top. Most participants associated the house with Islam, although Ahmed (consultant, 28 years) explained that there was nothing explicitly Muslim about the house and its symbols. Fatima (consultant, 31 years)

knew of an area south of Copenhagen where she had seen several such houses. The statements seem to indicate an awareness that the notion of incompatibility that exists in Danish popular consciousness comes from the massive media coverage, but is detached from knowledge of actual presence in certain areas of Copenhagen.

Mikkel (student, 32) responded to the picture by pointing out that logically they were not incompatible, yet his first impression is that they were indeed incompatible.

Niklas (student, 24) has a different point of view: “I think they are logically incompatible, since we are a country that has a state church. In this way, we still have a state and a religion that are closely connected”.

One group didn’t see the co-presence of a Danish allotment garden house as incompatible with the Ottoman-style house surrounded by scores of Danish identity symbols, including the Danish flag and a blue “Madam Blå” coffee pot, although they were quick to note that many Danes would see it as incompatible.

With a reference to the Danish prime minister’s refusal to meet with 11 ambassadors from Muslim countries in October 2005 (dealt with earlier), Mikkel explained:

Holding a meeting was rejected. Then again there is this principle of pragmatic politics, which analysis has shown was the dumbest thing to do, since the Arab world puts enormous emphasis on meetings just for the sake of meetings, even if you don’t agree to anything. So like holding a meeting for the sake of expressing goodwill.

In this quote Mikkel emphasizes the irrational character of Arabic meeting culture even if most of the ambassadors were not Arabic.

The conflicting identities view also appeared when I interviewed the group about the cartoon story.

Jesper            I went crazy. I was abroad. I just received a text message from my younger brother in Damascus. “WHAT? Are we at war?” (Student, 31)

Mikkel            Suddenly Anders Fogh Rasmussen began to appear in all kinds of places. (Student, 32)

Anne                Just these pictures on the front page of all kinds of papers. With Muslims in a circle and a huge Danish flag on fire. (Student, 24).

The reactions around the world caused Mikkel to reflect on the outcome of the cartoon crisis.

Mikkel        I think of this event as a victory, if you can say that [laughs]. Since we haven't been terror-bombed [...] yet. In some ways we won this conflict, because they betrayed themselves [referring to the violent reactions supposedly showing Muslims' true character].

Anne            It wasn't as if we won or there was anything to win. I just thought it was depressing [...] They are not like us. Their religion means something else to them. Muhammad has an entirely different meaning for them than Jesus has for us and we can do with him as we please. I think one should be careful when writing about other religions and their meanings.

Mikkel        I disagree completely.

Jesper         I completely and fundamentally disagree.

Mikkel and Jesper's styles are particularly confrontational: there is no room to be careful, tolerant, or special attention. Only zero tolerance. Anything else is seen as giving in to pressure.

Mikkel        There was a proposal in the Arab world that the rights to freedom from critique of religion should be incorporated into human rights. I think this once again revealed their intentions [i.e., sneak in the backdoor and be allowed to reproduce non-democratic activities and beliefs].

In sum, Muslim culture and identity were seen as irrational, incompatible with Danish identity markers, and the cartoon crisis confirmed the ongoing battle producing winners and losers.

But what about the embedded relations of power between Muslims and the Danish newsmedia?

### **Muslim experiences**

Three of the four Muslim interviewees were engaged in the Muhammad cartoon story and followed it closely from the very beginning in September 2005. They were also constantly approached about their

assumed cultural identity and asked to distance themselves from what terrorists did in the name of Islam and what Muslims leaders at various levels and from various groups were saying.

Ahmed explains that since Muhammad was never the real issue, Muslims in Denmark refer to the Muhammad cartoon crisis as the “*Jyllands-Posten* crisis”, and continues:

As I see it the crisis started with a provocation, which then got out of hand. Then, somehow they ended up tying the crisis to freedom of speech, which it has nothing to do with [...] The problem has never been that some non-Muslims broke Islamic laws. Muslims do not expect this. In addition it is absurd, if Muslims should apologize to the Hindus every time they eat a cow, right? Since we have eaten their God. It is out of proportion. [...] What was really provocative, was the text [by cultural editor Flemming Rose], where it says you should accept being ridiculed, mocked, and insulted, simply because you are Muslim. That means my children—well not that I have any, but my children to come—and my parents should be ridiculed, mocked, and insulted, because they have a Muslim background. That’s what I protested against [...] People in Denmark and the rest of this earth shouldn’t be ridiculed automatically because they identify themselves as Muslims. That was the problem I had. That was the problem all Muslims had. Also, those who call for a court case against *Jyllands-Posten*, they had the cartoons only as item number 16 on their list of complaints.

Ahmed And where the entire news media cut off any sense of debate. This is where it goes awry. It is as if we were told that this is how we have decided to do. We have decided to ridicule, mock and insult all of you because you are Muslims. We have no intention of changing this. We do what we want to do. And there was no debate. There was no discussion. When you tried to say something the door was shut by those people babbling about free speech.

Nadia I feel that the crisis started from this “Us” and “Them” thinking and it wasn’t so much about free speech. [...] This was a provocation for the sake of provocation. [...] What I have done is to mentally retreat into my studies. I don’t feel like expressing my personal opinions. Only what is directly relevant to the issues we discuss, I will say. But when I hear comments that I think are really crass, I simply ignore them. I feel that the way of thinking has changed so much that talking about it feels like hitting a cushion. It does not add anything. You feel as if it is the whole atmosphere of the society; or

at least the atmosphere that has been blown up in the news media.

In sum, the Muslims I interviewed and others I spoke to more informally experienced that they are being contested for their identity and that the contestation was out of proportion. The dominant coping strategy was withdrawal”.

## **Conclusion**

Politicians and the media are turning the relationship between Muslims and Danish values into an identity conflict. The country’s arguably biggest and most powerful newspaper supported by the third largest newspaper and the two tabloids, as well as the government, turn to free speech and use it as a means to attack the country’s Muslim minority for its cultural identity. In political terms they are doing what they see is necessary on the basis of a Danish society, which is considered superior, both morally and intellectually, and to such an extent that insult and battling are the only means to be used.

Responses from some of the more educated Muslim youths I talked to show that they feel that an identity is being forced upon them that they do not recognize or identify with. They see themselves as Danish, ethnic, Muslims, and not potential terrorists.

In social science terms “ethnic” is always about identity *and* something else, which could be seen as relations of power or as situating the conflicts in a wider socio-political field, which includes the state whether it is strong or it is weak. In this manner relations between the ethnic group and the surrounding society must always be situated properly. Politicians and the media disguise this side to their media practice and politics, and many scholars have left it untouched.

Except for Muslim extremist and self-staged spokespersons, Muslim voices were not salient in the media coverage. Some Muslims, like Ahmed, claimed that Muslims tried to make their voices heard, but were met by closed doors and no or little, access to the news media.

When the cartoon conflict exploded globally and violence erupted in many countries, the media coverage of events in other countries was often made from a narrow “Danish” angle. In the next chapter I will look closer at how the Danish Muhammad cartoon conflict played itself out in Egypt at a time when the Danish government asked a group of Christians to initiate a dialogue with Egyptian religious leaders and how the Egyptian news media covered a visit by a delegation of Danish Christians.

## CHAPTER 4

# DIALOGICAL OPPOSITION IN THE DANISH GOVERNMENT'S HANDLING OF THE MUHAMMAD CARTOON CONFLICT

Much global media coverage and most academic treatments of the Muhammad cartoon crisis ignored the role of the Danish government when they sought to explain why the crisis turned global and violent. In February 2006 violent reactions to the publication of the cartoons by the largest Danish newspaper, *Morgenavisen Jyllands-Posten*, reached several continents and led to the loss of at least 138 lives in cartoon-related demonstrations in Pakistan, India, Nigeria and elsewhere.

As the global reactions escalated the Danish government found itself in what the prime minister saw as the country's worst foreign policy crisis since WWII.<sup>37</sup> Faced with this crisis the government, supported by much of the Danish news media and the majority of the Danish population, adopted an approach of non-dialogue with and no apology to Muslims in Denmark. Prime Minister Anders Fogh Rasmussen found, as mentioned earlier, no reason to talk to any of the eleven ambassadors of Muslim countries who requested a meeting to discuss the development of anti-Islamism in the country. More broadly, the political debate and media attention to "Muslim cultural identity" was heightened; it was negative; and it employed a simplified, media-tized world where binary forces were either good or evil, beautiful or ugly, friendly or hostile, which again fit nicely with a clash of civilization framework (Peterson 2007). Danish politicians and the news media monitored the "annoying difference" of Muslim and non-Westerners for signs that could be interpreted as lack of integration and loyalty to national values (Hervik 2011), waiting for new opportunity to regulate the public as well as private lives of certain minority citizens in an attempt to combat "incompatible" values.

As the violent reactions worldwide continued to be given wide media exposure, the government made several initiatives to handle the exploding anti-Danish and anti-Western reactions around the world. One of the initiatives taken to soften the cartoon crisis was to send

a Christian delegation to Egypt. The delegation's aim was to contact Christian and Muslim leaders in Egypt in order to promote dialogue and to talk down the growing discontent with the cavalier Danish and Western attitudes towards the Muslim world. Egyptians had been able to follow the cartoon story almost from its beginning with Al Jazeera coverage in early October 2005 and through the Egyptian newspaper Al-Fagr's analysis of six cartoons on 17 October. Egypt had also become officially involved at that time, when the Egyptian ambassador to Denmark, Mona Omar Attia, co-signed a letter calling for a meeting with the Danish prime minister on 11 October.

This raises several inter-related questions. How can we explain this apparent contradiction between the government's insistence on non-dialogue with cultural minorities within Denmark while simultaneously pursuing dialogue initiatives abroad to prevent further conflict? The introduction of dialogue as a tool of conflict management raises further questions such as what conflict, if any, was the dialogue initiative meant to prevent? Furthermore, who were the primary actors? The "West" and "Islam"? "Denmark" and the "Middle East"? The current Danish government and Muslim leaders? Supporters of non-dialogue and Muslim leaders of non-democratic countries?

### **Mocking and the refusal of dialogue**

When Prime Minister Rasmussen, backed by politicians of the right and left, on 22 October 2005 denied ten Muslim and one Christian ambassador a meeting to talk about the Danish public debate on Muslims, he argued that he could not interfere in the editorial process of the *Jyllands-Posten*: "Freedom of expression has a wide scope and the Danish government has no means of influencing the press" (Larsen and Seidenfaden, 2006:329). Eight days later he added the necessity of provocation to his denial of dialogue.

What is fundamental in this case is that enlightened and free societies make it further than un-enlightened non-free societies, exactly because some dare to provoke and criticize authorities, either political or religious authorities [...] I will never accept that respect for people's religious affiliations will lead to restrictions on the press and its opportunity to be critical, humorous or satirical (Svane and Maressa 2005).

While it is certainly true that the prime minister did not have a legal right to intervene in the editorial process, he could have publicly (as an enactment of free speech) dissociated himself from the publication, from the content of the cartoons, from Rose's explanatory text, from *Jyllands-Posten's* editorial of the same day, and from the general

association of Islam with terrorism. Rasmussen did none of those. Instead, he used his interview to endorse *Jyllands-Posten's* position and the act of publishing the cartoons (Berg and Hervik, 2007; Hervik, 2008). Rasmussen's position reflected a dominant axiom of Danish politics, i.e., that politicians should take an uncompromising stance towards Islam, portraying it as the most dangerous religion (Hervik 2008), precisely as *Jyllands-Posten* had done with the publication of the cartoons.

Seventeen Danish newspapers re-published one or several of the original cartoons on 17 February 2008. The re-publication was explained as a statement connected to the Danish Security and Intelligence Service's arrest of three North-African men for plotting the murder of cartoonist Kurt Westergaard. This statement was either part of the news coverage of the disclosure of a murder plot, or as a statement against journalists not being able to express themselves freely.

### **Origins of Incompatibility**

Surveys have shown that enemy images may appear in countries where the enemy is not really present. According to David Smith, anti-Jewish feeling is largely detached from the presence of Jews within the country. Slovakia, Romania, and Poland, for instance, show a high degree of anti-Semitism even though these countries are virtually without any Jews (Smith 1996). Or, to put it differently, representing the Jews as a demonic enemy is a social construction that comes from a different origin than the actual physical presence of Jews. Jews are perhaps the chosen enemy, chosen projectively as "evil personified", which means they embody the anti-Semites' inner demons (ibid.). Complex historical trajectories and the explicit role of the news media and its intimate relationship to political power come to mind. However, rather than going into these (see Hervik 2011) I wish to emphasize that these results show clearly the socially constructed nature of anti-Semitism (see also Lentin 2008), which means that we need to look also at the social constructors of anti-Semitism. What does this possibly teach us about the origin of incompatibility? Do the assumed incompatibility and the enemy image of Muslims come from a factual reality, such as something Muslims say or do? Smith went on to ask:

Are these Jews pure phantasmagorical constructions? Or are they, perhaps, distorted but still recognizable reflections of real Jews? [...] If anti-Semitism is partly a reaction to the conduct or character of living Jews, then Jews may be able to reform anti-Semites by self-transformation (1996: 205).



Although Smith found that Jews one hundred years ago would discuss this among themselves, the historical answer was clear when World War II brought the Holocaust. Nothing the Jews did, or failed to do, made any difference—and this answer holds a more general truth about enemy images (ibid.).

Likewise, we can ask: “Do the enemy image of Islam and Muslims and the alleged incompatibility with Danish cultural values have anything to do with things Muslims do or say, in Denmark or more broadly?” Obviously, anti-Islamic rhetoric directed against Muslims in general may be inspired by terrorist acts done by people in the name of Islam, but to take a handful of terrorists as the metonymic representation of 1.25 billion dangerous people is absurd. This is nevertheless often seen in the media and in political discourse. Likewise, acts of terrorism done by Christians or Marxists do not similarly lead the media to put forth enemy images of Christianity and communism.

The enemy image of Muslims in Denmark is older than the Muhammad cartoon event. In the Danish debate even prior to 9/11 the Danish People’s Party declared that Islamic and Danish Christian ways of thinking were incompatible. So did the political commentator for *Jyllands-Posten*, Ralf Pittelkow, who argued that Islam in its present form is irreconcilable with the West. Author and journalist Helle Brix argued that Islamists—by which she means all Muslim believers—should be fought at any price. Minister for Welfare Karen Jespersen also claims that Islam cannot exist side-by-side with Danish culture. In these four cases Danish values and Islam are presented as incompatible. (Hervik 2011:233). As mentioned earlier, negative mediatized image can be seen in how the terms “Islam” and “Muslim” are represented along with violence, terrorism, and political activism. Håkan Hvitfelt found in his study that this is the case in 85 percent of the news media articles in the early to mid-1990s (Hvitfelt 1998). The association of Muslim/Islam with violence also occurred in the focus groups I dealt with earlier (see also Hervik 2011).

We therefore need to look at the enemy image from the perspective of the producers of negatively described out-group more than we have done previously. Action towards Muslims is already taking place before they are encountered in person, or vicariously in the news media, as it embeds a performativity of politics that is not constituted by what the Muslim is actually doing. Maybe Smith is right when he argues that the enemy image of Jews is better understood as “a figment of social imaginations that supposedly sees the enemy as evil personified” (1996). We can certainly rewrite Smith’s use of Rosenberg by saying that a researcher looking for an objective basis for islamophobia in

the traits of the Muslims is like a police officer, who solves the crime by arresting the corpse.<sup>38</sup> In other words, if you want to understand anti-Semites, you should analyze the anti-Semites, not the Jews (Smith 1996). We need to look at the inner demons of this group and find the source of their supporters and their continuous production of antagonistic relationships (ibid.). Elsewhere I have shown how the domestic opponents figured as “traitors” and “cowards” who were accused of not standing up for freedom of speech when Denmark needed it, and who pursued a lax immigrant policy, allowing a “stream” of migrants to flow into Denmark (Boe and Hervik 2008). This chapter argues that the zero-tolerance strategy towards Muslims tells us more about its producers and sponsors than about the actual relationship between the categories “West” and “Islam”. I will analyze the transnational, cross-Atlantic network of anti-Islamism, which makes us able to better understand the idea of cultural incompatibility.

In the Danish media coverage of the cartoon crisis—particularly in the frame “Freedom of speech as a Danish freedom” (see chapter two), 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. As I pointed out earlier, about 80 percent of the Danish voters see the relationship between native Danish and Muslims as incompatible (Hervik 2004). This enemy is needed for the construction of Danish national identity, a project that has been emerging in Denmark since the mid-1990s. In this period a number of studies have demonstrated a rigid dichotomization between the morally superior Danes (with free speech, for instance) and “Others”, 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 30 September 2005. I showed that this was also present in the editorials throughout the summer of 2001 (Chapter one and Hervik 2011). Within this dichotomization it has become legitimate to treat newly arriving immigrants as different from native Danes (Holm 2007; Hvenegaard-Lassen 2002).

Both Carl Schmitt and Leo Strauss have stressed, liberal democracies are weak because they rest on the willingness to compromise. In the “Freedom of speech as a Danish freedom” frame including the Danish prime minister’s rejection of a meeting with the eleven ambassadors of Muslim countries, compromising was not a possibility; zero tolerance was the only solution. Therefore one can argue that to refuse to meet with the ambassadors is not a blunder from a neoconservative perspective, but part of a fight to beat the opponent. An apology (or

dialogue) is also not an option. When the prime minister brought an apology in an interview on 30 January 2006 on Arabic television, most Danish commentators immediately interpreted it as a pseudo-apology.

The prime minister did not explicitly respond to the ambassadors' "request for an urgent meeting", but explained that "acts or expressions of a blasphemous or discriminatory nature" could be brought to court. At the same time, he wrote about dialogue of a different order:

I share your view that dialogue between cultures and religions needs to be based on mutual respect and understanding. There is indeed room for increasing mutual understanding between different cultures and religions. In this regard, I have personally taken the initiative to enter into a dialogue with representations from the Muslims communities in Denmark.

Furthermore, I would like to see the dialogue between Denmark and the Muslim world strengthened. Indeed, one of the principal objectives of the initiative 'Partnership for Progress and Reform', launched by the Danish Government in 2003, is to stimulate the dialogue between Denmark, the EU and countries in North Africa and the Middle East (Rasmussen in Larsen and Seidenfaden 2007: 329).

This raises the issue of what goes into dialogue at the various levels. Is dialogue an opportunity for a discussion, where one can convince the opponent with rational arguments? Or, is dialogue the winner's way of consoling the loser?

### **Vicarious Dialogue in Egypt**

In early February 2006 the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Per Stig Møller asked the Danish Mission Council for advice on what initiatives could be taken to lessen tensions in the Arab and Muslim world. The Council was already receiving state funds for projects relating to the collaboration between Christian-Muslim dialogue groups in Egypt and in Denmark. To meet the request the Mission Council asked its collaborator in Cairo, CEOSS (Coptic Evangelical Organization for Social Services), for suggestions about what the Council could do to contribute to a diminishing of violence in the Middle East. Within a few days the Secretariat granted funds from the Partnership for Progress and Reform (*Det arabiske initiativ*)<sup>39</sup> to send a high-level Protestant Church delegation to Egypt. From 16 to 19 February, six Christian leaders (male) traveled to Egypt and met with Christian (Coptic) and Muslim leaders, and politicians. Their task was to clarify the situation in Denmark and continue the already existing dialogue meetings with groups in Egypt. According to the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs:

The main objective of the Partnership is to establish the basis for a strengthened dialogue with countries in the wider Middle East region—from Morocco in the west to Iran in the east. The dialogue should be based on common values that have formed our relations through more than two millennia. After the enlargement of the European Union, the role of the Mediterranean and the Middle East is in focus as regions to which Europe should build closer relations. (2003)

The Partnership illustrates a connection between combating terror, development aid and national security that has emerged in Denmark since the late 1990s. The logic is that through the promotion of dialogue and democracy terrorist recruitment of poor and relatively deprived people will diminish.

The Government will use these funds in a targeted way to counteract the threats caused by the increasing gap between particularly the Western world and the Arab world, including the launch of special activities to combat the underlying causes of terrorism and for activities to promote modernization and democratization in the Arab countries. (Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2003)

CEOSS, meanwhile, had been in defensive and apologetic mode since the previous October (2005). Coptic leaders had allowed Coptic students to give Muslim students a CD as a Ramadan gift. The CD contain a theatre play recorded two years earlier called “I was blind but now I see” which was meant as a statement against religious extremism and radicalism. In the play a Coptic student was lured by money into converting to Islam. Once converted the local sheikh urged him to kill priests and burn churches. Eventually the student abandoned Islam and returned to Christianity. Enraged Islamists then sought to kill him, but a faithful Muslim friend saved him. A journalist from the tabloid newspaper *Al-Midan* got hold of the CD and wrote a story about it that was published on 14 October 2005. Riots quickly broke out in Alexandria and caused several casualties as well as damage to cars, church property, Coptic businesses, windows and furniture (Croucher 2005). Teaming up with the Danish Christians was thus also a chance for CEOSS to patch up its image and divert attention from the unfortunate gift-giving incident.

The delegation did not represent the Danish government or *Jyllands-Posten*, but did work out a message to be delivered at all meetings in Egypt that included *Jyllands-Posten*'s apology translated into Arabic and a statement by the prime minister saying “that he wouldn't express himself in such a way that it may offend other

people's religious feelings". The message included a set of factual statements about Danish democracy. According to the Council's report, two statements were particularly important: first, that the religious delegation traveled without a political mandate or message from the Danish government, and second, that Christian Danes also felt offended by the cartoons (Danish Mission Council 2006).

The delegation's visit was closely followed by the Danish, Egyptian, and international press, but was quickly taken off the agenda once the delegation had left Egypt.

### **Egyptian media coverage**

In CEOSS's sample of media coverage, at least nine Egyptian dailies covered the visit (*Al Abram*, *Al Akhbar*, *El Gamhoria*, *Al Mesaa*, *Egypt Revival*, *Egyptian Today*, *Rosa-Al-Youseef*, *Arabian*, and *El Mosawar*). Five Egyptian television stations, numerous Egyptian news Web sites, and many Middle Eastern newspapers also published substantial coverage.

Headlines of the visit were fairly uniform: "Danish church delegates support Muslims", "Copenhagen's bishop in Egypt to apologize for the insulting drawings of Islam", "Danish Christian delegates in Cairo decrease the impact of the cartoon crisis", "Danish church delegates apologize today", "Denmark's church delegates discuss with Al-Azhar Sheikh (Tantawi) about calming down Islamic emotions", "Copenhagen doesn't suffer from Islamophobia", "Danish Christian delegates condemn the drawings", and "Danish priests apologized to Al-Azhar Sheikh". The uniformity of the headline indicates that the message of the delegation was clear and understood by the Egyptian media.

The International Committee for the Support of the Final Prophet (ICSFP) headlined its story "Danish Vice-President of the Parliament [Niels Helweg Petersen] assures that Muslims are being exposed to attacks":

In Egypt the Christian Danish delegates try to abate the impact that is happening in the Islamic street because of the insulting of the prophet (pbuh) the delegation included a number of the religious leaders led by the Bishop of Copenhagen, Karsten Nissen. He said 'this visit is taken place because we want as Christians to express that we feel humiliated about what happened, and we identify with the Islamic world because of the drawings. That is why we came to show our respect to the Muslims who wish to continue a dialogue with us'. The bishop made it clear that this visit is not formal, and it does NOT represent the Danish government or the newspapers that insulted the Muslims. He stressed that this visit is organized through cooperation

between the Churches of Denmark and the Egyptian embassy in Copenhagen. ([Why Muhammad.com](http://WhyMuhammad.com) 2006; emphasis original).

For ICSFP it is clear that the Danish Christian delegation's apology is not the same as that of the Danish government. Nissen's core message, shown in the above quote, was repeated by most newspapers: Danish Christians also feel humiliated; they show respect to Muslims; they offer an apology; and they disassociate themselves from the drawings.

Thus, *Al Mesaa*'s headline read "Copenhagen bishop: We respect the Islamic religion". The news article goes on to say: "We refuse the insult against the prophet. We felt humiliated by the insulting drawings [...] and demonstrated against them in our country" (*Al-Mesaa* 17 February 2006).

*Almasry Alyom* added:

The protestant Bishop Karsten Nissen said that the aim of the visit is to emphasize that the Danish people does not hate Muslims and that Christians want to live in peace with Muslims in their country and the rest of the world. Moreover, the two religious groups can live together and prove that the clash of civilization theory does not exist between the Islamic and the Christian world (*Almasry Alyom* 18 February 2006).

Under the headline "Dialogue between Al-Azhar sheikh and Danish priests", BBC's Arabic-language website wrote:

Danish Bishop: "it is impossible for Prime Minister Anders Fogh Rasmussen to apologize for what was published by *Jyllands-Posten*". [...] "I clarified for Tantawi [Al-Azhar sheikh] that the newspaper apologized for the drawings but our Prime Minister cannot apologize for something he did not do, because he is not the editor of the newspaper" (BBC Arabic Website 2006)

Several news media outlets reflected on the apology issue. *Nahthat Masr* noted that the Danish church delegates announced their innocence of involvement in the drawings, but nevertheless offered an official apology in Cairo and described the drawings as a childish behavior. They also explained that freedom of speech does not mean publishing whatever you want. Rather, they emphasized that freedom of speech must be exerted in a responsible manner and not used as ignorantly and foolishly as it was by *Jyllands-Posten* (*Nahthat Masr* 18 February 2006).

*Roz Al-Youssef* noted that various political representatives apologized for the insults of the prophet. An article on 15 February 2006 under the title: "Delegation from Danish churches [visits Cairo] to

show support for Muslims. Norwegian government apologizes for the insulting of the prophet” went on:

The Norwegian government apologized again for the republishing of the insulting drawings of the prophet by the *Magazinet* newspaper [on 10 January 2006]. Minister of Foreign Affairs, Jonas Gahr Store emphasized that his government denounces any act that deliberately segregates people or hurts anyone [...] European Union Representative Javier Solana apologized for the insult to the prophet (pbuh) and expressed the EU’s resentment of the caricatures. He called for a speedy end to the crisis [...] And on the other hand a delegation representing the Danish churches headed by Copenhagen’s bishop Karsten Nissen will arrive in Cairo tomorrow on a special visit to meet Alazhar Sheikh, Minister of Alawqaf<sup>40</sup> and Egypt’s highest mufti, in order to declare the Danish churches’ support to the Muslim crowds in denouncing the caricature drawings that hurt their [Muslim] feelings (*Roz Al-Youssef* 15 February 2006).

The European Union apologized for the drawings and so did the Norwegian government, while the Danish government maintained its line of no dialogue, no apology.

*Masr Alarabiya* also reported on Solana’s apology, on the eve of the delegation’s visit in an article headlined: “After Solana’s Apology to Al-Azhar sheikh, a delegation from the Danish churches visits Cairo:”

Javier Solana, High Representative for the Common Foreign and Security Policy and Secretary-General of the Council of the European Union, apologized to Al-Azhar sheikh doctor Muhammad Sayed Tantawi for the insults to the prophet Muhammad (pbuh) published by a Danish newspaper. Tantawi assured Solana that the Islamic centers in Britain, Austria, Germany and the USA do not suffer from a clash of civilizations. Tantawi also insisted that on the dialogue of civilizations and the dialogue of religions, but said that the problem is that there are those [non-Muslims] who understand the goodness of Islam but use this insight to insult Islam in the name of freedom of speech (*Masr Alarabiya* 15 February 2006).

The *Masr Alarabiya* article describes (but doesn’t analyze) the apology of Javier Solana and thereby alludes to the non-apologizing Danish prime minister. The questions that seem to appear for the Egyptian media and its readers are: Can the Danish Christian delegates apologize for something they did not do? And if Javier Solana found it appropriate to apologize, then why doesn’t the Danish Prime Minister do the same, since he obviously know the drawings insulted many Muslims and Christians?

An article *Alahram's* "Islamic-Christian agreement on criminalization of insults to sanctities" reports agreement between Tantawi and the Danish delegates about promoting international law to provide some legal protection of religion, the prophets, and sacred religious places.

Al-Azhar sheikh, the great imam doctor Mohammed Sayed Tantawi, called on international institutions to quickly issue a law that criminalizes insults against religion, sanctities, and prophets, and to define punishments for countries that violate this law [...] pointing out that the problem between Denmark and the Islamic world will not be solved without issuing such a law [...] Tantawi said that they agreed that expressing Islamic anger through violent acts such as burning and destroying buildings are unacceptable. The delegates emphasized to Tantawi that the Danish law criminalizes insulting sanctums and that the case of the newspaper that published the caricature drawings is being tried in the Danish legal system (*Alahram* 19 February 2006).<sup>41</sup>

After the delegation had returned to Denmark, *Alakhbar* newspaper summarized the results of the delegation's visit to Egypt. A visit that also included talks with Head of the Presidential Office for Political Affairs, Osama Albaz. The visit included three important points:

- 1) The delegates came to apologize for the harm caused to the Muslims by a small number of Danish people.
- 2) There is a hidden agenda [*Al-Yad Al-Khafiya*—lit. "the invisible hand;" <sup>42</sup> Arabic speakers would recognize this as an indirect evocation of a Western, American and Zionists conspiracy against the Arabic world behind this issue, set up by some person or group who wants to cause trouble to the relationship between the Danish people and the Muslim world.
- 3) Dialogue, and the continuation of the dialogue, is the only way to overcome the dilemma and its repercussions (*Alakhbar* 23 February 2006).

All of the nine newspapers we looked at emphasized that the Christian delegation's visit was a wish for dialogue with the Muslim Al-Azhar scholars. The delegates are described as respectful and praised for being sympathetic with the humiliation of Muslims and their feelings triggered by the cartoons.

Most of the newspapers emphasize the importance of differentiating the Danish government from the Danish Christian delegation;



that the priests of Denmark felt humiliated because of the cartoons; and that the priests of Denmark apologized to the Al-Azhar sheikh. The Christian delegation's apology and wish to continue a dialogue is recognized and accepted by the Muslim scholars as also coming from some of the Danish people, which confirms the political rather than national nature of the way the cartoon crisis was perceived in Egypt. The Danish government and *Jyllands-Posten*, rather than the Danish people as such, are accused of being disrespectful of the person of the prophet Muhammad. This news media coverage reveals the split in Danish reactions to the cartoon issue in terms of whether dialogue should be pursued. One reaction was to recognize the offending nature of the cartoons, actively pursue a genuine dialogue, and offer an apology. The other response was to reject the offending nature of the cartoons; to refuse dialogue; and to insist on not apologizing.

### **Staged Dialogue**

Throughout the Egyptian news coverage *al-hiwar*, "dialogue", is a concept used to describe the objective of the visiting Christian delegation. "Dialogue" is sometimes mistakenly used in English for the Arabic *niqash*. *Niqash* refers more to a discussion and differs from *hiwar*-dialogue in the way that each concept carries different assumptions about the interlocutor. The concept of dialogue in the Arabic language *hiwar* derives from the root verb *hawara*, which means the rewinding of words, i.e., reviewing the logic and the expression used in addressing someone. *Hiwar-dialogue* is linked to the concept of "consultation" *mushawara*, which stresses that for dialogue to take place there must be acceptance of consultation about some issue (Alzubaidy 1969:108).

"Dialogue" in the Arabic implies that people involved shall present points of view or evidence to support of their opinion, unconstrained, respectfully, and in complete freedom, so that the dialogue partners can reach to a solution to a specific problem or make a subject matter clearer through the exchanges of questions and answers. In this manner *hiwar*/dialogue is a shared consultation.

According to the Arabic dictionary authored by Taj Al-Roos, the art of dialogue has rules and regularities that must be followed in order to keep dialogue from turning doubtful or indisputable. All parties involved in the dialogue must know the subject of the dialogue; admit being faulty in the case if proved being incorrect; use polite words and act politely; respect the faith/belief of the other and his/her principles; aiming to reach the truth and achieve rightful justice; restrain themselves from becoming angry; be moderate until the

dialogue is finished; have the ability/freedom to express their opinions; be flexible and must avoid stiffening; listen to all the parties involved in the dialogue; and one must stop him/herself from controversy; and understand and listen to the speaker in order to become understanding and forgiving (Alzubaidy 1969).

Philosopher Mikhail Bakhtin has argued similarly with regard to the attributes of dialogue. He argued: “When dialogue ends, everything ends [...] A single voice ends nothing and resolves nothing. Two voices is the minimum for life, the minimum for existence”. He wrote this in 1929 (Emerson 1984: 363). Bakhtin argued that absolute truth must be rejected, since it speaks in a single voice. No statement or position can ideally exist without entering into dialogue. Accordingly, no participant in a dialogue has a privileged position. Nor can one arrive at a solution before engaging in a dialogue. Bakhtin’s argument implicitly embraces the idea of recognition of the interlocutors. The struggle for recognition is developed further by Alex Honneth (1996),<sup>43</sup> who argues that lack of recognition or misrecognition at various levels will create social pathologies and cause social conflicts. (See also Fraser and Honneth, 2003, Taylor, 1994).

Mutual recognition is inherent also in the concept of dialogue in conflict prevention, management and transformation. Thus, the Swedish research organization Folke Bernadotte Academy (2007) - which works to enhance the quality of international crisis and conflict prevention by, for instance, improving the skills of the facilitator in sustaining a constructive dialogue process - defined dialogue as “voluntary processes where multiple stakeholders to a conflict aim at reaching a mutually satisfactory agreement with the assistance of an outsider facilitator or mediator”. The idea being that the dialogue will alter the shared awareness, so that it reaches a higher level of understanding, where conflicts can be prevented and resolved.

In a true dialogue relation there must be mutual recognition of the interlocutors; no interlocutor can have a privileged position, and the outcome of the dialogue cannot be given beforehand. Dialogue requires presence, where dialogue partners can sit face-to-face explaining what is at stake on their side (Vindeløv in Mandagmorgen 27 February 2006: 26). Even if there can be no privileged position, we enter into dialogue from a certain position and with the idea of using dialogue for a certain purpose. Dialogue will never take place in a power-free space. Knowledge of the specific circumstances, preconditions, and perspectives are necessary (Andersen, Hansen, and Sinclair 2006).<sup>44</sup>

Andersen, Hansen, and Sinclair have analyzed the Danish government’s initiative in the Middle East and North Africa,

“Partnership for Progress and Reform” (Det arabiske initiativ), the program used to fund the Christian delegation to Egypt in February 2006. They criticize the Danish government for not establishing a specific foundation for the dialogue and instead basing the Partnership’s dialogue talk on an abstract identification of differences to be bridged. Despite its rhetorical wish to meet locally expressed needs in the Middle East, the Partnership program’s agenda is distinctly Danish. “The cartoon case is even an example showing that Denmark in reality did not want the dialogue, since the opponent’s points of view could not be recognized, and since entering into dialogue was perceived as giving in on one’s own values” (2006). But, as Vibeke Vindeløv has pointed out, this shows the Danish prime minister has not understood the meaning of dialogue. Entering into dialogue does not mean giving up the democratic ideals refined over hundreds of years. It is possible to defend democratic ideals while acknowledging that the cartoons offend Muslims and others, and to understand that denying dialogue is a lack of recognition which fuels outrage and dramatic reactions (Vindeløv in Mandagmorgen, 27 February 2006). Andersen, Hansen and Sinclair also argue that by failing to recognize any differing views on free speech, the Danish government may have fuelled the escalation of the cartoon crisis.

## **Conclusion**

We can now turn back to the question posed in the beginning: Is there a contradiction between the negative dialogue employed toward the ambassadors and offended Muslims in Denmark, and the staging of dialogue in Egypt?

Many members of ethnic minorities feel unrecognized in Denmark today. They experience discrimination, marginalization, and exclusion. Unable to obtain a true dialogue with the Danish government about the growing anti-Islamism in Denmark, including the publication of the cartoons, cultural editor Rose’s explanatory article, and *Jyllands-Posten*’s editorial of 30 September 2005, Muslim organizations and ambassadors turned to their government for consultations. The lack of recognition in Denmark then eventually led to violent reactions in most corners of the world as radical Danish imams played with fire that got out of hand.

The dramatic escalation of the reactions forced the Danish government and the EU to react. In one of several responses the Danish government sponsored a Christian delegation to go to the Middle East to initiate a dialogue, which it hoped could help smother the violence. That the government did not wish to enter a true dialogue on its own

is supported by the unclear picture of which parts of which conflict the dialogue was supposed to help resolve. Government politicians made frequent references to the “clash of civilizations” narrative, which suggests they had in mind abstract and essentialized notions of “Islam” vs. “West” – rather like George Lakoff reminding us of what to think of when he says: “Don’t think of an elephant”. For these politicians, true dialogue with Muslims is not on the agenda, at least while the Danish government maintains the policy of keeping Muslims out of Denmark. That the government does not seriously want dialogue is supported by Andersen, Hansen, and Sinclair’s argument that “the Partnership Program for Reform and Progress” (the body that funded the Christian delegation to Egypt) is too much of a “one position, one truth” approach, where the political idea is to diminish the chances of terrorist recruitment among the deprived poor by supporting various dialogue projects in the Middle East and Northern Africa. Dialogue seems to end up falling back on the neoconservative premise that “our” democratic values are superior to “theirs” and Huntington’s view of the “clash” of civilization is chosen rather than “dialogue” of civilizations (Andersen et al. 2006:5).

In the Middle Eastern news media, politicians and Muslims leaders who all have their own perspectives, interests, and points of view clearly differentiate between the Church delegation and the Danish government. The delegation identified with the humiliation felt by religious brothers and recognize the benefits of continuous true dialogue between Christians and Muslims. The inter-faith dialogue does not take place between Christian and Muslim representatives simply talking about clashes between Christians and Muslims, although that often leads to joint action. Rather, the two groups talk—based on the premise of being much more alike than different—about shared concerns such as radicalized vs. peacefully oriented believers, ignorance of the holy books, and simplistic media coverage of religious issues. The Danish government, on the other hand, does not live up to the criteria of *hiwar*/dialogue, i.e., admitting to having been at fault in not recognizing the offending nature of the cartoons and for refusing to talk to the eleven ambassadors in October 2005.

By failing to distance itself from (and in fact endorsing) *Jyllands-Posten*’s project, the government accepts the popular association of Islam with terrorism, as seen in Kurt Westergaard’s bomb-and-creed-in-the-turban cartoon, which makes dialogue virtually impossible in any sense of the term. Instead, the government is forced to rely on someone else to do the dialogue for them.

The Danish government stand fairly firm on the negative dialogue position, although it vicariously tries to calm down tensions in Egypt and the Middle East by sending a group of dialogue-oriented Christian delegates. In accordance with the neoconservative philosophy it maintained the negative dialogue as a political strategy.

In the beginning I also argued that the social constructors of the idea of incompatibility and negative dialogue should be examined. Claims about the incompatibility of “Danish” and “Muslim” societies and ways of living did not start with the Danish newspaper *Jyllands-Posten*’s publication of the cartoons. But the debate following from it lead only to more entrenched and uncompromising positions that used other incompatible bipolar division of absolutes such as “democracy” and “enemies of democracy”, “free speech” and “enemies of free speech”. In Denmark politicians continue to vie for stricter zero-tolerance measures, such as banning the headscarf from more and more places (although so far not from sidewalks), to “solve” social problems. In popular consciousness Muslim ways of living are increasingly seen as provocative and creating fissures in Danish society and therefore often meet with confrontation.

Yet the ideas that “there can be no moral equivalency”, that “our system is morally superior”, and that “the public sphere is not for dialogue but an area for serious battling and confrontation” do not come from Samuel Huntington’s formulation of the “clash of civilizations” scheme itself and are not directed at the relationship between the “West” and “Islam” as cultural or civilizational entities. These three ideas are general principles applied to any political relationship; the “West” and “Islam” clash being one instance of application. The foundation of Samuel Huntington’s idea of clashing identity values resembled Carl Schmitt’s idea that that we don’t know who we are, until we know our enemies, and once we know them, we need to overcome them. The idea of treating your political opponent as a foe or friend comes from Schmitt (and is practiced by Strauss) in the furious critique of the overly democratic and weak Weimar Republic, which so strongly shaped both men’s academic approach to the concept of the political. Schmitt, to the best of my knowledge, did not deal with the incompatibility of the “West” with “Islam”. Huntington, and many others with him, have applied it, and enhanced this dichotomization to the relationship between the “West”, “Islam”, “China” and other civilizations. But the idea of incompatibility, treating opponents as friends, or foes, is not restricted to clashes of civilizations, but comes out in strong criticism of multiculturalists, liberals, relativists, cosmopolitans and so, who are often seen as cowards and traitors (Boe and

Hervik 2008). The incompatibility of values narrative and the practice of negative dialogue is an ideology not constrained to the clash of civilization narrative, but are also in play within religious, cultural, social and other social spheres.

## EPILOGUE

In the years following the cartoon crisis events appeared with uncompromising belief in free speech with little attention to the social responsibility of using of free speech, such as using the right to insult others may not be the most favorable means to create a positive, relationship with other citizens. On 20 May 2010 the first Draw Muhammad Day took place as an initiative of a Seattle cartoonist, Molly Norris. It followed threats against two cartoonists who depicted Muhammad negatively in an episode of the American animated series South Park. The original idea was to hold a competition to draw Muhammad, which could generate so many drawings that from of speech could be successfully defended and the threats watered out. This Draw Muhammad activism has resulted in thousands of insulting cartoons on the net, originally aimed at a few radical Muslims, who sent death threats, but also offending millions of peaceful minded Muslim believers. Thus, in spite of the well-intended initiative this activism leads to further polarization and nourishing Muslim sentiments of not being respected by Westerners.

In light of the belief that the Muhammad cartoon story is a story about free speech and free speech must be defended regardless without concerns, it is interesting to realize that communication experts and others advice against using any form of association with the original Muhammad cartoon story. This is the conclusion that came out particularly clear in May of 2010 – four and a half years of the original publication of the 12 cartoons - when Finland's largest newspaper, Helsingin Sanomat, published a controversial Fingerpori cartoon.

The Fingerpori cartoon of a Nazi soldier happily finding a package of soap labeled “free-range Jews” (Vapaan Juutalaisen Saippua) created much concern in Finland. The shocking scene in the cartoon was set in Berlin 1943 but spoke to a contemporary public debate about choosing eggs from free-ranging or battery hens. It was withdrawn from the Helsingin Sanomat website and met with an apology by popular cartoonist Pertti Jarla; later a cartoonist about the original cartoon was published; and yet most interestingly the Editor-in-Chief, Reeta Meriläinen, responded to an invitation by well known and respected Finnish blog, Instant Kaamos.

There was something odd about Jarla's cartoon. If we follow the logic of such a cartoon, we would strongly expect that an anti-Semitic Nazi soldier would choose "a Jew-free soap", but he "chooses" the ethically correct product based on "free-ranging Jews". Like chickens, Jews (in soap) must have had a good life to make the product attractive. Obviously, the chicken – Jew analogy puts readers at awe, but at the same time, we could ask, if the scene itself overshadows the irony and whether one should take the cartoon at face value? The cartoon may be distasteful and testing the limits, but the irony is undisputable.

We learned from research on the Danish Muhammad cartoon crisis that actual publication of the 12 infamous cartoons was less controversial and confrontational than the stories about the cartoons and stories about stories about the cartoons (Hervik 2011, Hervik and Berg 2007). Had the Danish prime minister met in October 2005 with ambassadors who were concerned with the general development in the Danish news media and politics in Denmark instead of insisting on a zero-tolerance strategy and a political spin transformation to maintain that the story was all about free speech, two politicizing Muslim delegations would not have traveled to the Middle East to fertilize the global and at time violent response to the cartoons, to the largest Danish newspaper, *Morgenavisen Jyllands-Posten* and the government. Stories about the cartoons are indeed important.

There were at least three stories in play in the Fingerpori cartoon case of 3 May 2010. What immediately struck as unusual was that the Editor-in-Chief of Finland's largest newspaper decided to respond to a blogger. Helsinkin Sanomat editors and communications experts knew they should be careful about commenting on blogs, which are by definition subjective, risky business, albeit to various degrees. The risk of adding insult to members of the target group is large. When leading journalists and politicians do communicate on blogs of others, there is a good chance that something crucial is at stake. Just prior to the Fingerpori incident, the Facebook organization closed the Facebook group "Draw Muhammad Day". Not that initiators couldn't bypass the removal or that it was opened again soon, but they shut it down in order to communicate a solid statement that served to disassociate itself from being associated with the negative image following the Danish Muhammad cartoons. Regardless of one's interpretation, any association with such cartoons is handled as a case of negative publicity. Once you, in any way, are associated with the Muhammad cartoons as racist and violent global reactions by offended and angry people of Christian, Muslim, Buddhist, Hindi and other backgrounds, it is difficult to dismantle this powerful negative image. Accordingly,



it is necessary to act pro-actively to improve one's public relations image, which is precisely what the *Helsingin Sanomat's* Editor-in-Chief attempted to do in her response to a blogger. When faced with the potential negative influence of the blog, the newspaper found itself in a lose-lose situation; either *Helsingin Sanomat* apologizes and seeks to withdraw the mentioned cartoons. Thereby, the controversy surrounding the cartoon would ultimately be legitimized. Or, on the other hand, the Finnish newspaper may choose to label any critical interpretations as misunderstandings. This would potentially connote the acceptance of impending racism within their newspaper. Ultimately, she offered guarantees of the good moral basis and democratic nature of *Helsingin Sanomat* and distanced herself from the cartoonist, who was listed as being sole responsible for the cartoon. It should be added that even in Denmark, beneath the high-octane political verbal tone, communication experts, teachers, corporations and others seek to avoid being associated with the negative imaged resulting from the Muhammad cartoon crisis and its aftermath. Not so much for reasons of censorship but to avoid negative associations and having to wrestle with the stigmatizing image of being a discriminator, racist, Islamophobe, or anything in the vicinity of such.

A second story about the free-range Jew soap cartoon came from the blog, which *Helsingin Sanomat* was responding to. The blog, Instant Kaamos, wrote an inquiry and invitation to publish the answer on the blog, in which they framed the story as "Holocaust 'humour'" and generally associated it with the Holocaust: "ridiculing and insulting the victims of the Nazi Holocaust", "trivialize genocide" and accompanying it with a mild threat about the potential detrimental consequences for Finland's image in Europe. Like in the Danish case, this wording was characterized as aggressive and appealing to a moral panic that exceeded the original ironic cartoons. Did any Holocaust survivor or relatives express that they were offended, or is Instant Kaamos speaking on their behalf? There are plenty of cartoons dealing with the Holocaust and other atrocities around the world, as people in Israel, for instance, reminded us during the Muhammad cartoon discussions. The treatment of Jews in the last 100 years has taught us to be sensitive and careful about anti-Semitic popular and academic literature. When Instant Kaamos framed the issue so strongly as a Holocaust issue, where irony became trivializing, then *Helsingin Sanomat* *had* to respond and trivialize the Fingerpori cartoon as well as making sure everyone remembers *Helsingin Sanomat* as being a newspaper for democracy and human dignity.

However, the focal point of the cartoon is not really Berlin, Jews, or Nazis during WWII. There were previous instances of non-controversial Fingerpori uses of the Nazi metaphor that did not generate much response. Perhaps, the new cartoon was rather an issue about choosing ethically and politically correct eggs and other produce, onto which the cartoonist wished to add his satirical perspective by investing the issue with a perspective from the Nazi era that adds insult, mocking, and ridicule to people to whom such choices matters. In another blog the analogue was not so much Jews and chickens, but Nazis and “modern leftists (such as obesity warriors and greenies)

(Tongue Tied 2010). Such a comparison would not go unnoted in the Danish debate, which is noted for being very confrontational and aggressive. Did “modern left-wingers” complain about the cartoons? Who are speaking on their behalf? Or, rather, and, this is my third perspective, who did this blogger’s mocking of the left-wingers represent?

The argumentative strategy to evoke Nazism for the purpose of mocking left-wingers has been all over the debate on the Muhammad cartoons in Denmark. Left-wingers were seen as cowards, who did not stand up for free speech, and traitors, for failing to conduct a restrictive identity politics towards non-Western immigrants, especially Muslims in order to halt immigration (Boe and Hervik 2008). Whereas the first two perspectives mentioned in this short commentary did not make direct references to the Muhammad cartoon story, the third perspective did in the shape of radical right bloggers. Radical right Australian, John Ray’s Tongue Tied (referred to above), and the Tundra Tabloids are two such cases. Tundra Tabloids begins its story:

The Finnish capital’s newspaper, the Helsinki Sanomat, refused to print the dreaded Danish cartoons of Mohamed when the storm surrounding them first erupted, *regardless of the well documented reasons as to why they were published by the Jyllands-Posten in the first place*, but had no problem whatsoever publishing the above cartoon by Pertti Jarla in his “Fingerpori” comic strip” (original emphasis) (Tundra Tabloids 2010)

There were precisely no well-documented reasons to publish the Muhammad cartoons and they were according to cultural editor, Flemming Rose, and Editor-in-Chief, Carsten Juste, not showing evidence of self-censorship. Instead, the published cartoons, the accompanying text by Rose, and the editorial, all of 30 September 2005, make clear the intention was to ridicule and insult Muslims for being Muslims. Again such stories of the cartoons are important. Today, we know that a strong core group in a radical right network that encom-

passed North-American neo-conservatives and neo-conservatives in other European countries dominated the news media coverage and form a discourse of confrontation and insistence on seeing the issue as an issue of free speech between countries, who has free speech and those who don't (Hervik 2008, 2011). Part of this epistemic community is also Tundra Tabloids and to some extent the blog, Tongue Tied, which is quick to establish that left-wingers have allied themselves with Islamism against "Us". Moreover Tundra Tabloids brings interview with Lars Vilks, who produced and still produces his own cartoon controversy, and a link "Urgent, Help Geert Now" and additional links that can help Dutch radical right populist, Geert Wilders, who needs no introduction. The Danish neo-conservatives and their related sympathizers are organized in various ways, most clearly in the Free Speech Society and its tentacles of other websites and blogs. With money originating from *Jyllands-Posten* foundation among others, this society gave free speech prizes to cultural editor, Flemming Rose, cartoonist Kurt Westergaard, and to neo-Conservative, Daniel Pipes. Lars Vilks is also a friend of the society.

Comparing these three perspectives propel interesting questions for an elaborate study. The public relations-aspect builds on an intention of not being associated with the negative Muhammad cartoon story, while the third perspective follows these cartoons as an important and necessary anti-Muslim manifestation. The second perspective has the Muhammad cartoons as a backdrop in the wordings used and something that is on the public sensitivity agenda since the Muhammad cartoon story took place, but here the blog expands its application from the anti-Muslim and radical Muslim agenda to the Jewish and anti-Semitic.

At this time we should be reminded about Tariq Modood's argument that the reason Muslim minorities do not receive the same positive and sensitive treatment as the Jews in the Western news media: Muslims are lumped into a single monolithic category and representing oppressors, which makes it impossible to be sympathetic to Muslims as objects of racism (Modood 2006).

In light of these three perspectives, let us consider the treatment of political satire in the shape of cartoons. The Mohammed cartoons have directed an unintentional trend, which will influence the legacy of political cartoons for years to come. Representatives of the political radical right have perhaps gained too much by the publication of the Muhammad drawings. Examples such as the Finnish publications, certainly indicate that one either enters the path of controversial and potentially harmful satire or does not walk the path at all.

On the other hand, representatives of the left have won too much as well. By continuously nominating critical cartoons, the labeling of political correctness suffers from severe inflation and free speech will act as a counter-argument against those who are in fact passionate about this issue.

Regardless of ones ideological positioning, all drawings, cartoons, pictures, which portray religious, social, racial – perhaps even sexual – minorities, are clouded by the Muhammad cartoons.

## CHRONOLOGY OF MAIN EVENTS

- 2001 May The Mona Sheikh Story.
- 2005 June Islam critical author, Kåre Bluitgen, complains that he cannot find an illustrator for his new book on Islam.
- 2005 August News Agency Ritzau's Bureau, writes about Bluitgen's problems finding an illustrator.
- 2005 Sept. Jyllands-Posten initiates a project to test self-censorship among cartoonists in Denmark.
- 2005 Sept. Jyllands-Posten publishes the results (30 September).
- 2005 Oct. Organization of Islamic Conference (15 October) and 11 Ambassadors (12 October) send a letter to the Danish Prime Minister about anti-Islamic developments in Denmark.
- 2005 Oct. The prime minister sends a letter in response (22 October).
- 2005 Oct. The prime minister gives a big interview to Jyllands-Posten. 30 October
- 2005 Dec. Two groups of Muslim representatives travel to the Middle East to talk about the cartoons and the denial of dialogue.
- 2006 Jan. Norwegian Christian Magazinet publishes the cartoons (10 January).
- 2006 Jan. Prime Minister, Anders Fogh Rasmussen is interviewed on Al-Arabiya (30 January)
- 2006 Feb. Danish Christian delegation travels to Cairo to meet with Muslim leaders, politicians, and Muslim-Christian dialogue groups.
- 2006 March The Prime Minister gives a big interview to Belingske Tidende (26 March).
- 2008 Feb. Danish Police arrest three North African men for plotting a murder of cartoonist Kurt Westergaard. Seventeen Danish newspapers publish (or re-publish) one or more of the original cartoons in connection to these arrests.

## SUMMARY

The publication of the Muhammad cartoons did not hit Denmark out of the blue. In the summer of 2001 another anti-Islamic media event occurred with several of the same key writers of articles in *Jyllands-Posten* in the front seat. In ousting young Danish born Muslims with Pakistani background from political influence journalists used sources in the global arena to contest the young Muslims but without creating a “global” news story. Yet earlier, an unprecedented tabloid newspaper campaign filled the Danish media with a debate that was no less confrontational in content and form than the two later ones. The first chapter provides the socio-historical background leading up to the publication on 30 September 2005.

The second chapter situates the cartoons within *Jyllands-Posten*’s recent history of anti-Islamic representations, promoting an image of Islam that resonates well with the majority of the Danish population. As breaking news of global cartoon violence shifted the focus of attention from *Jyllands-Posten* to the Danish state, the government struggled for damage control after its unfortunate decision not to meet with 11 ambassadors of Muslim countries about the potential damaging effect of the cartoons in the Muslim world. By insisting that the “cartoon issue” is all about freedom of speech and blaming Danish imams for stirring up violent reactions, the government sought to change the focus from the confrontational and disrespectful cartoons to a discussion based on who has free speech and who does not. In this political spin, Denmark and *Jyllands-Posten* have done nothing wrong. Instead the problem was represented as being the reactions in the Muslim world. To those who had misunderstood the cartoon issue and become offended, the government and *Jyllands-Posten* apologized. The Danish government has attempted to understand and control the intended meanings in these terms, but has only been successful in the domestic setting, where the political spin resonates well with the large majority of the Danish voters. But in the global arena the spin is unsuccessful. In addition a counter discourse emerged already in 2005 and gained ground by revealing the neo-conservative connection and radical right vantage point of a powerful chunk of writers in *Jyllands-Posten*, *Berlingske Tidende* and the tabloid papers, who

have in common that they are anti-Islamic and use freedom of speech against Islam. Originally, the founding fathers of Danish democracy intended freedom of speech as means to protect vulnerable groups, like the Muslims in Denmark, against power holders such as the state, hegemonic groups, and the mass media.

In chapter three I discuss what a focus on identity, ethnicity and ethnic conflict can tell us about the cartoon conflict. Through a critical discussion of different theoretical approaches to identity (ethnic and religious in particular), I argue that identity issues must always be situated in their proper context, which includes the prevailing relations and power. Accordingly, ethnicity, for example, can never be an independent explanatory dimension. When these criteria are applied to the Danish cartoon conflict (in this chapter to the media coverage and consumer responses) it becomes clear that popular and mediatized representations of Muslims are social constructions of identity, which are different from how Muslims understand their identities.

Much global media coverage and most academic treatments of the Muhammad cartoon crisis ignore the role of the Danish government in their explanations of why the crisis turned global and violent. In October 2005 the Danish prime minister, backed by politicians of the right and left, denied 10 Muslim and 1 Christian ambassador representing 730 million citizens a meeting to talk about the Danish public debate on Muslims. The Prime Minister, Anders Fogh Rasmussen, refused to meet with the ambassadors and argued in what is considered a winning political spin that he could not interfere in the editorial process of the newspaper *Jyllands-Posten*, which published the 12 cartoons on 30 September 2006. Rasmussen's interpretation of the letter echoed *Jyllands-Posten's* insistence on a non-dialogue, no-compromise, and no-apology approach to their concerns. The political spin following his answer developed as a distinction between the good countries with free speech, and the bad countries without free speech and democratic values. In response to the refusal to meet with the ambassadors, Danish imams turned to their religious and political authorities to inform them about their problems obtaining recognition and dialogue with the Danish authorities. Later, the Danish government attacked the Danish imams for traveling to the Middle East to stir up trouble, political support, violent demonstrations, and economic boycotts.

When the global violence escalated in February 2006 the government, in its own words, found itself in the worst foreign policy crisis since WWII. One of the initiatives taken to soften the crisis was to send a Christian delegation to Egypt to contact Christian-Muslim

dialogue groups, promote dialogue, and to talk down the growing discontent with the Danish and Western cavalier attitudes towards the Muslim world. This raises several inter-related questions, which are addressed in chapter four. How do we explain this contradiction between insisting on non-dialogue with cultural minorities in Denmark, while at the same time turning to dialogue initiatives elsewhere in order to prevent further conflict? What is the conflict about and who are the primary actors? The chapter takes a close look at this apparent contradiction between the practice of dialogue promotion in Egypt and non-dialogue in Denmark.



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## **Other Newspapers and news agencies**

### **Egyptian**

Alahram, 19 February 2006

Alakhbar, 23 February 2006

Almasry Alyom, 18 February 2006

Al-Mesaa, 17 February 2006

Masr Alarabiya, 10 March 2006

Nahthat Masr, 18 February 2006

Roz Al-Youssef, 15 February 2006

### **French**

Le Figaro, 9 February 2006

Libération, 3 February 2006

### **Danish news sites:**

TV-Avisen, Denmark's Radio (DR), 21.00, 19 May 2001

TV2 news, 6 February 2006

Denmarks Radio (2010) DR (Danish Broadcasting Corporation's)

News Update, 25 March 2010

## ENDNOTES

- 1 This late entry and perhaps because of Klausen's vantage point on the East Coast of North America, she ends up with a series of minor errors that so to speak falls under the radar. In one of *Jyllands-Posten's* cartoons, she wrongly depicts Muhammad as a soccer fan Fremad Amager (instead of Frem Valby), while another error appears in the statement that Parliamentary Louise Frevert was convicted for her Islam tumor analogy, which she was not.
- 2 N. F. S. Grundtvig (1783 – 1872) is one of the most influential and important figures in formulating Danish cultural nationalism in the last half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Grundtvig was a politician, pastor, poet, historian, author and several other professions.
- 3 Generally speaking, the Swedish media often represents Denmark as rabidly xenophobic and intolerant, while the Danish news media presents the Swedish state and the Swedish people as politically correct and afraid of calling things by their right name (Hedetoft, Peterson and Sturfelt 2006).
- 4 For a comparison of the media coverage of the Danish People's Party and the Sweden Democrats in the mid to late 2000, see Hellström and Hervik (2011)
- 5 "B.T." was originally short for the tabloid version of *Berlingske Tidende*. But B.T. is today a newspaper with a different intended audience and independent editorial leadership. "B.T." is the proper name and is not used anymore as an abbreviation.
- 6 Even though the word "Venstre" in Danish is literally "left", the party Venstre is a rightwing party. The deceiving name is a remnant of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century simple political division between the National Liberals and Estate owners, who created a political party, Højre (Right), and opposed by the peasant party referred to as "Venstre."
- 7 Even if the news media position itself as "objective," it still become actors in the political sphere (Arno 2009), but here is a newspapers that have gone farther explicitly articulating and promoting different nationalist narratives as part of the news package they sell to consumers.

- 8 Signe Toft studied this story as a researcher in the “Structuring Diversity” team research project that led to the publication “Den generende forskellighed” (Hervik 1999). Unless otherwise indicated, the story draws on Toft (1999).
- 9 Idara Minhaj ul-Quran is an international Sufi revivalist movement that seeks to combine Sufi mystical practices, religious orthodoxy, and education. This non-political and non-sectarian movement seeks to revive the message of the Quran and the Sunnah within a modern and moderate framework that promotes welfare, establish Muslim Women’s movements, the Muslim youth, and interfaith dialogue. Perhaps the most prominent member was Benazar Bhutto (Geaves 2005, see also Minhaj-ul-Quran website).
- 10 The editorial about Afghanistan is written after 21 million Afghans had been declared losers in the war with the Taliban. The Mujahedin was economically supported and militarily equipped by Western countries and Saudi Arabia (Coll 2007), including an amount from a Danish youth committee that comprise a leading minister of the contemporary government, Lars Løkke Rasmussen and leader of the radical right Danish People’s Party, Pia Kjærsgaard (Hervik 2011).
- 11 Although fear of the Taliban’s disapproval of Sufism may have shaped the organization’s insistence on its orthodoxy, Minhaj is not in fact linked to either the Taliban or to any Pakistani political party, although it promotes student involvement in politics (Geaves 2005: 12).
- 12 In practical terms the retraction is a text, *TV-avisen* had to read and bring on the screen. It appeared at the end of the prime time news, where it took less than a minute to read.
- 13 In the wake of the Muhammad cartoon crisis Brix’ financial and ideological connections with American neoconservatism came clear. For instance, in her role as speaker for the Bendor Associates, and the Free Speech Society, who granted cultural editor Flemming Rose, cartoonists Kurt Westergaard, anti-Islamist Daniel Pipes, and Muslim apostate Ibn Waraq free speech prizes. (Hervik 2008)
- 14 The existence of this women being forced into wearing the scarf and the double standards of sexual practices and norms are undeniable. However, they are not specific to Muslims, say even a general attribute of Muslims, but can be found in other cultures and religions as well including the Western world.
- 15 A curious fact can be introduced here. About 85 % of the Danes are members of the Danish protestant church. Only 1-2 % attends

- Church regularly. If Danes considered themselves “relaxed”, or say nominal Christians, it is interesting to know that 31 % believes in reincarnation (Hervik 2002).
- 16 Seeing Islam as incompatible with Danish values can also be seen in the political program of the Danish People’s Party in 2001, as the party completed a shift from a focus on the economic consequences of migrant presence to an emphasis on their cultural values (see Meret 2010).
  - 17 Rose had been a left-winger himself like many other neoconservatives (Hervik 2008).
  - 18 Karen Jespersen was at the time member of the Social Democratic Party. Later, she completed her remarkable journey that started with the “revolutionary”, “Marxist”, “democratic”, and “socialist party” called the “Left Socialist Party” (*Venstresocialisterne*) and ended Minister of Social Welfare for the right-wing liberal party, Venstre.
  - 19 Borg also fails to note that Maggaard is a radical right anti-islamic commentator.
  - 20 Westergaard offered these reflections in an interview several months after the publication and after the story broke out in the global media scene (Thomsen 2006). Elsewhere, he admitted that his cartoon is the most controversial of the 12 cartoons (Hansen and Hundevadt 2006).
  - 21 Vollsmose is a part of Odense on the island of Funen with a large population of immigrants and descendants.
  - 22 According to Arno (2009) such an event is a pseudo-event and not a real event. However, this example shows precisely, how this distinction hide the fact that most news pieces are approached and created as through a specific “angle” that immediately “constructs” an event to become something it may not have been before, namely, news. In the cartoon case *Jyllands-Posten* created the project, which in Arno’s word would be a “real” event with dire and multiple effects.
  - 23 Although I use “discourse analysis” and “frame analysis” interchangeably, they do come from two different traditions and are only roughly overlapping. Frame analysis came out in media and communication studies (Entmann 1993, de Vreese 2005) and focus mostly on the specific linguistic choices chosen to present a story and the cognitive schemas used in making sense of these frames. In this way frame analysis has much in common with cultural studies and its focus on production, distribution and reception of meaning (Hervik 2011). These specific frames can be seen as

- tools for the larger discourses that Foucault was theorizing. Such discourses – that constitutes the objects of which they speak – pay little attention to alternative discourses or how discourses take are responded to. They are larger regimes of truth. They are domains of power, and such to be looked at in relation to institutionalized power and hegemonic social groups.
- 24 The journalist-as-hero comes out with full force in discussion early January 2007 when the prestigious Danish price for journalist, the Cavling Price, was given. Many journalists wanted cultural editor, Flemming Rose to be given the price, for his “defense of free speech”, yet it was given to others for revealing the pitiful conditions of asylum seekers children.
  - 25 In February 2010 editor-in-chief, Tøger Seidenfaden apologized for offending Muslims by publishing the cartoon.
  - 26 The “Blame the imam” strategy contains sub-blames such as the 11 ambassadors (the Egyptian ambassador in particular), who turned to their home governments for advice, thereby contributing to the globalization of the cartoon publication. Lack of space prevents me from unfolding the hierarchy of sub-blames within the three sets of blames.
  - 27 In November 2006 Sheikh Hlayhel returned to Lebanon.
  - 28 In another IT-piece Vidino includes the blame on the imam’s strategy in his subtitle “Creating Outrage: Meet the imam behind the cartoon overreaction.” (2006). From the beginning it is unclear which of the imams, he is referring to in the title, but it is not Sheikh Hlayhel but Abu Laban (Vidino 2006).
  - 29 Daniel Pipes also received a free speech price by the Danish islamophobic Free Speech Society (Hervik 2008).
  - 30 The absence of stories about how Egyptians were offended by the cartoons in Al Faqr has not been researched. There are no indications as to what kind of responses, by whom, when, and even why not this is the case in any of the sources. The Danish Embassy in Cairo did register an increase of incoming protest mails of a different kind than earlier though not in substantial numbers.
  - 31 On 31 January 2007 the Prime Minister did go out to criticize a documentary by a journalist with Denmark’s Radio, one of the public service stations, that was critical of the government. In a Parliamentary debate, the Prime Minister also argued that criticism of the government’s criticism was an attempt to impose restrictions on free speech (Folketinget 2007). Thus, the Prime Minister’s act of criticizing the documentary broadcasted by Denmark’s Radio is exerting free speech.

- 32 This is also the case of Bernard Lewis (1990), who is another prominent political scientist and senior advisor to the US government.
- 33 According to author and senior editor of Newsweek, Michael Hirsch, Bernard Lewis' model for the Middle East is much like Kemal Ataturk's imposition of puritanical secularism. "Today, that Epiphany – Lewis's Kemalist vision of a secularized, Westernized Arab democracy that casts off the medieval shackles of Islam and enters modernity at last – remains the core of George W. Bush's faltering vision in Iraq" (2004:1-2). Lewis pressed the government to move on to confront Saddam Hussein in co-op pieces in *The Wall Street Journal*. He saw 9/11 as "the opening salvo of the nature of Islam", now it was time "to get on with it" implying using military means to impose a Kemalist time of Islamic democracy, one that didn't compromise for any Islamized version of democracy (Hirsh 2004).
- 34 Elsewhere, I have looked at how clash of civilization subscribers relate to a Danish community of neoconservatives, who form a strong core group in many newspaper articles during the cartoon controversy. The group was responsible for a substantial part of the dominant discourse "Freedom of speech as a Danish freedom" dealt with in the previous chapter (Hervik 2008, Hervik 2011).
- 35 The fact that most Somalis were also Muslims was rarely mentioned. But four years later during the Mona Sheikh affair in May 2001, Muslims did become the new cultural others in the political strengthening of Danish core values (Hervik 2011).
- 36 Although I won't go into it here, this is where neoracism of the micro-level collides with the micro-level narrative of a clash of civilizations.
- 37 Jytte Klausen rightly points out that the Cuban missile crisis in 1962 and the 1973-74 oil crisis, when Denmark and Holland "was singled out for particular penalties by the Arab oil-producing countries because of a prime minister's incautious words about Israel and ended up freezing and with carless Sundays." (1999:5).
- 38 Islamophobia exploded with the idea being that there is something about Arabs and Muslims that make them capable of carrying out such acts as 9/11 with the assumption that any association with Arab or Muslim with threats against our personal security as the lynchpin of Islamophobia (Lentin 2008:xv).

- 39 According to the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs:  
The main objective of the Partnership is to establish the basis for a strengthened dialogue with countries in the wider Middle East region—from Morocco in the west to Iran in the east. The dialogue should be based on common values that have formed our relations through more than two millennia. After the enlargement of the European Union, the role of the Mediterranean and the Middle East is in focus as regions to which Europe should build closer relations. (Danish-Arab Partnership Programme 2009).  
The Partnership illustrates a connection between combating terror, development aid, and national security that has emerged in Denmark since the late 1990s. The logic is that through the promotion of dialogue and democracy, terrorist recruitment of poor and relatively deprived people will diminish. According to the Danish debate, the development aid was also meant to prevent more migrants and refugees from coming to Denmark.  
The government will use these funds in a targeted way to counteract the threats caused by the increasing gap between particularly the Western world and the Arab world, including the launch of special activities to combat the underlying causes of terrorism and for activities to promote modernization and democratization in the Arab countries. (Danida 2003).
- 40 *Alawqaf* is the religious institution that annually distributes the charity money gathered from Muslims called *khums* and *zakat* to poor people.
- 41 Danish imam Abdul Wahid Pedersen made a similar suggestion 12 October 2005 on Al Jazeera.
- 42 Arabic speakers would recognize this as an indirect evocation of a Western, American, and Zionist conspiracy against the Arabic world.
- 43 Honneth builds on Emmanuel Kant and George Herbert Mead (Fraser and Honneth 1993, Honneth 1996, Mead 1934, and Taylor 1994).
- 44 Vibeke Vindeløv has pointed out, this shows that the Danish prime minister has not understood the gist of dialogue. Entering into dialogue does not mean giving up the democratic ideals refined over hundreds of years. Democratic ideals can be defended even while you acknowledge that the cartoons are offending Muslims and others; and denying dialogue constitutes a lack of recognition, which fuels outrage and dramatic reactions (Rønnow 2006). Vindeløv did not consider, whether the prime minister wanted the dialogue or not.







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