

Martin REPP\*

## “The Caricature of Caricatures”

### Communicational Strategies in the Danish Cartoon Conflict

*If you pee on someone's leg  
don't be surprised  
about the reactions.*  
(German proverb)

#### 1. Overview of the events: Another power struggle

##### 1.1 A provincial affair

On September 30, 2005, *Jyllands Posten* (JP) printed twelve, by now infamous, cartoons of the Prophet Mohammad. JP's "culture editor" Flemming Rose explained the publication in the article as follows: "Some Muslims reject modern, secular society. They demand a special position, insisting on special consideration of their own religious feelings. It is incompatible with secular democracy and freedom of expression, where one has to be ready to put up with scorn, mockery and ridicule." (Transl. by the Director of the Public Prosecution, Denmark, File No. RA-2006-41-0151, March 15, 2006) The editor in chief, Carsten Juste, later claimed that this was intended to be "a contribution to the inner-Danish debate about freedom of expression." (Die Welt Febr. 1)

Within one week twelve Danish Muslim leaders wrote letters of protest to the newspaper and to the Culture Minister; the latter referred them to the Prime Minister Anders Fogh Rasmussen, who did not respond. (JT Febr. 14) They also circulated a petition and submitted 17,000 signatures to Prime Minister. Further, they consulted with ambassadors of eleven Muslim countries, who asked the Prime Minister for a meeting which he declined. (WP Febr. 16) On October 12, JP received several death threats and therefore hired security staff. (Reporters Without Border Oct. 17, 2005) Two days later, about 5,000 Muslims demonstrated in Copenhagen against the "provocative" nature of the cartoons. (Reporters Without Border Oct. 17, 2005)

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\* Professor, Ryukoku University, Kyoto. Associate Director of the NCC Center for the Study of Japanese Religions, Kyoto, and editor of its journal *Japanese Religions*.

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Meanwhile, Rakyat Merdeka Online (Indonesia) published the cartoons on its web site on October 13, which received almost no reaction. (WP Febr. 16) The same happened after they were republished here on October 22. (WP Febr. 16) A similar fate experienced the weekly *Al Fagr* (Egypt) on October 17. (JT Febr. 12)

## 1.2 From Denmark to the Near-East

The next step in the development occurred when some Danish Muslim leaders decided to make their concerns heard in Muslim countries since neither JP nor the government took their concerns serious. (JT Febr. 5) On December 4, a delegation of five Danish Muslims traveled to Egypt for about a week, carrying with them a 43-page dossier with the JP cartoons as well as ten other offensive illustrations published in the Danish paper *Weekend Avisen*. (According to the Danish imam Laban, the latter had been sent anonymously to Muslim leaders in Denmark. (JT Febr. 14)) They met with the head of al-Azhar University, the Mufti of Egypt, the secretary general of the Arab League, and an assistant of the Foreign Minister. They also gave a news conference which was extensively covered by Arabic-language media. (WP Febr. 16) Then another delegation of four Danish Muslims traveled to Lebanon from December 17-31, where they met with the Grand Mufti of Lebanon, the spiritual head of the Shiites, and the Patriarch of the Maronite Church. During a one-day trip to Syria, they gave a copy of the dossier to the Grand Mufti of Syria. (WP Febr. 16) The TV stations Al-Jazeera and Al-Arabiya broadcasted this issue. (JT Febr. 14)

## 1.3 Media, internet, boycott and political reactions in the Arab world

In January 2006, developments began to accelerate. The news about the cartoons in the Near East sparked the first large reactions in the Muslim world. From around January 21 on, Muslims began sending messages on cell phones and internet calling for economic boycott of Danish products; they also mailed protests to Danish embassies. In Saudi Arabia, supermarkets started to withdraw Danish products from their shelves. (WP Febr. 16)

Then developments proceeded to a political level when, at a meeting of the Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC) in Tunis during the last weekend in January, the Interior Ministers of 17 Arabic states condemned the cartoons as “offence to Islam” (BBC News Jan. 31) and demanded from the Danish Government to punish the responsible editors. (Die Welt Febr. 18; Islam.de Jan. 30) Libya closed its embassy in Copenhagen on January 29 because of JP’s disrespect and because the Danish authorities did not take responsible action. At about the same time, the governments of Syria and Iran condemned the publication of the cartoons. (Islam.de Jan. 30) Meanwhile, in a meeting with Afghanistan’s President Karzai, Prime Minister Rasmussen defended his position that the government cannot influence the independent media.

On the economic level, developments extended briefly to a European scope when, in one of the first reactions to the boycott, the EU trade chief Peter

Mandelson in a meeting with a Saudi minister declared European solidarity with Denmark by stating: "A boycott of Danish products is a boycott against the whole EU." (JT Jan. 31; Die Welt Febr. 1)

On January 30, the Danish Prime Minister suddenly revised his position held until the previous day and criticized the publication of the cartoons for the first time, apparently after he felt economic and political pressure. Muslims did not accept this as a proper apology. (WP Febr. 16) At about the same time, JP's editor in chief Juste posted a message on its homepage stating that the publication of the cartoons was not against Danish law, but they were not intended to offend Muslims. (WP Febr. 16) Danish Muslims first accepted JP's "apology," but later rejected it as "half hearted." (Die Welt Febr. 1 and 2)

#### 1.4 Reprint of the cartoons and escalation of violence

On January 31, Palestinians protested in Gaza and burned Danish flags with the symbolic white cross on red background; gunmen briefly took over the EU office. (BBC News Jan.31) Meanwhile in Denmark, a bomb threat forced JP employees to evacuate the office in Aarhus. (BBC News Febr. 1) According to a survey of this time, 87% of the Danes feared a terror attack on Copenhagen. (JT Febr. 14) Also in Germany, the Interior Minister of Bavaria and the Union of the German Police issued warnings concerning possible terrorism. (Spiegel Online Febr. 6)

In immediate reaction to the statements by Rasmussen and JP, at least seven European newspapers republished the cartoons on February 1, because they viewed such statements as defeat of free speech. (WP Febr. 16) Among them were also the three German papers *Die Welt*, *Berliner Zeitung* and *Tageszeitung* (taz). (WP Febr. 16) Papers in Italy and Spain published them more discretely. (JT Febr. 3) *France Soir* exclaimed on the front page "Yes, we have the right to caricature God" and printed the cartoons inside. This was then criticized by the French Foreign Ministry, considered to be an unusual measure. (JT Febr. 3)

The reprint of the cartoons unleashed new anger in the Islamic world. (WP Febr. 16) On February 2, Western diplomats and journalists had to pull out of Palestinian areas. Also because of fear of Muslim attacks, Hamas put a Christian church under military protection! (JT Febr. 4) The Indonesian website Rakyat Merdeka Online (cf. 1.1) published one cartoon again, but had to withdraw it in less than twelve hours. (WP Febr. 16) Now the rage extended from the Middle East to Saudi Arabia, Pakistan and Indonesia. (JT Febr. 5) On February 3, following the Friday prayers, protests were held in Indonesia, Malaysia, Palestinian territories and Iraq. (WP Febr. 16) Muslims demonstrated also in London and burned flags. The Foreign Secretary Jack Straw criticized European media for reprinting the cartoons. (JT Febr. 5) In the same line, a U.S. States Department spokesman backed Muslims by criticizing the cartoons as offensive. (JT Febr. 5)

The protests now began to escalate in violence. On February 4, Syrian demonstrators torched the Danish and Norwegian embassies in Damascus. Protestors in Gaza burned Danish and German flags and smashed windows of the German Culture Center. (JT Febr. 6) Around that time, the Danish embassy in

Beirut was stormed. (JT Febr. 7) The governments of Syria and Egypt were accused of politically exploiting the anger. (JT Febr. 7; cf. Febr. 8)

Meanwhile, the fight on the original front continued. European cartoonists defended their right to provoke (JT Febr. 6), whereas the Arab European League posted anti-Jewish cartoons on its web site together with a disclaimer that this was part of an exercise in free speech (as JP had claimed for its publication) and not to endorse its contents. (JT Febr. 7) On the same level of exchange, another frontline was drawn in Denmark when *Politiken*, a rival of JP, published cartoons of Jesus which JP had declined to print in April 2003, together with the accompanying e-mail exchange. (Islam.de Febr. 8)

On February 5, demonstrations in Beirut continued. (WP Febr. 16) Muslims protested in Bangkok and in Jakarta on February 6. (JT Febr. 7) Demonstrations were also held before the Danish and Austrian embassies in Tehran, the latter because Austria chaired the European Union at that time. (JT Febr. 8) On the economic front, the Iranian government suspended trade and trade treaties with Denmark. (Spiegel Online Febr. 6)

Developments in the media war kept pace with those on the economic and political frontlines. In a new twist, the *Hamsbari* newspaper in Iran announced an international contest of Holocaust cartoons. (JT Febr. 8) Upon the question whether JP would publish such cartoons, Rose, the editor for cultural affairs and responsible for the first publication of the cartoons, first agreed to do so, but its editor in chief, Carsten Juste, pulled him back and shortly afterwards urged him to take a temporary leave. (www2.onnachrichten.t-online.de; JT Febr. 10) Meanwhile, the Japanese Foreign Ministry urged the media to exercise restraint (JT Febr. 8) what they did.

By now, on the economic front, the boycott began to hurt Danish exports. In the previous week, a Danish-Swedish cooperative had placed advertisements in Saudi newspapers in order to appease consumers. (Spiegel Febr. 6; JT Febr. 8) Danish tourist companies cancelled trips to Egypt, Morocco and Tunisia because they feared for the safety of customers. (JT Febr. 8)

On February 7, protests occurred in Peshawara, Pakistan, as well as in front of the Danish peace keepers' camp in Afghanistan. (JT Febr. 8) The Danish government advised its citizens to leave Indonesia for safety reason. (JT Febr. 8) On February 8, the US government accused Syria and Iran of using the row for its current political agendas. In Afghanistan, demonstrations turned into anti-American protests which caused the first casualties. It cost the lives of eleven people. Also one person was killed in Somalia and one in Lebanon. (JT Febr. 10; WP Febr. 16) At around this time, a Taliban commander announced a bounty of 100 kg gold for killing the person responsible for the cartoons. (JT Febr. 10)

#### 1.4 Further escalations

For February 9, no major major demonstrations in the Middle East and North Africa were reported. Muslim religious and political leaders urged for calm. (JT Febr. 11) However, on February 10, again a Friday, the until now biggest

demonstration was held in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. Also large protests took place in Pakistan, Bangladesh, India and Sri Lanka, and smaller ones in Indonesia and the Philippines. (JT Febr. 12) On February 13 and the following day, protests occurred again in Peshawar. (JT Febr. 16) Violent protests took place in the Pakistani capital Islamabad on February 14. (JT Febr. 16) On February 15, huge demonstrations were held by about 70,000 people in Peshawar. Protesters torched a KFC restaurant as well as a Korean (!) operated bus terminal; they also ransacked the offices of the Norwegian mobile phone company Mobilink. Two people died. Protests occurred in Lahore for the second day, and MacDonalds and Pizza Hut restaurants were attacked. (Spiegel Febr. 15; JT Febr. 16)

In an attempt to deescalate the struggle caused by the publication of the cartoons, the Austrian Foreign Minister invited the Danish Foreign Minister, the Grand Mufti of Syria, the Bishop of Denmark, and some others to a consultation in Vienna on February 16, because Austria currently chaired the Council of the European Union. (Islam.de, Febr. 17)

On Friday February 17, protests continued in Islamabad and other Pakistani cities. In this country, a cleric announced a \$1 million bounty for the killing of the Danish cartoonists. (JT Febr. 19) This was later condemned by the Organization of Islamic Countries (OIC). (Islam.de, February 22) Earlier in this week, five people had died during demonstrations in Pakistan. Now, the objectives of protests here extended by turning against President Musharraf and the USA. The Danish embassy was temporarily closed, and Danes were urged to return home. (JT Febr. 19)

Meanwhile the development in Europe kept pace with those in the Muslim world. The Italian Minister for Reforms Calderoli of the anti-immigrant Northern League party provoked Muslims by wearing a T-shirt with the cartoons. In reaction, protesters in Libya torched an Italian consulate on February 17. At least ten or eleven persons were killed. Thereupon, the Italian Prime Minister urged Calderoli to resign, who on the next day first refused to do so, but later during that day stepped down. (JT Febr. 19 and 20)

The conflict now extended to North Africa and opened new front lines. On February 18, Muslim rioters in northern Nigeria burned fifteen churches and killed at least fifteen Christians. (JT Febr. 20) In reaction to this violence, Christian rioters killed at least twelve Muslims and torched mosques in southern Nigeria on February 21. In the northern area, during that time at least 50 persons (mostly Christians) were killed. (JT Febr. 23) According to a report by Ali Bahati Juma, the riots in Nigeria caused altogether the death of more than 100 Muslims and Christians. (www.project-syndicate.org 2006)

Also the fights on the media front kept going. Flemming Rose, JP's culture editor, published an article in the *Washington Post* on Friday 19, where he defended his position without offering an apology. (JT Febr. 21) On the same day, Danish companies placed full-page advertisements in four Saudi Arabian newspapers with the "apology" by JP editor Carsten Juste from January 30; this was done without the involvement of JP. (JT Febr. 21) It reads as follows (translation from Arabic by AP):

Allow me first of all to say that our newspaper values and believes in the freedom of religious conviction and supports democracy and respects every individual. We apologize for the great misunderstanding that occurred over the drawings that depicted the noble prophet Muhammad (prayers and peace be upon him) and that led to a growing feeling of animosity toward Denmark and the Danish. ... It is very important to state that the purpose of these drawings was not to detract from the personality of the prophet (peace be upon him) or to diminish his value. Rather it was an opening to dialogue on the freedom of expression, which we in our country value greatly. We did not realize at the time the extent of the issue's sensitivity for the Muslims who live in Denmark and the millions of Muslims around the world. ... We now offer our apologies and our deep sadness over what happened, because this was far from the intentions of the newspaper, which previously received an award of excellence from the European Commission after we published a number of articles in a special edition calling for peaceful coexistence and mutual respect between the Danish and all other ethnicities in Denmark ... (JT Febr. 21)

On February 22, the far-right British National Party planned to distribute leaflets with a cartoon. (JT Febr. 24) Meanwhile, the U.S.-based Jewish Anti-Defamation League concluded from the events until now that the West had lost on the cartoon issue. (JT Febr. 24) An article published February 25 claimed that the cartoons controversy revived the previous Asian values debate, thereby extending the media front ideologically further East. (JT Febr. 25)

### 1.5 The “end” of the conflict: An anti-climax

Towards the end of February and in March, the struggles on the media, cultural, religious, political and economic fronts seemed to have calmed down, at least on the surface and for the time being. Muslim representatives established a foundation (endowed with 100 Million EUR) in Bahrain with the task to represent Islam correctly in public media. (Islam.de March 26) On March 10, moderate Christian and Muslim leaders held a consultation about the cartoon affair in Denmark. (JT March 10) Also in other places, the time for more cultured forms of communication finally seems to have arrived. Even in a place as far as Japan, the Danish Embassy in Tokyo and the Muslim federation agreed to hold round-table talks later in the year. (JT March 11) One can assume that Danish diplomats did the same also in countries located closer to Denmark.

## 2. Germany

### 2.1 The role of media in the dispute and their discussion

Before summarizing the events and discussions in Germany, two linguistic explanations are at place. First, the German language has no direct equivalent word for “cartoon,” but only for “caricature.” For this reason it does not render the double meaning of “cartoon” as funny or provocative sketch and instead identifies it

clearly as caricature. Next, German media frequently use the expression "freedom of opinion" (Meinungsfreiheit) in cases when the English language would employ the term "freedom of expression." For my subsequent translations from German media I decided to provide a literal rendition.

In response to the publication of the cartoons by JP at the end of September, *Frankfurter Rundschau* published on October 27, 2005, an article by Hannes Gamillscheg entitled "Caricature of the Prophet Muhammad – Provocation as Strategy." (Also published in: islam.de Nov. 2, 2005) Here, the author summarized the events up to now as development from a "naughty boy's joke" to a "state affair." He criticized that by publishing the cartoons, JP did nothing else than repeating old stereotypes about Muslims. Most important, Gamillscheg exposed the real motive of the editors' publishing the cartoons as not being for the sake of freedom of expression, but as provocative strategy by a "national-conservative" paper.

In reaction to the "apologies" by Rasmussen and Juste on January 30, among the European newspapers (as already mentioned) also the German dailies *Die Welt* (conservative), *Berliner Tageszeitung*, and (left) *Tageszeitung* (taz) reprinted the cartoons on Februar 1. Other newspapers printed one or two cartoons for reference. The editor of *Die Welt*, Roger Koppel, explained: "This had now become a huge political story." "In a secular Western society, a prime minister and a newspaper had to issue an apology for exercising their right to satire." "You don't stir up religious hatred, but, sorry, we live in a secular country in the West." "It is part of our culture. It's just not possible that our culture gets somehow penalized by threats." (WP Febr. 16) The editor in chief of *Tageszeitung* (taz), defended the reprint by stating: "We print these caricatures because there exists an obligation to document (Dokumentationspflicht); because readers should form their own opinion. And we print them because it belongs to freedom of press not to bow under the pressure of radical Muslims." (*Die Welt* Febr. 2)

Reprint of the cartoons by these newspapers triggered controversies in the German media. On the one hand, for example, the deputy editor in chief of the (liberal, left leaning) weekly *Der Spiegel* welcomed the publication by *Die Welt*. The foreign desk editor of *Süddeutsche Zeitung* claimed, like others, that Muslims living in Western societies must endure such provocations so that Western freedoms would not be curtailed. (tagesschau.de March 29) On the other hand, the editor in chief of the largest German tabloid *Bild* stated: "I personally would not print any caricatures which consciously hurt religious feelings." The editor in chief of the respected weekly *Die Zeit* stated: "As someone who personally has a religious belief (religiöses Koordinatensystem), one should not try to hurt the religious feelings of people. However, in the case of Denmark I must warn not to exercise self-censorship too quickly." (*Die Welt* Febr. 2) The left-leaning daily *Frankfurter Rundschau* criticized the cartoons on February 4 as defamatory. (JT Febr. 6) The editor for news (and in charge for cartoons) of the (conservative) *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* criticized the misrepresentation of the Prophet by the image of a terrorist, but conceded that the cartoon incident increased the "self-censorship" of newspapers. (tagesschau.de March 29)

Some news agencies established also internet fora on their websites where their readers' discussions about the cartoons were published. (Cf. *spiegel.de*, *bbc.co.uk*) This reflects the high profile which the cartoon affair had gained in public discussion. *Die Welt* published a questionnaire among its readers according to which, not surprisingly for this paper, the consent outweighed the dissent. (*welt.de*)

On February 1, a spokesman of the German Association of Journalists (Deutscher Journalistenverein, DJV) criticized the republication of the cartoons by German newspapers. (*Netzeitung* Febr. 1; cf. *Die Welt* Febr. 1) Later on the same day, however, Michael Konken, chairman of DJV, defended the reprints as "necessary contribution for forming opinions." (*Die Welt* Febr. 2) The aim of the reprint was not, Konken claimed, to hurt religious feelings. (*Netzeitung* Febr. 2) A month later, on March 2, the German Press Council (Deutscher Presserat), in charge for the ethical codex of German media, issued a statement saying that printing the caricatures did not infringe upon its media codex. (*epd* March 2) Later, a similar statement was made by the Swiss Press Council. (*swissinfo* March 28)

Republishing the cartoons by German newspapers, of course, unleashed new anger, (*WP* Febr. 16) Now, also German flags, citizens and institutions in Muslim countries became the target of violent attacks. Further, the reprint in *Die Welt* had one tragic consequence in Germany when on March 20 a Pakistani student entered its office with a knife in order to attack the editor in chief. He was caught in time and put into prison for investigation. On May 3, he was found dead in his cell after apparently committing suicide. When this was made public, his father in Pakistan accused German authorities of torture. Subsequently the rumor spread here that he had died from such cause. This led again to demonstrations in Pakistan on May 7. Its government asked the German counterpart for an inquiry. Muslim representatives in Germany reacted concerned and regretted that this incident would again worsen the relationship between Muslims and Germans. A representative of the Ahmadiyya Congregation in Germany, a group considered by the Muslim majority in Pakistan as heresy, suspected that the student knew that his suicide would fan rumors in his home country. (*Tageszeitung* May 8) This tragic incident shows how fragile the "peace" between Muslims and Europeans had become.

In an attempt for reconciliation after the cartoon dispute, the editors in chief of two mass tabloids, the German *Bild* and the Turkish *Hürriyet*, published together an article in late May in which they stated: "We call upon all people to show respect for others, to avoid insult, humiliation or meanness, and to build up a true coalition of cultures being based on mutual respect." (*tagesschau.de*, May 25)

## 2.2 Muslim contributions to the discussion

In reaction to the reprint of the Danish cartoons in European papers, including *Die Welt*, the vice-chairman of the Central Council of Muslims in Germany (Zentralrat der Muslime in Deutschland. ZMD), Mohammad Aman Hobohm, stated that the cartoon publication deeply offended Muslims. "It was done not to defend freedom of the press, but to spite the Muslims." (*www.news.bbc.co.uk*, Febr. 1)

Later, the chairman of ZMD condemned the cartoons as well as the violent reactions. (Spiegel Online Febr. 6) On February 2, the chairman of the Turkish Congregation (Türkische Gemeinde) in Germany, Kenan Kolat, on the one hand criticized violent reactions to the publication of the cartoons, and on the other hand appealed to the media to respect the "sensibilities of Muslims." This does not imply that criticism of religion should be excluded. Freedom of expression is very important, he stressed. Further he suggested that "we need to discuss how to treat sensitive themes." Media also "should employ journalists of Turkish descent in order to strengthen their intercultural competence." (Netzzeitung Febr. 2; epd Febr. 4)

In an interview published by *Die Welt* on February 1, the Vice-President of the Islamic Federation (Islamische Föderation) in Berlin, Burhan Kesici, stated: "We all have laughed much about caricatures depicting al-Zarkawi and Osama Bin Laden, this is no problem. However, here the founder of our religion, Muhammad, is concerned. One cannot reduce the whole religion to two or three terrorists. In the case of terror attacks in Northern Ireland, nobody talked about Christians. When Muslims were slaughtered in Chechnia, nobody criticized the church." "I am very much worried about the climate on both sides. Two or three years ago I still would have been very optimistic concerning the future of dialogue. Now it became a kind of popular sports (Volkssport) to insult others." Later, on February 6, the Vice-President of the Islamic Federation issued a press release in which he condemned both, the cartoons as "hurting and being provocative," as well as the violent reactions. "Violence is the wrong way to exhibit agitation over the cartoons and damages the dialogue, and thereby the possibility to solve this matter by discussion." "Such actions stir hate and build up front lines which cannot be removed in many years of endeavor." "Islam commands a discourse of the most beautiful kind. We Muslims should follow this principle." (www.if-berlin.de)

On February 10, the Central Council of Muslims in Germany (ZMD) issued a press release condemning both, the "blasphemous attacks on Islam and Muslims by the caricatures, as well as the violent riots in various countries of the Muslim world." "Even if there are provocations circulated, for Muslims violence is no means to solve conflicts." Protest should be expressed in peaceful forms and Muslims should be prudent. "Every attack against the dignity of individual Muslims and Islam should be countered by legal means. Our response has to be a critical discourse about values and respect against faith and conscience which involves the whole society. In the center of the so-called caricature debate is the question: How should religious convictions of faith of other religions and people in the future be treated in a civilized manner?" The Central Council "calls upon all groups of society, the churches and Muslims, to react in a deescalating way to the spiral of attacks in word and picture, and not to be irritated in continuing the peaceful protest." The statement aimed at "peace of the whole society in Germany." (www.zentralrat.de)

The Union of Turkish-Islamic Culture Associations in Europe (Union der Türkisch-Islamischen Kulturvereine in Europa, ATIB) issued on its German homepage (www.atib.org) a press statement (without date, downloaded March 29, 2006) which includes the following:

Those, who despise the cultural values of other people, and those, who wanted, and still want, to destroy the cultures, exhibit once more their prejudices and enmity against the Islamic religion and against Muslims by portraying the Prophet of Islam as caricature. We strictly disapprove and condemn the Danish newspaper's attack against the most sacred values of Islam. Some people defend this attack on the grounds of freedom of press and expression. Those who caused the violent escalations, which we never approve, are the [real] cause for the excesses. ... One should not play down (verharmlosen) to caricature the Prophet of 1.3 billion Muslims as 'terrorist' in the name of 'freedom of expression.' ... To insult the sacred values of other people in the name of freedom of expression and Western values is nothing else than despotism. It is a mean psychological condition of people to depict all Muslims as terrorists. It is even more disturbing for us 'West European Muslims' that the media in other European countries pour oil into the fire in the name of solidarity. We expect that the churches will take a clear position against the blasphemy. Muslims should be on alert in view of these plans plotted against them. They should not allow themselves to be provoked. Nobody must be damaged by Muslims. We wish and expect that such dangerous events will not happen again which put world peace on risk.

The Union of Turkish-Islamic Culture Associations in Europe published the following statement by the German Muslim Yasin Bas. After expressing his being shocked by the tasteless caricatures, he stated: "Even though this kind of Danish provocation is without any good instinct, the call for boycott is no solution. Protests are legitimate as long as they are not violent. For this reason we condemn the burning of the Danish flag and the attack on diplomatic institutions which are as disgracing and wrong as the nasty caricatures ..." Bas then deliberated the question of how the "Christian occident" with its "allegedly unlimited sense of humor" would have reacted to blasphemous depictions of Jesus or the Pope. "The solution thus is mutual respect and peaceful dialogue. Even in the case of a caricature (Latin *caricare*: overdo, exaggerate), which has its meaning in exaggeration, one should respect the religion of others. Freedom, also freedom of press and expression, has its limit where it begins to insult somebody else. This limit clearly has been transgressed. Unfortunately, this is already blasphemy. For this reason, the caricatures represent a new dimension of islamophobia against Muslims and their religion. The Bible, the Thora, as well as the Quran, are based on the same fundamental elements. To attack or defame each another with visual media or other means, in the end only fosters the radicals on both sides. They are now happy and gratefully exploit this provocation in order to undermine the free and peaceful co-existence of people of different religions, who possess more communalities than differences." In order to "deescalate this conflict," Bas called upon believers of all religions to maintain order and be prudent.

Some of the homepages of Muslim organizations also established fora to discuss the issue, as some media had done, such as *Der Spiegel* and BBC. These Muslim homepages also provided useful material published in newspaper and elsewhere. (Cf. islam.de) In concluding this section, it must be stated, however, that the homepages in German language to which I had access were all moderate in their statements

concerning the cartoon affair. It is very likely, though, that there were also Arabic or Turkish language websites of other organizations in Germany which expressed radical views.

### 2.3 Reactions by church representatives and organizations

The church statements concerning the dispute were triggered by the reprint of the cartoons in German and other European newspapers on February 1. On February 2, Bishop Hein of the (Protestant) Church of Kurhessen-Waldeck stated that in the religious realm certain taboo zones have to be acknowledged. "Caricatures should not be published in case they hurt the bearers of religious feelings." This applies also for the treatment of Jesus. Western societies have forgotten to treat religious feelings in a respectful manner. He further stated that the image of a secularized world belongs to the past. Religion is not a private affair, as it is generally assumed, but a public matter. Apart from that, the right remains to criticize a religion. Dangers must be identified and solved on legal grounds. However, there is a borderline at that point where religion is going to be ridiculed. (epd Febr. 2, 2006)

On February 1, the Vatican issued the first statement on this matter, stating that the right to freedom of expression does not imply the right to offend a religion. (JT Febr. 6) On February 3, the chairman of the German Bishops' Conference (Deutsche Bischofskonferenz), Cardinal Karl Lehmann, issued the following press release:

One of the fundamentals of coexistence is respect for the religious confession of other people. This is valid for all religions. Satire or caricatures, belonging to freedom of opinion in democratic societies, become problematic when they touch at the center of religious confessions. Those were hurt, according to the conviction of many Muslims, by the caricatures first published in Denmark. However, at the same time, also any use of violence as well as all rhetorical calls for war and warnings of boycott are decidedly to be refuted. This occurrence shows how much we still have to learn in intercourse with each other. (dbk.de)

Also on February 3, two Protestant bishops expressed their position in the dispute. The Bishop of the Church of Baden, Ulrich Fischer, called the publication of the cartoons by JP as "ignorant and religiously intolerant." It is "stupid" to ignore the prohibition of the Prophet's depiction in Islam. He deplored that the cartoons now were instrumentalized by Muslims. When playing with fire, such as the editors of JP did, one should not be surprised when it starts to burn. The publication of the cartoons has to be seen in the context of Denmark's politics (its alliance with America during the invasion of Irak) in recent years which is critically viewed by Islamic countries. (epd Febr. 4) On the same day, the Bishop of Hannover and Niedersachsen, Margot Kässmann, criticized the reaction to the cartoon publication as "absolutely inadequate." Even Christians sometimes experience that their feelings are hurt. "But the response cannot be violence." "Muslims should protest that violence is done in their name." Now, however, they rather confirm the caricature

depicting Mohammad as terrorist. "There are limits. Nobody should hurt religious feelings deliberately. However, we also have to accept that religion is criticized, even by caricatures, and we must be able to [pursue] dialogue." (epd Febr. 4)

The chairperson of the Council of the Protestant Church in Germany, Bishop Wolfgang Huber (Ratsvorsitzender der Evangelischen Kirche in Deutschland, EKD, an umbrella organization of the major Protestant churches), also on February 3 called upon all conflicting parties to exercise restraint. He highly respects those who have been hurt. However, "Muslims should not allow themselves to be made part of a campaign." He further called upon cartoonists to exercise respect in the sensitive issue of religion. "Freedom of opinion should not be abolished." And "religion should not be abused for justification of violence." (epd Febr. 3) In another statement on February 6., Bishop Huber pointed out: "I am disturbed that the combination of Muslim faith and violence expressed in the caricature, which caused so much outcry in the Arab world, now returns to us in [form of] the reactions to it." "These reactions confirm the fears about violent forces within Islam which are expressed in these caricatures when depicting the Prophet Mohammad in connection with a bomb." "In all respect for free expression of opinion, more sensibility in treating religious convictions is necessary." "We have to fear that the relationship between religions is endangered." "Much damage is done." "I hope that the peaceful forces in Islam will prevail. The credibility of Islam depends on that." "It is wrong to identify Islam in general with this [violent] campaign." In respect to anti-semitic cartoons in Arabic media he stated: "Such bad caricatures are no justification for bad Mohammad caricatures." He also expressed his hope that violence may not extend to Europe and that Islamic congregations call for prudence. "This is not a fight between cultures, but a fight for culture." (<http://www2.onnachrichten.t-online.de/dyn/c/69/05/71/6905710.html>)

Apart from these statements by German church officials on regional and national levels, mission organizations contributed significantly to the discussion with their international horizon and expertise in cross-cultural communication. On February 10, the Association of Churches and Missions in Southwest Germany (Evangelisches Missionswerk in Südwestdeutschland, EMS) issued a statement in which it called upon to "respect the religious feelings of people of other faiths and to contribute to mutual understanding between religions." Further, it stated:

As international community of churches and missions, EMS works for respect towards people of different religious convictions. ... We deeply regret that the religious feelings of Muslims were hurt by the publication of provocative caricatures first in Denmark. Such form of provocation endangers the peaceful co-existence on which we rely everywhere in the world. Our partners in Near East, Africa, and Asia live in countries where since centuries Christians and Muslims live together in close neighborhood. Especially they are in danger to become victims, on the one hand, of ignorance against Muslims in the West, and, on the other hand, of a wrong image of the Western world. In Islamic countries, 'Western' and 'Christian' quite often are seen as identical. We consider it necessary that the responsible politicians and the religious leaders everywhere in the world contribute more to distinctions and mutual understanding. We think

that violence is an inadequate reaction. It causes suffering and deepens the gap of ignorance. On the basis of our firm Christian conviction, EMS continues to work for a better understanding among religions and to pursue the path of good neighborhood.

In respect to the question of freedom of the press, EMS quoted a statement by the General Secretary of the World Council of Churches (WCC). Dr. Samuel Kobia, who said:

Media with freedom posses power. If the power of media is used to counter the abuse of power in society and politics, it is wisely employed. However, to use it in order to criticize the values and dignity of people, who feel powerless, as in this case [of the Danish cartoons], it is dangerous. ([www.ems-online.org](http://www.ems-online.org))

After violence erupted in Nigeria, the German Branch of Basler Mission (Basler Mission Deutscher Zweig) issued a press release on February 22 describing the events there. The mission 21 (Basler Mission) secretary for Nigeria, Jochen Kirsch, had visited the country just two weeks before. According to him, the dispute concerning the Danish cartoons had been increasingly instrumentalized for local conflicts. In the midst of "religious, ethnic and social tensions, ... certain political powers use such opportunities for their own interests and try to destabilize the existing order." ([www.basler-mission.de](http://www.basler-mission.de))

## 2.4 Reactions by politicians

On February 2, the day after the cartoons were reprinted by German and other European newspapers, a number of German politicians also entered the discussion. Interior Minister Wolfgang Schäuble of the conservative party Christian Democratic Union (CDU) defended the renewed publication of the cartoons as legitimate and stated: "Why should the government apologize for something which happened in execution of the press freedom?" "If the state meddles here, this would be the first step towards limitation of press freedom." "The media have to cope themselves with the consequences of what they do." (Netzeitung Febr. 2)

Similarly, the media expert of the Social Democratic Party (SPD), Jörg Tauss, defended the cartoon publication as legitimate. Even though they could "indeed hurt religious feelings," however, "in case of doubt I prefer the freedom of opinion and information." "Caricaturists must have free space which is protected by freedom of opinion." This is "part of our order of culture and values, in which church, state and media are separate." (Netzeitung Febr. 2) A representative of the Green Party, Volker Beck, stated: "Just like Christian churches and Jews, also the Muslims must endure criticism and satire." "Who reacts towards an inadequate caricature of Muhammad with a bomb in his turban by bomb threats only affirms those who consider this picture a description of Islam." The (liberal) Free Democratic Party's (FDP) spokesman for media politics, Christoph Walz, called for restraint in the struggle about the cartoons. He was probably the first politician to emphasize that the dispute clarifies how important an increased "dialogue" with Islam is. (Netzeitung Febr. 2)

Claudia Roth, a leading politician of the Green Party, stated:

Freedom of opinion and of art have to be guarded as essential assets. However, to treat the Prophet of a world religion equally to a mass murderer like Osama Bin Laden is an unbelievable lack of instinct and taste. As democrat I do not need to accept the lack of taste, but I have to endure it. Equally unacceptable, however, is also the beginning of heating-up sentiments in countries such as Saudi Arabia, Iran and Kuwait, which do not have freedom of the press. Yet, the representatives of the Danish government and press maintained freedom of the word only until the time when the economic disadvantages of the publications became obvious.” (Die Welt Febr. 2)

On February 5, a CDU politician and official in the Defense Ministry, Friedbert Pflüger, criticized the publication of the cartoons severely by stating: “Like any freedom, freedom of opinion and press freedom have their limit in the dignity of others, and I think, this was transgressed.” (Spiegel Online Febr. 6) At around this time, Chancellor Angela Merkel expressed her understanding for Muslims being hurt, however, this would not justify violence. “Freedom of the press is one of the great assets as a component of democracy, but we also have the value and asset of freedom of religion.” (JT Febr. 6) During these days, protesters in Gaza had burned German and Danish flags, and had smashed the windows of the German Culture Center. (JT Febr. 6) On February 6, Merkel also took up the subject of “dialogue” and stated that instead of war between cultures, “dialogue between cultures” is necessary to solve the conflict. She also admitted that such dialogue has not yet sufficiently been pursued. (Spiegel Online Febr. 6)

When worldwide protests of Muslims accelerated, the German parliament convened a special session on February 10 during which politicians on the one hand condemned the violence, and on the other hand called for “dialogue among cultures.” A representative of the Green Party, Fritz Kuhn, accused JP for abuse of responsibility and, at the same time, maintained the importance of freedom of opinion. (Netzeitung Febr. 11) The increased call for a “dialogue among cultures” signifies a shift in the attitude by German politicians in response to the violent protests.

Shortly before, the Vice-President of the German Parliament, Wolfgang Thierse (SPD), had warned against instrumentalization of the cartoon dispute for party politics. He criticized attempts by the conservative parties Christian Democratic Union (CDU) and Christian Social Union (CSU) to use the violent protests by Muslims as pretext to question the entry of Turkey into the European Union. Such strategies do not contribute to develop peace among religions in Germany, Europe, and the world. (Netzeitung Febr. 10) Later, in a meeting with the Turkish Minister President, the German Interior Minister Schäuble praised the moderate attitude of Muslims in Germany in the cartoon dispute for which he gave credit to Turkey’s influence. (tagesschau.de, May 25)

### 3. Analysis of communicational structures

The development of the Danish cartoon affair, in my opinion, is best understood by an analysis of the communicational mechanisms employed by the various agents involved in the case. The trigger was provocation, and the final results were escalations in media wars, economic boycotts, political disputes, violence and deaths. In the last section, the driving forces behind this kind of spiraling interactions will be elaborated. First, subconscious factors like fear and collective memories will be introduced; then provocative strategies will be analyzed; third, the hostile rhetoric will be examined; fourth, the difficulties of cross-cultural communication shall be elaborated; fifth, flaws in the ethical codex and lack of journalistic professionalism will be treated; sixth, the political strategies shall be analyzed; and finally the economic factor will be introduced as a decisive cause for beginning and ending the conflict.

#### 3.1 Communication of fear and collective memories

The occasion which brought JP's editor to solicit and publish the cartoons, was (among others) the refusal by illustrators to draw images of the Prophet Muhammad for a children's book because they feared reprisals by Muslims. This background reveals that the real reason for the cartoon publication was the editor's "fear" that Muslims in Denmark endanger "freedom of expression." (Cf. the English translations of parts of the article by Director of the Public Prosecution, Denmark, File No. RA-2006-41-0151, March 15, 2006) Now, such fear, probably shared also by other Danish people, has a counterpart on the side of immigrant Muslims in this country. Their reaction to the publication was motivated by their fear as ethnic and religious minority to be further marginalized and stigmatized in a society which had become increasingly hostile in recent years.

The subsequent discussion triggered by the reprint of the cartoons in European papers was further peppered by fears on both sides. We read, for example, "European artists exercise self-censorship because they fear Muslim reactions." (Die Welt Febr. 1, quoted from Daily Star Beirut Jan. 24) Tim Rutten wrote in an article "An honest look at comic self-censorship" for *Los Angeles Times*: "The American news media's current exercise in mass self-censorship has nothing to do with either sensitivity or restraint and everything to do with timidity and expediency." (JT Febr. 12)

As we know from Psychology, on the one hand, fear reflects real threats, and on the other hand, creates anticipated, imaginative threats. Whereas the former can be justified by rational argument of facts, the latter may be an exaggeration or fiction. In other words, such emotional communication is characterized by the ambiguity of fact and fiction. Particularly the element of exaggeration or imagination then perpetuates the exchange between two fearful agents eventually to a level of violence which probably neither of the two initially intended. Most exchange of violence is caused by an uncontrolled exchange of emotions. The only solution to the dilemma posed by such emotional communication is to rationalize and verbalize the

respective fears and communicate mutually about both, the real and imagined fears. By publishing cartoons, the editor chose the way of emotional communication right from the beginning, thereby excluding a rational, direct discourse about the real subject, and thus determining an emotional discourse of fear.

However, the communication of fear may have even more complex dimensions when considering the collective memories of the past playing an active, though hidden, role in the present discourse. Since Islam and Christianity (or Europe) have a long history of peaceful as well as violent interaction, their memories considerably influence their present encounter. Strangely enough, however, it is mostly the negative memories of each other that determine the present communication. Cruelties reaching from the Muslim conquest of Christian countries and the crusades during the Middle Ages, over colonialism, to the terrorist attacks of the World Trade Center, the American invasion in Iraq, or the torture of prisoners, are invoked. (Cf. JT Febr. 18) In the article “The Emotional Clash of Civilizations” ([www.project-syndicate.org](http://www.project-syndicate.org) 2006), Dominique Moisi points out this dimension of the conflict, the factor of bad memories:

At a time when religion is becoming increasingly important elsewhere, we Europeans have largely forgotten our (violent and intolerant) religious past, and we have difficulty understanding the role that religion can play in other peoples’ lives. In some ways, ‘they’ are our own buried past and, with a combination of ignorance, and, above all, fear, ‘we’ are afraid that ‘they’ could define our future. We live in a secular world, where free speech can easily turn into insensitive and irresponsible mockery, while others see religion as their supreme goal, if not their last hope.

Moisi continues: The Israeli-Palestinian conflict has become an “obsession” in the Arabic world, not so much that Arabs and Muslims care about the Palestinians (for decades they have not done anything for them). “In reality, for them the [cartoon] conflict has come to symbolize the anachronistic perpetuation of an unfair colonial order, to represent their political malaise, and to embody the perceived impossibility to their being masters of their destiny.” “Here, perhaps, is the real clash of civilizations: the emotional conflict between the European culture of fear and the Muslim, particular Arab, culture of humiliation. It would be dangerous to underestimate the depth of so wide an emotional divide, and to recognize its existence is the first step to overcoming it. But that will be difficult, for transcending the emotional clash of civilizations presupposes an opening to the ‘other’ that neither side may yet be ready to undertake.”

These considerations show the complexities of emotional communication: First the discourse is initiated by present fears, then it moves back to individual memories of the past, third, it extends to collective memories, fourth, all these memories and fears are mixed up with each other in one big mess, and finally this heavy load anachronistically returning to the present influences and enforces today’s conflicts. In short, the problem with such emotional forms of communication is that instead of helping solving the conflicts, reinforces them, because different levels, dimensions, disputed issues, etc. are wildly mixed, and thereby create a confused,

blurred, and very complex situation. In the end, it becomes extremely difficult to entangle the different elements and factors and to attempt to solve the present and initial problem.

In February 2006, JP cultural editor Rose explained in a WP article the initial publication with several cases of self-censorship in Europe caused by "widening fears and feelings of intimidation in dealing with issues related to Islam." (JT Febr. 21) This raises the question: What has the cartoon depicting the Prophet of a world religion in reality to do with maintaining the freedom of expression in Denmark? Journalists and editors are supposed to be specialists in communications, who are able to distinguish between emotional and rational discourse and know when to employ which mode. Thus, the question is, did the JP's intentionally choose the discourse of fear, or was it a lack of professional skill? At this point no answer can be found; yet, subsequent investigations may lead further in this question.

This investigation of communicational structures of fear is incomplete if another result is not mentioned. Fear spreads out by creating new fears. As mentioned above, Danes and Germans suddenly feared terrorist attacks in their countries. European cartoonists feared to be killed. Danish tourists did not travel to Muslim countries for fear of their lives. And European expatriates in these countries had to leave for the same reason. European embassies and consulates had to be closed temporarily for fear of violence. Minority Christians in Muslim countries had to fear for their lives, as did Muslim minorities in Southern Nigeria. The following newspaper quotations further illustrate this spiral of fear: "President Vladimir Putin has condemned the publication of the [Danish] cartoons, apparently fearing that the widening tensions over the cartoons could destabilize Russia whose population includes an estimated 20 million Muslims, or nearly 14 percent." (JT Febr. 19) "Weeks of sometimes violent protests by Muslims around the world against the cartoons have triggered fears of a clash of civilizations between the West and Islam." (JT Febr. 19) These and other cases clearly show the self-propelling power of communication of fear.

### 3.2 The strategy of provocation: Triggering the spiral of violence

The majority of Muslims perceived the publication of the cartoons as provocation and insult. For most adherents of Islam today, any depiction of the Prophet is forbidden since it is considered to be a sacrilege. However, to characterize him as a terrorist, as one cartoon did, is even more offensive. It is not so that Muslims do not have a nuanced sense of humor. As Burhan Kesici stated (cf. 2.2): "We all have laughed much about caricatures depicting al-Zarkawi and Osama Bin Laden, this is no problem. However, here the founder of our religion, Muhammad, is concerned." (Die Welt Febr. 1)

JP's cultural editor Rose admitted that he chose the means of provocation when stating in his in WP article (Febr. 19) that he tried to test the limits of self-censorship "by calling on cartoonists to challenge a Muslim taboo." (JT Febr. 21) The same approach was pursued by those who defended the reprint. For example,

the foreign desk editor of *Süddeutsche Zeitung* claimed that Muslims living in Western societies must endure such provocations so that Western freedoms would not be curtailed. (tagesschau.de March 29) Also the Italian Minister for Reforms, Calderoli, intended to provoke Muslims by wearing a T-shirt with the cartoons.

After feeling political and economic pressure, the Norwegian government called the cartoons “provocative and hurting.” (Netzeitung Jan. 31) In his excellent article on the affair, the former Danish Foreign Minister Uffe Ellemann-Jensen commented the publication of cartoons as “unnecessary provocation” (JT Febr. 23; also published by project.syndicate 2006) As mentioned above (2.1), Hannes Gamillscheg exposed JP’s policy of provocation already quite early as a “strategy.” (Frankfurter Rundschau Oct. 27, 2005) Provocation is the old trick to trigger an over-reaction which then can to be blamed and used for obscuring the initial cause of conflict. Consequently, in this case also over-reactions followed on all levels. On the level of drawings, the Iranian newspaper *Hamshari* reacted by announcing an international contest of Holocaust cartoons. The “plan was to turn the tables on the assertion that newspapers can print offensive material in the name of freedom of expression.” *Hamshari*’s graphics editor explained: “The Western papers printed these sacrilegious cartoons on the pretext of freedom of expression, so let’s see if they mean what they say and also print these Holocaust cartoons.” (JT Febr. 8)

Provocation is a self-fulfilling prophecy. As a German Bishop pointed out (cf. 2.3) “These [violent] reactions confirm the fears about violent forces within Islam which are expressed in these caricatures ....” *Quod erat demonstrandum!* And the Saudi writer Sulaiman al-Hatlan stated: “Unfortunately, the emotional reactions and boycotts will only serve to consolidate the West’s stereotypes of Arabs. ... There should be an intellectual reaction and discussion by both sides to see what’s the point of provoking millions of Muslims now.” (JT Febr. 1) This call for a direct, rational discussion without the subtext of emotional provocations was issued elsewhere as well. For example, an JT editorial with the title “What right to torment?” states: “The cartoons themselves do not have much news value.” “The very character of the printed cartoons prevented a meaningful debate over how the media should handle news coverage of Islam. And the commotion it has caused may have made life harder for Muslims trying to adjust themselves to the civil values of European society.” (JT Febr. 18)

The provocative form of communication also caused the deepening of conflicts. It triggered the fusions of originally independent conflicts, such as the Muslim discrimination in Europe and the Western meddling in Near East affairs. Thereby the provocations considerably aggravated the conflict from a local “freedom of press” dispute to a global “war” between the West and Islam, as outlined above. We read, for example, the demonstrations in Pakistan “have expanded beyond the cartoon controversy into a broader attack on Pakistan’s President Gen. Pervez Musharraf and his Western backers, especially the U.S.” (JT Febr. 19)

Both, the communication by fear (3.1) and that by provocation, share the character of emotional exchange which unleashes irrational forces and mechanisms. They are certainly the strategies which aggravate existing conflicts instead of

contributing to solve them. These are also the strategies to start war, as history shows. This leads us to the next form of exchange.

### 3.3 Hostile communication: The rhetoric of war, victory and defeat

In his article in WP (Febr. 19), JP's editor Rose stated: "If a believer demands that I as a nonbeliever observes his taboos in the public domain, he is not asking for my respect, but for my submission. And that is incompatible with a secular society." (JT Febr. 21) He perceives here the conflict between the different values in terms of "submission," in other words, as a power struggle for dominion.

Three weeks after the first publication of the cartoons already – after Danish Muslims had staged a demonstration in Copenhagen and Arab ambassadors had submitted here their unsuccessful request to meet the Prime Minister – the *Brussels Journal* reported on these developments in an article entitled "Jihad against Danish newspaper." (Oct. 22, 2005) The rhetoric of war was taken up after the reprint of the cartoons. In its press statement quoted above (2.2), the Union of Turkish-Islamic Culture Associations in Europe portrayed the producers and publishers of the cartoons as the kind of people "who wanted, and still want, to destroy the [Islamic] cultures." A leaflet calling for protests in Lebanon on February 4 says: "They have declared war. So for the victory of the Prophet we must accept the challenge." (WP Febr. 16) A radical imam in Norway said: "These drawings are a declaration of war." (JT Febr. 5) Demonstrators in Kuala Lumpur shouted in front of the Danish embassy: "Long live Islam. Destroy Denmark. Destroy Israel. Destroy George Bush. Destroy America!" (JT Febr. 12) Here we observe a similar development, like in the case of fear, that the rhetoric of "war" tends to extend from the original dispute to a wider conflict. Also on the other side of the front line, the Italian minister Calderoli joined the chorus when declaring his wearing the T-shirt with the cartoon as a "battle for freedom." (JT Febr. 19)

Like in the previous sections already, also here the abyss of history suddenly opens up and exerts its powers in the present conflict. The *Washington Post* (Febr. 16) called the cartoon affair "a quintessentially 21st-century battle, a conflict steeped in decades, even centuries of grievances, reshaped by the attacks of Sept. 11, 2001, and their aftermath." In another article we read: "That image [depicting Muhammad with a bomb] reinforced the belief among many Muslims that the US-led wars in Afghanistan and Iraq were not simply in response to the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks or the threat posed by Saddam Hussein, but were part of a Western war against Islam little different from the Crusades of the Middle Ages." (JT Febr. 7) Thus, the media war seems to be a secular continuation of the old religious war between Muslims and Christians.

Now, everybody who is directly involved in a competition or a war, or observes it from safe distance, is eager to see the result. Who won and who lost? We shall be disappointed in this case because we receive contradicting messages. In the first round, when JP issued the "apology," its editor in chief Juste admitted: "They have won." (Die Welt Febr. 2) *Die Welt* published an article on this topic under the title:

“Danish paper admits defeat.” It quotes Juste as saying: “I am deeply ashamed to admit that the others have won.” Thus, the “fight for the freedom of expression” seems to be lost. (Die Welt Febr. 1) This “defeat,” as a number of European editors saw it, became their motive to reprint the cartoons, in other words, to start a new round of media war for their freedom. But it is not clear whether these newspaper won the second round either, if we believe the U.S.-based Jewish Anti-Defamation League’s conclusion from the events hitherto later in February according to which the West had lost on the cartoon issue. (JT Febr. 24)

However, were the Muslims the victors? Some of them did not claim victory either. Saleh al-Qallah, a former Jordanian minister, wrote for example: “This time, Arabs and Muslims have entered a just war ... but emerged from it with ruinous results that have led to a new distortion of Islam in the West.” “We should be brave enough to admit that attempts to deepen the gap between the Christian West and the Muslim East have led to an Arab and Muslim defeat in this round.” (JT Febr. 11) Just in the case of the Afghanistan and Iraq wars, also in this media war for freedom no victory parades were held.

But there are hints for the emergence of a completely unexpected kind of victor. As pointed out before, the communicational strategies employed in this conflict determined its aggravation. According to an analysis by the *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, “If the conflict escalates, a fatal coercion for solidarity occurs. Each subsequent paper publishing the Muhammad cartoons brings ten-thousands of Muslims to join the demonstrations; and attacks of freedom of the press, or even the murder of a cartoonist, would force us to fight for the rights of freedom and the order of freedom.” (NZZ Febr. 6) The former Danish Foreign Minister Uffe Ellemann-Jensen hits the point when stating: “Now that the conflict over the cartoons depicting the prophet Muhammad is dying down, or so I hope, it is clear that the only winners are the extremists – in the Islamic World and in Europe.” (JT Febr. 23) The rhetoric of fundamentalists on each side makes us believe that the struggle is to be defined easily as one between the two stereotyped “enemies.” The present analysis leads to the insight that the real conflict does not occur between “the” West and “the” Muslims, but, more sophisticated, between fundamentalists and moderates on both sides.

### 3.4 Cross-cultural communication: The exchange of stereotypes

The reason for publishing the cartoons was explained by JP’s editor as follows (cf. 1.1): “Some Muslims reject modern, secular society. They demand a special position, insisting on special consideration of their own religious feelings. It is incompatible with secular democracy and freedom of expression, where one has to be ready to put up with scorn, mockery and ridicule.” Whereas this text still differentiates between “some Muslims” and (implied) others, a good number of the cartoons generalize by portraying “the” Muslims in stereotypes, such as terrorists. Thus, JP’s editors provide a double message, and it is obvious that the visual image in this case is stronger than words.

The conflict, as characterized by JP's editors, occurs between "religious feelings" of "some Muslims" (according to the visual subtext, "all Muslims") with "modern, secular society" which claims the "right of freedom of expression" to ridicule anybody without limits. The pattern of such "incompatibility" is also expressed in a statement by the Danish imam Ahmed Abu Laban when saying: "In the West, freedom of speech is sacred, to us, the prophet is sacred:" (JT Febr. 5) The Western stereotypes of Muslims correspond with the Muslim stereotypes of Westerners as being anti-Islamic. (JT Febr. 10)

As mentioned, Rose later defended the print of the cartoons again by stating: "It is part of our culture. It's just not possible that our culture gets somehow penalized by threats." (WP Febr. 16) Other defenders of this "European" (or "Western") "freedom" also conjured "our culture" as legitimation for mockery. For example, a German politician was quoted already as saying that this is "part of our order of culture and values, in which church, state and media are separate." (Netzzeitung Febr. 2) At this point we have to refer the now arising question for later (see 3.5.1) whether this acclaimed Western freedom for mockery is not a mockery of the Western concept of freedom itself.

Still, on the present level of intercultural discourse, the question here is whether we have "probably a misunderstanding caused by culture," as JP's Juste at one time stated (Die Welt Febr. 1), or a "fight between cultures," namely between "the Western and the Muslim world," as for example Ingo Fischer in generalizing manner claims? (Die Welt Febr. 18) An editorial in *Japan Times* calls the cartoons an expression of Edward Said's "Orientalism," namely "the tendency to view the Orient, Arabs, Islam, etc. as backward, inferior, passive and alien." (JT Febr. 18) As the former British diplomat Hugh Cortazzi states:

Islam is no more monolithic than Christianity. ... So the clash should not be exaggerated, but these events do call for increased self-restraint on the part of Islamic organizations, and the media, with regard to sensitive religious issues. Islamic intolerance will only increase enmity toward Islam and exacerbate the clash of civilizations, an outcome sought by the leaders of al-Qaida. (JT Febr. 20)

Just as such stereotypes do not sufficiently characterize the variety of Muslims in the Orient, they fail to grasp their situation in Europe. We read for example: "For many of Europe's Muslims, the controversy is a double blow – to their religious devotion and to their civil beliefs. 'Muslims in Norway feel violated twice in this case – first through the caricatures and then by the Norwegian flag being burned,' Norway's Islamic Council said in a statement." (JT Febr. 5) The fact that the situation on both sides is much more complex than perceived by stereotypes shows that the exchange of stereotypes in this "war between cultures" is only a proxy war serving the self-interest of confirming one's prejudices and provoking the desired reaction. It is the same strategy as in the communications of fear and provocation. As *Neue Zürcher Zeitung* (Febr. 6) observed, the whole cartoon affair is an "autistic monologue" and far away from intercultural dialogue. As mentioned above, in contrast, German missions working in international networks were among the few organizations in Europe being competent in cross-cultural communication also in this case.

In his superb analysis of the cartoon case, Uffe Elleman-Jensen hits the point also in this aspect when writing:

Our globalized world brings us not only economic opportunities but also cultural and spiritual challenges. The Internet and text messages have developed over less than a decade and we still have not yet made the mental adjustments to the implications of such instantaneous communication. The Danish cartoonists and newspaper editors ... obviously failed to understand that they were not just addressing themselves to a local audience but to other inhabitants of the global village. (JT Febr. 23)

The JP editors as well as a number of their European colleagues seem to be embarrassingly incompetent in modern cross-cultural communication.

### 3.5 Ethics of communication in the mass media

The Danish or European cartoon conflict poses the essential problem of ethical conduct by journalists and editors. Hence, the official instances dealing with such issues made their position clear also in this case. For example, the German Press Council, in charge for the ethical codex of German media, issued a statement on March 2 saying that printing the caricatures did not infringe upon its media codex. (epd March 2) A similar statement was later made by the Swiss Press Council. (swissinfo March 28) The following section treats the question whether such judgments are justified or not.

#### 3.5.1 “Freedom of the Press”: “Self-censorship” or responsibility?

The European discussion of “freedom of the press” centered mainly on two key words, the fear of “self-censorship” by the defenders of the cartoon publication, and the emphasis of “responsibility” or self-restraint by its critics. Again, as observed above in other respects, also on this level of discourse the discussion is confused and blurred which makes it difficult to solve the conflict.

First, the problem is not just a simple struggle between defense and denial of press freedom since there are a number of Muslim individuals and organizations in Europe and elsewhere affirming press freedom. For example, the chairman of the Central Council of Muslims in Germany maintained that moderate Muslims affirm and support freedom of the press. (taz May 8) However, they deny that this freedom implies the right to ridicule a religion, including its core. This position is shared, at least in the cartoon case, by a number of Western newspapers and politicians, as we saw before.

Next, the defenders of the cartoon publication maintain that freedom of the press is incompatible with “self-censorship,” while the critics hold that such a freedom implies also a sense of responsibility for those affected by the publication. When introducing the word “self-censorship,” the defenders skillfully employ a term with heavy historical load. Who in Europe wants to return to previous

"censorships" of totalitarian regimes? Of course, hardly anyone. Inducing their readers to choose between "freedom of press" and "self-censorship," those who cannot think of an alternative to such a choice, will quickly decide for the former. However, introducing neutral terms such as "self-restraint" instead (cf. JT Febr. 8), the former choice turns out to be an artificial alternative. Critics of an acclaimed unlimited press freedom acknowledge an essential connection between freedom and responsibility. For example, the State Department spokesman Kurtis Cooper stated: "We fully recognize and respect freedom of the press and expression, but it must be coupled with press responsibility. Inciting religious or ethnic hatred in this manner is not acceptable." (JT Febr. 5)

A number of newspapers called the publication of the cartoons an abuse of press freedom. According to *Frankfurter Rundschau*: "Whoever turns something like this into the salvation of freedom of the press ... is not really doing any favors to the press freedom, because they are defending the misuse, rather than the sensible use, of press freedom." (JT Febr. 6) Similarly, *Japan Times* states in an editorial: "Freedom of expression does not mean printing or broadcasting any image for its own sake without limits. When it comes to exposing truth that must be shared with the public for its benefit, full play should be given to the exercise of these rights. ... The publication of the cartoons in question does not qualify as a valid exercise of these rights." (JT Febr. 18) This quotation refers to the context in which the right to press freedom is exercised. Hence, it makes a big difference whether to fight for such freedom in a repressive, totalitarian state (Rose "justified" the cartoon publication with his journalistic experience in the Soviet Union (JT Febr. 21)), or to unleash criticism unfairly on a religious and ethnic minority (which feels already in the defense) in a democratic state.

However, the real problem lies deeper. The proponents of uncontrolled exercise of free speech seem to confuse the terms "freedom" and "libertinism." As *France Soir* claimed on its front page Febr. 1, "Yes, we have the right to caricature God!" one would ask: Yes, but for what purpose would you do that? The controversial ethicist Peter Singer vigorously defended unlimited freedom of speech also in the cartoon case. He argued: "freedom of speech is essential to democratic regimes, and it must include the freedom to say what everyone else believes to be false, and even what many people find offensive. ... Without that freedom, human progress will always run up against a basic roadblock." (2006, [www.project-syndicate.org](http://www.project-syndicate.org)) He justifies his argument by quoting article 10 of the European *Convention for the Protection* [this word he drops in his article!] *of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms* which stipulates the right to freedom of expression. Interestingly enough, however, he forgets to read further in his text of authority, namely the second part of this article which stipulates: "The exercise of these freedoms, since it carries with it duties and responsibilities, may be subject to such formalities ... as prescribed by the law and are necessary in a democratic society ... for the protection of the reputation or rights of others ..." The *Convention* clearly does not affirm the right for discrimination of any kind. One wonders what Singer's and the editors' interests behind such kind of selective, one-eyed perceptions are.

Libertinists make a mockery of the Western concept of freedom which always implies responsibilities and duties. It is this kind of Western libertinism which many Muslims are criticizing, and they are right to do so. Uffe Ellemann-Jensen characterized the cartoon publication as follows: "It ... constituted in itself a caricature of our cherished freedom of expression that is guaranteed in our constitution." (JT Febr. 23) The Israeli newspaper *Haaretz* (Febr. 6, quoted by salon.com Febr. 14) calls the cartoons racist and states: "In that sense, it also profanes the right of freedom of speech, distorting it into the freedom to foster hatred."

This problem leads us to another level of this conflict: What are the real motives of the proponents of unlimited freedom of speech? The editorial of *Japan Times* gives a hint: "The lesson for the mass media is simple but important: The right to freedom of expression carries responsibility, and editors must search their souls for a hidden bias or ideology when reporting things related to a different culture." (JT Febr. 18) One motive is certainly the hidden political agenda of newspapers and their editors, a level of communication which itself was rarely discussed in the public. One of the few was the World Socialist Web Site which puts the problem as follows: "The extreme-right forces which suddenly have discovered their interest for 'freedom of opinion' demonstrate the lies in this campaign." Such kind of propaganda is intended to prepare ideologically for war. (wsws.org Febr. 18; cf. above 3.3) The right-leaning press has a shallow history in defense of freedom of expression in oppressive countries. One wonders why its editors discover it now in countries which guarantee a free press already and cowardly attack their weak minorities in the name of liberty. The political aspect of the cartoon affair will be treated below.

### 3.5.2 Double standards

JP's editor Rose defended the publication of the Mohammad cartoons as follows: "We have a tradition of satire in Denmark." "We do the same with the royal family, politicians, anyone. In a modern secular society, nobody can impose their religious taboos in the public domain." (WP, reprinted in JT Febr. 14) He also stated: "The cartoonists treated Islam the same way they treat Christianity, Buddhism, Hinduism and other religions." (JT Febr. 21) However, the Danish paper *Politiken*, a rival of JP, exposed this claim as lie when revealing that JP had rejected to publish satirical cartoons of Jesus in April 2003. *Politiken* published these cartoons of Jesus and also the accompanying e-mail exchange with the cartoonist in which JP declined to print them. (Islam.de February 8; JT Febr. 21) According to the cartoonist, JP's editor had refused to publish them for fear it would offend the readers, whereas the editor said they were not good. (JT Febr. 10) Later, in February 2006, JP also refused to publish the Holocaust cartoons solicited by the Iranian newspaper *Hamshari* as test for the Western claim for press freedom. (JT Febr. 10; cf. above 3.2)

The editor of *Die Welt* responded to Muslim criticism that the West accepts to denigrate Muslims, but not Jews or the Holocaust, by saying: "It's not double standard because it's the right of every culture to have its own taboos." Because of

its history, German society had chosen to establish certain limits on free speech. (WP Febr. 16) I cannot quite follow this kind of sophistry trying to escape the criticism of obvious hypocrisy or double standards. Why should one acknowledge the own historical obligations and not allow others to have their "taboos"? One basic principle of ethics, the Golden Rule – which is valid not only in "our culture" – is that one should not do to others something which one does not want others do to oneself. Like in the misconception of freedom as libertinism, also here we observe a remarkable one-sidedness, a one-eyed perception. This is, of course, interconnected with the editors' provincial way of thinking in an age of globalization.

Another criticism concerning double standards in the Western press was voiced by the Vice-President of the Islamic Federation in Berlin by stating: "In the case of terror attacks in Northern Ireland, nobody talked about Christians. When Muslims were slaughtered in Chechnia, nobody criticized the church." (Die Welt Febr. 1)

As the inclination towards double standards is one of the shortcomings of human beings in general, it is not only characteristic for certain tendencies in the West, but also for the Orient as well. As the *Daily Star* in Beirut pointed out on Jan. 24: "While extreme right-wing anti-immigration groups incite the Islamophobia in Denmark, Muslim communities deny the increasing role of their own extremists. ... Our hurt feelings should not be limited to the Danish newspaper ..., but must include also all those whose acts have to be considered as equally directed against Islam. If not, then all of us are responsible for such cartoons." (Quoted in Die Welt Febr. 1)

Following double standards simply is hypocrisy. Hypocrisy nullifies any claim for moral authority or legitimacy, as the editors of the cartoons in their fight for press freedom always attempted. Moreover, their hypocrisy undermines the trust in their work and indicates hidden, ulterior motives (cf. 3.4). The problem of double standards in the media and elsewhere leads to the question of proper balance, or a more complete perception, of complex realities, in short, to the question of "objective" or impartial reporting by media.

### 3.5.3 Lack of journalistic professionalism

The JP editors apparently felt affected by the criticism of double standard and tried to counter it. According to Rose, JP planned in February 2006 to print cartoons satirizing Jesus and the Israel-Palestinian conflict on a whole page. One cartoonist Kurt Westergaard, who had drawn the most offensive caricature of Mohammad with a bomb attached to his turban, creatively modified it now by attaching a bomb to the star of David. As Rose explained: "Some people are accusing us of being one-sided." "We are trying to show that we are not giving anybody a free ride." (WP in JT Febr. 14) The timing for the attempt to balance problems was quite late, and it is doubtful whether a distasteful image can be compensated by another. I do not know whether JP realized its intelligent plan.

In comments on the cartoon affair, the deputy editor of the Italian newspaper *Corriere della Sera*, Gianni Riotta, on the one hand, acknowledged the right to publish the cartoons. On the other hand, however, he criticized JP for making a

mistake in judgment because they implied that “all Muslims are terrorists.” He quoted the well-known American TV producer Fred Friendly, who taught students at Columbia University: “Shouting ‘fire’ in a crowded theater is not freedom of expression, it’s being stupid.” (WP Febr. 16) Riotta published three less offensive Danish Mohammad cartoons together with three anti-Semitic cartoons from Arab newspapers and three Nazi-era propaganda posters. Thereby, he not only followed the rule of balanced reporting, but exposed the real problem and put it into proper perspective as well. As Riotta explained: “We wanted to show that these cartoons were really offensive and really racist. We wanted to give the readers some perspective.” (WP Febr. 16)

At the time when fear of terrorist attacks spread in Copenhagen, JP’ editor in chief stated that if he had known that the publication would lead to a crisis risking the lives of people, he would not have permitted the print. However, he did not consider it to be the newspaper’s responsibility that the print of the cartoons led to such consequences. (Die Welt Febr. 2) This sounds somewhat naive, and one wonders whether this is not again a lie. There was a discussion among JP’s journalists whether it was advisable to print the cartoons at the first place. Otherwise, one of them would have not contacted Prof. Tim Jensen for his opinion about depictions of Mohammad on the very day when the cartoons were first published. (See his essay “From a Prophetic Warner to a Villain”)

When summing up the kind of work which JP and other European newspapers did with publishing the cartoons, we find a lot of generalizations and stereotypes, provocative strategies, as well as an astounding degree of partiality and provincial way of thinking in an global age. Such accumulation of failures and transgressions of basic journalistic codes, in other words, the utter lack of journalistic professionalism combined with an amazing “cultural” arrogance (the reverse side of ignorance), is not only difficult to grasp for outside observers, but also hard to excuse. The whole affair is best summarized by Hani Shukrallah as a “caricature of a caricature.” (Salon.com Febr. 14) After all, the editors of JP (and later those of other European newspapers) did not check their sources properly. One cartoon depicts Mohammad as a schoolboy before a blackboard on which it is written in Persian with Arabic letters: “Jyllands Posten’s journalists are a bunch of reactionary provocateurs.” (FR Oct. 27, 2005; The Brussels Journal Jan. 22) This quotation, as indications mentioned above, lead us to the political subtext of this “freedom fight” by some European media which due to lack of journalistic professionalism and a badly hidden political agenda ended in this disastrous caricature of a caricature.

### 3.6 Political strategies: Communications between fundamentalists

In order to understand the cartoon conflict more completely, its political and social contexts have to taken into consideration. The present Danish government is conservative or leaning to the right. Since coming to power several years ago, it exhibited anti-foreigner policies, and its representatives as well as members of the ruling party expressed discriminating views publicly. (See Tim Jensen’s article “The

Muhammad Cartoon Crisis" for details.) It is in such a political climate that the provocative publication of the cartoons sparked the conflict since it ridiculed the Muslim minority at the most sensitive point, the founder of Islam. Even though JP previously had published some balanced articles on the foreign community, in general it is known for its right-wing editorial policy. As an article in *Frankfurter Rundschau* (October 27, 2005) quite early remarked, the real motivation of the JP editors to publish the cartoons was not for the sake of freedom of expression, but a provocative strategy by a "national-conservative" paper. Now, Danish Muslims reacted in a cultured manner to such provocation, by trying to communicate with JP and the government, collecting signatures, organizing a peaceful demonstration in Copenhagen, and even asking Muslim ambassadors to intervene for their sake. The government's refusal to communicate first with Muslim representatives and then with eleven (!) ambassadors characterizes its political stubbornness, especially the Prime Minister's. In this respect we read: The Danish imam "Laban said that response is typical of the discrimination against Muslims in Denmark, which he said has risen sharply since the Sept. 11, 2001 attacks in the United States. 'Muslims have been stigmatized,' he said. 'They have heard it at so many levels, horrible statements relating Islam to terrorism.' The cartoons, he said, are 'the drop that made the cup overflow.'" (JT Febr. 14) The Israeli newspaper *Haaretz* (Febr. 6, quoted by salon.com Febr. 14) comments the publication of the Danish cartoons as follows: "Of late, a new brand of anti-Semitic caricature has begun to circulate through Europe, an indication, perhaps, of a new breed of anti-Semitism. But the Semites, in this case, are not Jews."

It was this refusal to communicate in a civilized way within the country that caused the Danish Muslims to look abroad for support of their case. When they found attention in Muslim countries, they now were blamed for such a step. As the title of an article in WP and *Los Angeles Times* reads: "Clerics fanned embers of cartoon controversy," and its subtitle says: "Mission to Egypt finally ignited fury over newspaper's September feature." (Reprint in JT Febr. 14) This article states that Morten Messerschmidt, a member of parliament of the ruling People's Party, "blamed Laban and other Muslim leaders for escalating the conflict and refusing to integrate and to accept 'freedoms that have created our highly developed societies in the West.'" (WP, reprinted in JT Febr. 14) (He neglects to mention that libertinism here caused also our "highly developed" problems, which indicates another case of highly selective perception mentioned before.) According to this article, many people in Denmark think "that Laban is largely responsible for bringing the cartoons to the world's attention." (WP in JT Febr. 14) – One wonders: Was this not exactly JP's intention when making their cartoons public at the first place? Or did the editors want to limit them only to the public in the province? – Further we read in the WP article: Danish "Government officials and other critics here said Laban's delegations intentionally inflamed Islamic leaders in Egypt and Lebanon by passing off several obscene cartoons of Muhammad as among those published in the newspaper. Laban said those had been sent anonymously to Muslim leaders in Denmark and were shown to the Islamic officials as examples of anti-Muslim feeling

in the country.” (JT Febr. 14) Here, the Danish critics replace the primary causes, namely the publication of provocative cartoons and the refusal to communicate, by the secondary cause, namely going public in the Muslim world. Apparently, such confusing argumentation is part of the same political strategy which initiated the conflict at the first place. Hence, none of the right-wing editors and politicians blamed the European media for similarly aggravating the conflict internationally.

The observation of such poorly hidden political strategies leads to the question of why the JP editors and the Danish politicians did not voice their political agenda clearly? Why did they not take up the discussion directly with Danish Muslims about the real reasons for the provocation and the refusal to talk? Why did they, instead, attempt to fight proxy wars on the emotional level with a false claim for legitimacy, the acclaimed press freedom? Above we observed already several cases, which show similar structures of confused communication structures. The cartoon conflict consists of a mixture of (outspoken) “texts” and (not verbalized) “subtexts.” In this section on the political aspect we find again the same confusion.

Now, as such confusing communicational patterns were employed within the European discourse on the cartoon issue, they subsequently were used in the handling of this affair also in other regions. Already at the end of January 2006, the Saudi writer Sulaiman al-Hatlan stated: “This [cartoon incident] will be used by regimes who resent Western pressures to reform to say that the West is waging a war against Muslims and doesn’t have their best interest at heart.” (JT Febr. 1) The cartoon dispute provided a pretext for some governments of Muslim countries to fight the West in pursuit of their own political agendas which essentially have nothing to do with the Danish discrimination of Muslims. For example, the US government accused Syria and Iran on February 8 for using the cartoon row for its current political agendas. (JT Febr. 10; WP Febr. 16) In more concrete terms we read in the following analysis: “the genuine anger displayed by crowds in Syria, Lebanon, Gaza and Iraq may also have been exploited or intensified by some Muslim countries in the region to settle scores with Western powers. Syria and Iran face growing pressure from the Americans and the Europeans on the issue of Iraq and on Tehran’s nuclear program. And Egypt, one of the first to publicly criticize the cartoons, has been critical of the Danish government for funding critics of human rights abuses.” (JT Febr. 7) The Lebanese Social Affairs Minister Nayla Mouawad commented the protests in Beirut as follows: “This is an organized attempt to take advantage for purposes that do not serve the interests of Muslims and Lebanon, but those of others beyond the borders [sc. Syria].” (JT Febr. 7)

Also the violence and killings in Nigeria did not have to do much with the affair in Denmark. Since Islamic law was introduced in Nigeria a few years ago, tensions between Muslims and Christians rose considerably. The mission 21 (Basel) secretary for Nigeria, Jochen Kirsch, had visited the country just two weeks before the violence erupted. According to him, the dispute concerning the Danish cartoons had been increasingly instrumentalized for local conflicts. In the midst of “religious, ethnic and social tensions, ... certain political powers use such opportunities for their own interests and try to destabilize the existing order.” The delay of reactions to the

cartoons clearly indicates that it was used for ulterior reasons. (www.basler-mission.de, press release February 22)

The fear of terrorist attacks in Europe also has been seen as an instrumentalization of the cartoon affair, as we read: "there is a growing expectation that terrorists will exploit the perceived religious insult with an attack on the capital [Copenhagen]." (JT Febr. 14) According to Olivier Roy, a French specialist in Middle Eastern affairs, two crises had fused, namely that of Muslims in Europe who think the "the other religions benefit from greater protection than theirs (and) want the benefit of legal protection" and that of roiling anger in the Middle East. (JT Febr. 8)

However, also in European politics were attempts to use the cartoon conflict for other purposes. As mentioned above (2.4), the Vice-President of the German Parliament warned against instrumentalization of the cartoon dispute for party politics when criticizing attempts by the conservative parties Christian Democratic Union (CDU) and Christian Social Union (CSU) to use the violent protests by Muslims as pretext to argue against the entry of Turkey into the EU. (Netzeitung Febr. 10) The political instrumentalization of the cartoon affair is arbitrary, as we can see, for example, from the fact that the German Interior Minister later thanked Turkey for its influence on the moderate attitude of Muslims in Germany in the cartoon dispute. (tagesschau.de, May 25)

Ignited by the cartoon struggle, the constant fusing of unrelated problems considerably increased the polarization between the West and Islamic countries. According to Mounia Bennani-Chraïbi (University of Lausanne), for Muslims "since the Gulf War, international law has followed double standards." She said that the Muslim world's indignation is "linked to this feeling of inequality, of playing the villain in history." "The West has lost its Soviet enemy and has built Islam into its new enemy." (JT Febr. 8) When huge protests against the cartoons occurred, Malaysia's Prime Minister Abdullah Ahmad Badawi spoke of a "huge chasm that has emerged between the West and Islam,' particularly because of Muslim frustrations at Western policies toward Iraq, Afghanistan and the Palestinians." (JT Febr. 12)

As mentioned above, the former Danish Foreign Minister Uffe Ellemann-Jensen explained that the "only winners are the extremists – in the Islamic World and in Europe." (JT Febr. 23) The conflict triggered by the cartoon publication, essentially evolved into a political fight between fundamentalists. Fundamentalists are people, who try to pursue certain goals at all costs and are unwilling to reach compromises with those who hold different positions. Fundamentalism is basically the refusal to adapt to complex situations, or to historical changes. In this respect, the right-wing press and politicians in the West are not so much different from Muslim fundamentalists or intolerant political regimes in the Near East. As Ellemann-Jensen continues to write:

We should all be aware of those who seek to deepen these [cultural] differences and turn them into insurmountable gulfs instead of inspiration to a richer life. It is only too easy for them [Islamists] to point to the case of the cartoons and say: Now you see how Western-style democracy and freedom of expression mean that you will face ridicule and mockery of your religious faith! (JT Febr. 23)

The same is true for conservative politicians and media in the West to declare the overreaction by Muslims as “proof” for the legitimacy of their strategies to maintain or increase polarizations in this world.

### 3.7 The persuasiveness of economy

Now we finally reach the core of the cartoon affair. For practical reasons, I choose here to begin with the end. The Danish trade with Muslim countries is estimated at about \$ 1.6 billion annually. (JT Febr. 8) The economic boycott of Danish goods by twenty Muslim countries finally proved to be the most effective “weapon,” a non-violent means of protest. It is estimated that one of the big companies, Aria Foods, lost \$ 1 million per day. (JT Febr. 8) I do not know of any exact figure of the overall damage done to the Danish economy. In any case, it was big enough to move Danish companies first to exert their influence on the government and JP to issue “apologies” which both did suddenly and at the same day, on January 30! In the next step, these companies published the JP “apologies” in the Arab press. (JT Febr. 21) This shows where the real power in a “democratic country” like Denmark lies. In the end it is this force which curtailed the desired unlimited exercise of press freedom.

The Danish imam Fatih Alev commented the “apology” of the Danish Prime Minister as follows: “Denmark reacted only after it lost export revenues. He never minded, however, that Danish Muslims have been hurt since years.” (Die Welt Febr. 1) And the German politician Claudia Roth stated, as quoted above (2.4), that “the representatives of the Danish government and press maintained freedom of the word only until the time when the economic disadvantages of the publications became obvious. Apparently, the sale of Danish cheese is more important than the vehemently propagated freedom of expression.” (Die Welt Febr. 2)

This reveals the real irony of the cartoon affair that the Danish government and JP eventually were not “defeated” by Muslims, but by their companies at home. Obviously, economic profit is more important than the defense of “freedom of the press” and other freedoms. In this case again we encounter a “caricature of a caricature.” To my knowledge, none of the European freedom fighters of the press – neither the JP editors, nor those of the European media reprinting the cartoons – ever discussed their real defeat. The reason is obvious: they are more interested in pursuing their political agendas than dealing with the real issues. Thereby they exhibit again their hypocrisy and being blind at one eye. The final “economic” solution of the cartoon struggle makes it all too clear that the above treated media fights, cross-cultural and interreligious conflicts, and political struggles, essentially were only proxy wars. Because they do not reflect their real defeat, the European media involved in the case, like certain politicians, presumably will continue their fictive struggles very likely also in the future.

But the consideration up to now is only half of the truth if we do not treat another economic factor in the whole affair. Thereby, this section will conclude with the real beginning of the cartoon conflict. This consists, of course, in the reason for

foreigners to migrate to Europe at the first place which subsequently triggered the ethnic and religious tensions. The majority of migrants came to Europe for economic reasons, whereas the minority sought political and religious asylum. Among the former, the majority does not consist of "economic refugees," but of "guest workers," who once were invited by European governments to fill the gaps of the work force. These governments took such measures upon the initiative by companies' suggestion to invite foreign workers for their needs or objectives. However, the task to solve subsequent social problems, ethnic tensions and the difficult "integration" of foreign individuals and communities, was to be shouldered by society, namely local communities and politicians. Meanwhile, representatives of the economy, the real originators of these problems, effectively avoided taking any responsible steps to contribute solving the social problems.

Again, it seems characteristic that the freedom fighters of the press did not mention the real cause for the present conflicts in Europe and refrained from calling the public attention to this economic subtext of this story, the responsibilities of those managing the economy. Here again we observe the one-eyed perception of such editors. Whereas the above treated problems in cross-cultural and interreligious communication and the political discourses certainly form important factors of the cartoon affair, the economic factors played a pivotal role. They were not only the first cause for it, but, at least on the surface, they put also an end to it. Thus, economic factors round up the whole cartoon affair.

#### 4. Conclusions

The investigation of the European cartoon conflict above leads to the following conclusions. First of all, this dispute clearly poses the choice of whether to leave the discourse between the West and the Muslim world in the hands of fundamentalists, who aim at confrontational and provocative forms of communication, even at the risk of violent conflicts, or whether moderates take the initiative in their hands. As there are extremists on both sides, there are also sober minded people in the world. Danish moderate Muslims attempted to reconcile already in January 2006 (*The Brussels Journal* Jan. 22), that is before violent reactions provoked by reprinting the cartoons broke out. It is likely that the escalation in violence could have been avoided if the editors would have exercised restraint. Hence it is necessary that people with a common sense in East and West take the lead in such cross-cultural and interreligious disputes in order to solve the various points of conflict in a reasonable manner. As shown above, this can be done by direct and rational communication, by avoiding the confusion of problems (such as the social issues of European Muslims and the political tensions in the Near East), and by distinguishing between the "texts" of current issues and "subtexts" of emotion and history.

Such kind of discourse, however, requires political determination, far-reaching decisions and concrete measures. Since the escalation of the cartoon conflict, a number of politicians, representatives of churches and Muslim communities,

journalists and intellectuals, have called for “dialogue between cultures” or for an increased “dialogue” with Islam. (Cf. 2.1-4) In fact, the cartoon conflict itself damaged the possibilities for dialogue. As Bishop Huber stated (cf. 2.3): “We have to fear that the relationship between religions is endangered.” And the Vice-President of the Islamic Federation in Berlin stated: “Two or three years ago I still would have been very optimistic concerning the future of dialogue.” (Die Welt Febr. 1) He also deplored that violence damaged the “dialogue, and thereby the possibility to solve this matter by discussion.” “Such actions stir hate and build up front lines which cannot be removed in many years of endeavor.” However, he maintains, “Islam commands a discourse of the most beautiful kind.” (www.if-berlin.de) The German chancellor Merkel even admitted that until now such dialogue has not yet sufficiently been pursued. (Spiegel Online Febr. 6) Now, since many words of insight were spoken by political leaders, editors, and representatives of churches and Islam, the question is whether they really mean what they were saying by putting words into practice. If the cartoon affair is not followed-up by concrete actions, the whole conflict was in vain, especially the sacrifice of many victims.

Second, to *call* for “dialogue” is an easy thing, but those pursuing it actively know how difficult it is. As we saw, the conflict is not just between the “West” and “Islam,” the real borderline runs across and divides each of them. For example, Sheikh Youssef el-Qaradawi, a Muslim leader, questioned the possibility of dialogue by stating: “You have to have a common ground to have a dialogue with your enemy. But after insulting what is sacred to me, they should apologize.” (JT March 10) In contrast, the Egyptian Muslim preacher Amr Khaled maintained that the time of protest has passed and the time for discussion has come. He stated: “The deep-rooted solution of this problem is through dialogue to reach an understanding and coexistence between the nations.” “There are two schools of thought. One is that all of our actions should be reaction to what happened to us in the past twenty years, which is a lot. The other school wants the Islamic community to take the initiative to plan for the coming 20 years.” (JT March 10) Khaled attended the conference between Muslims and Christians in Denmark to discuss the conflict. Here another “circle” closes: first the Danish Imams travel to Egypt to complain about discrimination in Denmark, and now a Muslim preacher traveling from Egypt to Denmark in order to help solving the conflict by a civilized form of communication.

How can cross-cultural and interreligious communications succeed? In my view, there are two major components. The first is the mediation by people, who are “bilingual” in cultures and religions. Ingo Fischer, for example, asked: Where are the “mediators” in the this conflict between the “Western and the Muslim world”? (Die Welt Febr. 18) Uffe Ellemann-Jensen uses a metaphor when suggesting to “build bridges between religions, ethics and norms.” In more concrete terms, the chairman of the Turkish Congregation in Germany suggested that media “should employ journalists of Turkish descent in order to strengthen their intercultural competence.” (Netzeitung Febr. 2; epd Febr. 4) Specialists being conversant in both cultures and religions certainly need to receive more attention and responsibility. They should be placed in key positions in all those areas in education, media,

politics, and civil administration which are prone to conflict. Organizations which continuously cultivate this "bilinguality" are the governments' foreign ministries and, as mentioned above (2.3), the mission boards. Now, since the "orient" is not located anymore only East of Europe, but is also present in its very midst, European countries have to adjust to this situation, provide positions necessary for inter-cultural communications and entrust responsibilities to people, who are "bilingual" in culture and religion. Measures to prevent damages caused by cross-cultural conflicts are in the end economically cheaper than the actual damages (not to speak of the "cost" of life).

The second major component for the success of cross-cultural and interreligious communications is its systematic cultivation. Cross-cultural and interreligious communications are skills which may be acquired according to the method of "trial and error," the basic mode of human learning. Naturally, this requires much time and implies many detours and disappointments. Dialogue between Christianity and Islam in Europe presently suffers from much frustration because it does not develop as each side expected. However, there are more effective ways of learning, namely under the guidance of experienced experts. In the political world, states afford schools for young diplomats to acquire the skills of negotiating in order to help solving international conflicts. In the world of cross-cultural and interreligious communications, however, there are some individual experts, but no systematic programs and schools to train young people, especially future multipliers such as school teachers, priests, social workers, etc. It is here, in the establishment and financial support of such systematic training programs, where the decision is made whether we will be able to realize peaceful co-existence in the "global village." As this investigation has shown, it is certain forms of communication which lead to confrontation and conflict, whereas cultivated forms of exchange are the proper way to solve problems.

In one of the best analyses of the cartoon conflict, the former Danish foreign minister Uffe Ellemann-Jensen summarizes the basic problem as follows:

The lessons of this unfortunate incident seem to me to be clear: We should all acknowledge that in the modern world it is increasingly necessary for all sensible people to work for mutual respect, tolerance and better understanding. We must avoid situations where different values are confronted with each other in ways that trigger violence. Instead we must try to build bridges between religions, ethics and norms. Call it self-censorship if you wish. But self-censorship is practiced all the time by sensible people. If you wish to stay in the same room as other people you try not to offend them through unnecessary provocations. The room we are talking about is no longer the local pond but the global village. Coexistence is the key. Some people are unwilling to accept this. They are not open to values other than their own. They want confrontations. You find such people in Europe as well as in the Islamic world. Unfortunately they are the beneficiaries of the conflict that was triggered by the cartoons in a Danish newspaper. But if we do not stand up to them, we all run a grave risk of repeating some of history's great mistakes. The risk was explained in a very small poem by the late Danish poet and philosopher Piet Hein in one of his famous 'Grooks' called 'That is the question': coexistence or no existence. (JT Febr. 23)

**Abbreviations**

AP	Associate Press
DJV	Deutscher Journalistenverein
epd	Evangelischer Pressedienst
FAZ	<i>Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung</i>
JP	<i>Jyllands Posten</i>
JT	<i>Japan Times</i>
taz	<i>Tageszeitung</i>
WP	<i>Washington Post</i>