RELIGIOUS PLURALISM
IN DEMOCRATIC SOCIETIES

CHALLENGES AND PROSPECTS FOR
SOUTHEAST ASIA, EUROPE, AND
THE UNITED STATES
IN THE NEW MILLENNIUM

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The Prophet Muhammad Cartoon Episode and Implications for Europe-Muslim Relations: A Danish Perspective

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1. Introduction

In February 2006, the so-called cartoon case erupted into a full-scale international hot issue, drawing headlines all over the world. The case became a catalyst for a long awaited break out of a clash between strong and divergent views inside Europe. It started on September 30, 2005, when the biggest Danish daily 'Jyllands-Posten' published 12 cartoons of the Prophet Muhammad. The Muslim community in Denmark reacted in a predictable way, but found little official support and no sympathy from the newspaper. Eleven ambassadors representing Muslim countries requested for an appointment on October 19 to meet the Danish Prime Minister, Andres Fogh Rasmussen, but he refused, responding that he could not infringe on the freedom of the press. Other Danish newspapers decided not to print the drawings. In the rest of Europe, the newspapers were also divided, some of them publishing as an act of support for freedom of expression, while others did not see any purpose in doing so.

In the beginning of December, a delegation of Danish imams visited Egypt, and the Egyptian government handed a dossier about the case around at the OIC summit. Later the same month, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights announced that the UN was investigating racism of the Danish cartoonists. On 22nd December, former Danish ambassadors critized the Prime Minister's handling of the matter, and the Council of Europe also voiced criticism against Denmark. In his New Year speech, the Prime Minister stated: "I condemn any expression, action or indication that attempts to demonise groups of people". That was an attempt to settle the matter. He did not succeed. Jyllands-Posten tried to calm the gathering storm by apologizing, not for the printing of the cartoons, but for hurting the feelings of Islamic society. It did not work.[1]

Saudi Arabia issued a public condemnation of Denmark and recalled its ambassador. Mass demonstrations in many Muslim countries, closing of Danish embassies – some of them attacked by mobs – and boycott of Danish companies in the Muslim world escalated. The incident was classified as the most serious Danish diplomatic crisis since World War II. It gradually petered out with the last statement coming from Osama bin Laden on April 24, 2006 calling for boycott of Denmark and punishment of the cartoonists.[2]

The case caught everybody by surprise and spread around the Muslim World and the Muslim communities like a prairie fire. It was, however, a catalyst for a long awaited eruption of a clash between strong and divergent views inside Europe where parallel cultures have emerged, challenging Europe's social fabric unprepared for this edition of 'cultural globalism'.

Some people take the view that the case validates Samuel Huntington's theory about a clash of civilisations. To my mind, we are witnessing a clash inside civilisations, triggered off by minorities versus majorities, fighting over control to guide Europe and the Muslim World – something entirely different. Neither the Europeans nor the Muslims have adopted a uniform or common stance.

An analysis taking this as its starting point reveals three strategic choices:

(1) Is Europe moving towards some kind of multicultural society and if so what happens to traditional European values that the Europeans neither can nor will sacrifice?

(2) What is the repercussion on Europe of the Muslim, or may be more accurately, the Arab world's apparent difficulty in transforming the economy to benefit from economic globalization?

(3) Should Europe and the Europeans in these circumstances opt for a head-on confrontation with Arab/Muslim fundamentalism or use their influence to support the modernizing forces in the Arab/Muslim camp?

These three seminal but awkward questions point to five strong schisms arising for Europe: (a) Europe's search for an identity, (b) Are the Europeans hardening their attitude vis-à-vis Muslims or will integration into European societies of the Muslim community be accelerated?, (c) Europe's role in the world, (d) How will the image of the Western world look after the cartoon case?, and (e) Most intriguing of all, what will it mean for European values?

2. Europe's Search for Identity in Changed Circumstances

As has been stated many times, the case demonstrates that what the mass media reports cannot be confined to a national or cultural enclave. It may attract international, even global attention. There is a new dimension to it. The keyword is the minorities. Some decades ago, a report touching on Islam and Muslim values in a Danish, or even European, newspaper would hardly have attracted attention outside Europe. That is the case now. The Muslim minorities inside Europe communicate to their home countries, to their cultural base so to speak, what is said about their values in another, for them foreign and sometimes perceived as not too friendly, culture. This is where the pickets have been moved. On the one hand we have the traditional Europeans behaving like they did some decades ago, not recognising the changes. On the other hand we have a part of the Muslim minorities sticking to their cultural roots, disregarding their new home country and feeling more at ease with the values in the country/culture they left than the country/culture they have chosen to live in.

Most if not all the European newspapers behave with a certain amount of restraint when exercising freedom of expression inside the established culture, but do not feel the same responsibility vis-à-vis other cultures. The attitude of some Europeans is that people adhering to other cultures should adapt quickly to the new home country's culture. Jyllands-Posten stated clearly in the opening phase of the case: No one and/or nothing is exempt from mockery.

One view is that the Muslim minorities must adjust and fast to the existing European culture/identity and the European societies do not need to broaden their outlook and help to merge foreign cultural values with traditional European culture. Those who live in Europe must subscribe to the European culture. They

can practice their own religion even if not an established European one, but they cannot distance themselves from societal norms. Europe is not and should not be multicultural.

To understand this view we must recall that until a few decades ago, Europe's cultural minorities did not break away from European societal values. Immigrants were and are welcome and they can practise their own religion, but when it comes to societal values there is no way to escape the basic question of whether or not they accept European values. There is another view trying to integrate the immigrants (the Muslims) gradually, understanding the problems they face breaking away from their original culture, and having strong family links with the home countries. This policy focuses upon second generation Muslim immigrants. The aim is to facilitate integration, while at the same time acknowledging the wish of the Muslims to practise Islam.

In several European countries, the problem has not been solved but indeed aggravated by mistaken policies. The home country has, for a considerable time, allowed the Muslim minorities to live in enclaves and establish parallel cultures, without signalling that this was the wrong way. Suddenly when the problems become all too apparent, an abrupt change in policies follows. Understandably, that leaves a large part of the minorities baffled. This was a misunderstood and misguided leniency, pushing the Muslim minorities toward an untenable role in the European societies. It played right into the hands of those inside the Muslim minorities not wishing to integrate, and weakening the hands of those actually wishing to do so. The European right wing political parties and the dogmatic part of the Muslim minority succeeded in depicting precisely the picture of the other side they wanted, starting a vicious circle.

The choice, an agonizing one the Europeans face now not to be skirted, is whether they want to follow the first option (cementing the traditional European identity) or adapt to make room for cultural minorities with the inevitable imperative to adjust traditional European values. Will a majority of the Europeans rally behind a more multicultural Europe? The decisive point will be whether the right balance can be struck between acknowledging religious freedom and European societal values. Can some kind of congruity be found between Islam(a traditional theocratic religion) and the secular European societies?

Speaking about Europe in this context may in some cases be misleading as individual European countries have chosen their own path defined by the distinct nature of the problem they face. The UK may be the European country moving furthest toward a multicultural society with – if judged by various analyses – mixed results.[3] France seems to be the European country having encountered the most visible difficulties.[4] The dilemma could hardly have erupted in worse circumstances

with low economic growth, difficulties in reforming Europe's economic structure, question marks about Europe's role in the world, a rejected European Constitution stopping the integration in its tracks, and fumbling political leadership.

3. Europe's Aspiration: Old Europe, New Europe or Another Europe?

A clue to the answer may be found in the negotiations about the European Constitution. Here we find a summary of 'The Union's Values'[5]: "Respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and respect for human rights, including the rights of persons belonging to minorities. These values are common to the Member States in a society in which pluralism, non-discrimination, tolerance, justice, solidarity and equality between women and men prevail".

The hard core of the answer is that Europe cannot be expected to abandon or bend these principles. This is what Europe stands for in the eyes of the overwhelming majority of the Europeans. The challenge for Europe and the Europeans is to exercise tolerance and respect the rights of minorities. The challenge for the Muslim communities inside Europe is to realise the importance of these principles. The challenge for the Europeans and the Muslim minorities is to define in common the room of manoeuvre and compromise. This is after all what tolerance, solidarity and respect is about.

4. European Attitudes Towards Muslims and the Challenge of Integrating Minorities

The extreme right in Europe has got wind in its sails. Europe is losing confidence in itself and its ability to find answers to the challenges posed by new technology and the rise of China and India. The right wing parties ruthlessly exploit the problems putting the blame on 'foreigners' without really specifying how and why. This is the bad news. The good news is that despite terrorism, Osama bin Laden and similar news on top of a running conflict between Christian Europe and the Muslim world in particular in the Middle East from around 800 to around 1750 A.D., the extreme right only gets around 15% of the votes.

Whether the Europeans will harden their attitude depends, to a certain extent, on the Muslims' willingness to integrate, and at least adopt some of the

European values. The more the Europeans feel that the Muslim minority distances itself from the rest of society, the more likely it is that their attitude will harden. We cannot skip the role of symbols. The Muslims not wanting to adapt to traditional European societal values signal this by their choice of symbols, for example the headscarf and other visible demonstrations of 'standing apart'. Many Europeans regard this as a provocation more or less comparable to how many Muslims look upon the cartoons. They ask a simple question: Why do the hard line Muslims signal that they do not feel comfortable inside the home/host country's culture when choosing by their own free will to stay there?

For many Europeans the problem is not that they sense a request for equality with regard to religions but for special treatment of Islam – some sort of positive discrimination guaranteeing Islam and the Muslims not to be exposed to what in Europe is regarded as normal societal norms. That may be what the minority of the Muslims – the extremists and/or the dogmatists want – and they voice this stance with such vigour and use symbols so forcefully that, rightly or wrongly, it is perceived as the Muslim position. Equality would not be a problem, special treatment is.

What many Europeans do not see, and in some cases, do not want to see is the large number of Muslims actually having adapted, being integrated in society and successfully combining traditional European societal values with their traditional religion. These Muslims are mostly silent because they are often squeezed between their former kin so to speak and their new societies, thus not being fully accepted by either camp. It is hard for them to follow suit and tell where they belong as they feel at home in both camps, but unfortunately both camps want the 100% loyalty that they cannot deliver.

In the eyes of many Europeans, the Muslim view is almost exclusively being monopolized by the Imams and the hardliners. The press chasing confrontational views blow up this schism.[6] Much will depend on whether the Muslim societies inside Europe wishing to adapt, or already having adapted, will be able to wrest the right and even the monopoly to speak on behalf of the Muslims, away from the hard liners and the Imams, to present a much more nuanced and accurate picture of the Muslim minorities.

5. Implications for Europe's Role in the World

What does it mean for Europe's role in the world e.g. Turkey's bid to join the European Union, Europe's role in the Middle East, in North Africa and as a player in the game on the issue of a presumed nuclear weapons programme in Iran?

Europe has traditionally tried to convey the impression of a moderate, tolerant and understanding player in the diplomatic game. This will be increasingly difficult and as the Europeans do not have many other instruments at their disposal, inevitably Europe's influence in the world will suffer.

For many in the Muslim world, the events highlight two trends. Firstly, that the prevailing mood in Europe is replacing Communism and the Soviet Union as an enemy with Islam and the Muslims as the enemy. Secondly, if the above statement is not wholly true, that Europe and the Europeans practise double standards.[7] This will breed suspicion regarding any European initiative on foreign and security policy for a long time. Europe's scope to supplement and complement U.S. foreign policy with more subtle means will be almost non-existent. It will move towards a self-fulfilling theory, depicting the Western world as deaf to other cultures, relying more and more on military power to pursue its foreign and security policy objectives.

For Europe with a near abroad predominantly belonging to the Muslim world, this is as close to a catastrophe as it can be. North Africa has for a long time been a potential powder keg with grave social problems calling for a European effort. The Europeans have played a useful albeit, not dominating role in the Middle East. The question of Turkey's admission to the EU has been regarded as a litmus test whether Europe is a Christian club automatically excluding Muslim countries.

Iran's presumed nuclear weapons programme calls for strong international action. After the intelligence failure concerning Iraq's WMD, the Western powers need to act on solid and irrefutable evidence and seek the support of almost all countries in the Middle East whatever action is chosen. Iran has made it known that its objective is the destruction of Israel. This was a clever step to split the Arab political leadership from the Arab population. If it was difficult for the Middle Eastern countries to join a Western action against Iran, it now becomes almost impossible even if the Arab leaders know very well that an Iranian nuclear bomb aims at securing Iranian supremacy in the region. By taking a tough attitude in the cartoon case, the Iranians enhance this position. Iran, a traditional enemy of the Arabs, has managed to emerge as a champion of the chief Arab cause—the fight against Israel and Western values. Not many Westerners bother but watch carefully how the vocabulary is putting Europe, USA and Israel in the same box: the Western world.

Whatever foreign and security policies Europe may set in motion vis-à-vis the Muslims and in particular the Arab world, it will be looked upon with suspicion. The Arab/Muslim regimes will be drawn towards a more intransigent line towards Europe. The extremists, even the terrorists, will emerge in the mindset

of many people as being right: "The Western world did not mean it when preaching co-existence. They despise us and look down upon us. Better to prepare for the inevitable conflict whatever form or shape it may take".

The U.S. is bogged down in its efforts to introduce democracy in the Middle East. Europe has demolished any room for manoeuvre it may have had to influence the Arab/Muslim mindset. The key to the future of the Arab/Muslim world is firmly in the hands of the Arabs and the Muslims themselves.

6. Image of the Western World after the Cartoon Case

How will the Western world look after the cartoon case? Will we see a divergence between USA and Europe, and will the Muslim world continue to look at the Western world as a monolith?

The initial reaction of both the U.S. and European governments was to distance themselves from the cartoons and express their view that other people's religious feelings should not be hurt. The U.S.[8], the UK[9] and France came out with critical comments against the publication, but did not voice any opinion on the position of the Danish government. This attitude became blurred as the violence directed against Danish embassies produced statements against official trade boycotts and violence. It is unclear whether the second wave of statements[10] also meant that the U.S. and European governments shifted their attitude with regard to the publication itself, or whether it was a reaction against violence and disturbance of normal international relations.

The U.S. may not, after all, have felt too unhappy by watching what was going on. For years, the U.S. preaching to remodel the Middle East – and what in the eyes of Washington was regarded as the militancy of parts of the Muslim and Arab world – had fallen on deaf ears in Europe. The Europeans had not responded as the U.S. would have expected them to do. Now they themselves could taste the bitter drink. No middle ground seems to available in what the U.S. regards as a seminal struggle. The Europeans were punished, and they deserved it.

There is, however, a crucial snag in this perspective. Those who use the cartoon case are extremists and those in the Muslim and/or Arab camp using it direct their animosity, even attack not against Denmark or Europe but the U.S.. They want to fuel anger against the U.S. and see the cartoon case as one of many pieces in this puzzle. For them the enemy is the Western world, and the U.S. is the foremost representative of the Western world. Their real target may not be the Western world, but the political leaders in the Arab and/or Muslim world

co-operating with the Western world. By depicting the Western world as not respecting Islam and degrading Muslim values, they want to discredit political leaders inside the Muslim world trying to lead their countries into the age of globalization by broadening links with the Western world.

In this respect, the coincidence in timing of the cartoon case and several other events could not have been worse. The following cases all seem to prove the Western double standard or, even worse, some kind of Western policy to degrade the Muslim and/or the Arab world:

(1) Pictures showing torture of prisoners in Abu Ghraib were published again and even if they were not new pictures, they conveyed the same impression as the original ones namely that American servicemen in Iraq do look down upon Arab/Muslim prisoners.

(2) An Austrian court sentenced the British historian David Irving to three years imprisonment for denying the Holocaust. Since the cartoon case exploded, many Muslims have repeatedly pointed to Europe's attitude towards the Holocaust in contrast to its attitude towards Islam as an illustration of double standards. Now they had proof.

(3) Australia's Prime Minister John Howard in a book, allegedly written earlier but published now, was quoted for making unfriendly remarks about parts of the Muslim community, and even if his remarks did not point at the Muslim community as such it was one more example.[11] of western bias against the Muslim world.

(4) The uproar in the U.S. about the purchase of six American ports by a Dubai state-owned enterprise, claiming that such a purchase would jeopardize national security.

These cases may all follow the law in European nations and/or the U.S. and they can certainly be explained by logic, but it does not remove Muslim suspicions of the existence of a double standard. Even seen with European eyes, it makes mockery of the line taken by some Europeans that freedom of expression knows no borders. They unequivocally demonstrate that such borders do exist, but apparently not for insulting Muslims. It may be difficult to judge whether the cartoon case will move the U.S. and Europe towards or away from each other. It seems, however, obvious that in the eyes of the Muslim and Arab world, the cartoon case brings out into the open the notion that the Western world is united in applying double standards

with regard to values, and Islam and the Muslim world rank at the lower end of the scale than Western culture.

The Europeans and the Americans may not think that they are in the same boat but the Muslim world perceives it as such. The Muslims are quite capable of distinguishing the European political and economic policies from the American, but for them the decisive question is the attitude towards Muslims, Muslim culture and Islam – and on that score Europe and the U.S. are perceived to have similar views.

7. Whither European Values?

Most intriguing of all: What will it mean for European values, such as freedom of expression confronted with responsibility for what is said and done? Freedom of expression guaranteed in Western countries, is not unlimited. Nor is it true that European, or for that matter Danish mass media, do not exercise self-discipline. The Danish newspaper Jyllands-Posten has itself admitted that a couple of years ago it refrained from printing certain images of Jesus Christ, as they were deemed insulting. In all countries, there are precedents and/or legal provisions setting limits for what can be said or shown. In Denmark, article 266B in the penal code has been used against people speaking degradingly about Islam and/or the Muslims. Article 140 of the penal code prohibits blasphemy.

On March 16, 2006 the Danish Director of Public Prosecutions decided not to institute criminal proceedings in the cartoon case. The decision[12] falls in two parts and a brief summary reveals the following: Part one deals with the specific case: *In Denmark criminal proceedings may only be instituted, if it with the necessary certainty may be assumed, that the offence is punishable.* The Director of Public Prosecutions has made a thorough evaluation of all material and jurisprudence relevant to this case and has found that it may not with the necessary certainty be assumed that the publication of the said article is a punishable offence.

Part two deals with the general question of blasphemy:

> *The Director states in his decision that although there is no basis for institution of criminal proceedings in this case, both provisions of the Criminal Code contain a restriction of the freedom of expression. Section 140 of the Criminal Code protects religious feelings against mockery and scorn and Section 266B protects groups of persons against scorn and degradation on account of i.a. their religion. To the extent publicly made*

> *expressions fall within the scope of these rules there is, therefore, no free
> and unrestricted right to express opinions about religious subjects.*

The decision by the Danish Director of Public Prosecutions cannot be appealed to a higher administrative authority. This follows from Section 99(3) of the Danish Administration of Justice Act. As the decision by the Director of Public Prosecutions is based on a thorough examination of all aspects, which may have legal implications in this matter, the Danish Minister of Justice has no basis to change the decision. The heart of the decision is that there is restriction of freedom of expression, but the specific case did not warrant criminal prosecution.

For the Muslims having initiated this procedure, the decision can hardly have been satisfactory, however correct it may be from a legal point of view. According to the Muslim point of view, there certainly was mockery and scorn. According to the Danish point of view, based upon legal practice and earlier decisions, this was not the case. The question of multicultural society or not, equality among religions or not, different thresholds for different religions exploded into the open exposing the different perceptions between the Danes (Europeans) and how they see Christianity, and the Muslims and how they see Islam. The political and moral problem is the gap in perception of which values the legal system shall protect. The national legal system reflects the norms and values of society. The legal system was caught unaware and unprepared, being asked to rule in a case predominantly and overwhelmingly not legal but psychological, emotional, religious and above all political.

The case illustrates what is known from economic globalisation. National sovereignty has become an empty shell and is not anymore instrumental in governing nation-states' behaviour and safeguarding their interests. It does not really matter in this context whether it is legal or not according to Danish law to print the cartoons. That may be an interesting topic for academic debate, but bears no impact on realities. What is done and said inside a nation-state in conformity with its national sovereignty triggers international reactions. A nation-state cannot any longer do what it wants neglecting repercussions abroad.

The immediate effect will certainly be a higher degree of self-discipline by the European mass media. This is being denied by a large number of people, but is nevertheless true. Very few newspapers would want to test the limits again. The longer term effect may be some kind of international code or convention, inviting nation-states to amend their legislation making it a blasphemous act to hurt the feelings of people adhering to religions and going the necessary step further to define what blasphemy actually is. As long as different religions and different national cultures operate different thresholds, no solution is in sight.[13]

8. The Muslim World as seen from the Western World

The western world has conveniently forgotten the glorious past of Islam and the Muslim word and the many scientific breakthroughs that have taken place in the Muslim/Arab world.[14] In Western eyes, the Muslim world is looked at as backwards and as former colonies not having been able to get their act together after the exit of Western powers. It is also conveniently forgotten that democracy is nothing new for the Muslim world. India, with the second largest Muslim population in the world, and Indonesia, after the fall of President Suharto in 1998, are genuine democracies, although admittedly they function under secular constitutions.

The Muslim/Arab world has not been able to find a place in economic globalization. There are many reasons for that, but in the eyes of the Western world, it is primarily the fault of the Muslims themselves. They have not adapted, they have not put in place modern institutions and their economic systems reflect half-hearted attempts to adopt market economies.

In the vocabulary of modern politics and economics, the Muslims have ended up in the unenviable role as losers in the global market place. They have not followed the export led pattern of growth chosen by Japan, the Southeast Asian countries, China and now India, but instead opted for a domestic and semi-protectionist economic policy. But this perception goes further. The large majority of guest workers in Western Europe come from Muslim countries and in many cases, do the kind of work the Europeans themselves shy away from, and often for low salaries. The first generation staying in their new home/host countries is often holding back on higher education for their children, keeping them in the same position as their parents. This may be right or wrong and statistics are used with political purpose in mind, but it is difficult to contest this view held by most Europeans.

Basically, to state the unpleasant and brutal truth the mainstream European view is that the Muslims are living in an old-fashioned world dominated by a religion standing rooted to the spot, and apart from oil exports outside the paradigm of economic globalisation, have only themselves to blame.

9. The Muslim World as Seen from Inside

Seen from inside the Muslim world, the spectacular point is that many Muslims and Arabs do feel that the Western model has been tried. It failed and did so primarily

because it was not supported from outside. Egypt followed a democratic course for a considerable period of time until the middle of the 20th century. Iraq maintained a secular state for several decades. But none of these attempts were embraced by the Western world. The Western world criticizes the Muslim world and the Arab world for not modernizing societal norms, not introducing democracy and not adopting the secular model. "But we tried that", comes the answer, "and then you let us down". Seen through the Muslim/Arab prism this leaves no other way than the dogmatic and/or orthodox Islamic road. What else could be tried?

In the Western world, it is again conveniently overlooked that modernization and adaptation is a priority item on the agenda of the Muslim countries. When the Organization of Islamic Countries (OIC) held its summit meeting in 2003 in Malaysia's capital, Kuala Lumpur, Prime Minister Mahathir gave the opening address.[15] In the Western world it was mainly, if at all reported as an attack on Israel and he did indeed let loose some vitriolic words against Israel. But in the Muslim world, it was noted for its harsh criticism of the Muslims themselves, telling them in Dr. Mahathir's blunt way that they had themselves to blame for being underdeveloped. On how the Western world looks upon the Muslim world, the former Malaysian leader said among other things the following: "Today we, the whole Muslim ummah are treated with contempt and dishonour. Our religion is denigrated. Our holy places desecrated. Our countries are occupied. Our people starved and killed".[16] On how the Muslims feel and how they should feel, he said:

> Some would have us believe that, despite all these, our life is better than that of our detractors. Some believe that poverty is Islamic, sufferings and being oppressed are Islamic. This world is not for us. Ours are the joys of heaven in the afterlife. All that we have to do is to perform certain rituals, wear certain garments and put up a certain appearance. Our weakness, our backwardness and our inability to help our brothers and sisters who are being oppressed are part of the Will of Allah, the sufferings that we must endure before enjoying heaven in the hereafter. We must accept this fate that befalls us. We need not do anything. We can do nothing against the Will of Allah. But is it true that it is the Will of Allah and that we can and should do nothing? Allah has said in Surah Ar-Ra'd verse 11 that He will not change the fate of a community until the community has tried to change its fate itself.

On what the Muslim countries should do: "We must build up our strength in every field, not just in armed might. Our countries must be stable and well admin-

istered, must be economically and financially strong, industrially competent and technologically advanced. This will take time, but it can be done and it will be time well spent. We are enjoined by our religion to be patient. Innallahamaasabirin. Obviously there is virtue in being patient". Dr. Mahathir expressed what many Muslims feel. The time has come for adapting to the modern world and only the Muslims can do that. There is no room for self-pity and illusions.

The challenge to this view comes from three groups inside the Muslim world. Firstly, the clerics and what we may call the dogmatic circles, taking the stance that what is written in the Koran is valid once and for all and does not need to be interpreted or seen in the light of the times we live in. It is difficult to know how dominating this group is inside Islam, but judged by history, there certainly must be a debate also among the clerics about the future course for Islam. The clerics influence the Muslims by interpreting the religion, hence their influence is considerable, especially in a time where the importance of religion and Islam is growing.

Secondly, this growing importance of Islam for the Muslims can at least partly be explained by the new geopolitical situation after the fall of the Soviet Empire in 1990. From 1945 to 1990, the secular world was divided between, broadly speaking, the American/Western model cherishing democracy plus the free market and the Soviet/Russian model cherishing one party rule plus central economic planning. The Cold War was a civil war inside the secular world. As long as this civil war tapped the secular world for strength, Islam as the only existing theocratic model, was left in peace and did not feel any pressure or threat from secularism. When the Soviet/Russian Empire fell apart, the road was cleared for only one global model. Islam and the Muslim world suddenly felt targeted by the conquering and overwhelmingly powerful American style capitalism. The Bush administration's drive for democracy and the open talk of remodelling the Middle East was taken as proof by the Muslim world that this threat was real. If the Muslims yielded, there will be only one global model. That model would be secularism unacceptable to many Muslims.[17]

Thirdly, many Muslims both in Muslim countries and as minorities abroad realize that they are lost behind in the global economic race. The label social losers are sometimes used, even if it may be the wrong way to describe their social position. But while the majority of the Western world finds that the Muslims have only themselves to blame, the Muslims, not surprisingly, take quite a different approach. In their view, the Western model is to blame. They are forced to live and work inside a model designed and operated by people who think differently from them. The paradigm imposed upon them, so to speak, means that they are automatically left out. Regardless of what they do, the American/Western model

will never permit an equal footing. For them the playing ground is not level. Thus, they blame the prevailing global model for alienating them. It is not their fault. Economic globalization perceived as American style capitalism is to blame.

10. Conclusion: Fundamentalism or Moderation?

The cartoon case reveals that inside the European camp, some parts of the political segment, the mass media and the public feel that the time has come to affront Islam. Muslim communities have grown in Europe without being integrated. The perception among many Europeans is that terrorist groups such as Al Qaeda have the support of parts of the Muslim world. Regrettably, the image of Islam as a world religion providing peace in the soul for hundreds of millions of people risks being erased. Not many Europeans are truly interested in knowing what Islam is about and what the religion actually teaches and stands for. They content themselves with superficial views, offered by the mass media and/or politicians pursuing their own agenda.

This paves the way for fundamentalists in Europe, as it can also be seen in the U.S. Such people are so convinced that their view is the only one and everybody else is wrong, that they have the right, and in some cases, the obligation to impose their view upon others, if necessary by force. The cartoon case also uncovers the fundamentalists inside the Muslim camp – people who decided to use it to pursue their course of action. Unfortunately, there are segments of Muslim society working to prevent the Muslim communities from participating fully and constructively in globalization.

In the European camp, the fundamentalist's argument is that freedom of expression cannot be contested, cannot be negotiated and that it means complete freedom. Those arguing for some degree of respect for other people's beliefs are brushed aside, and accused of abandoning several centuries of struggle to ensure freedom of expression. In the Muslim camp, the argument is that no insult to Prophet Muhammad can be tolerated and those trying to dampen the reaction are accused of not being true believers and abandoning the faith. In both camps, the fundamentalists have occupied the high ground, accusing the moderates of abandoning holy and untouchable principles – in short, being some kind of cultural and/or religious renegades.[18]

The future relationship between the Western world and the Muslim world will be determined by whether the fundamentalists manage to carry the day, or whether the moderates will be able to gain the upper hand. The moderates face an uphill struggle.

Endnotes

[1] The official Danish position as set out by Prime Minister Anders Fogh Rasmussen at several occasions can be found at:
(a) Press Statement, Danish Foreign Ministry, 31 January 2006. http://www.um.dk/en/servicemenu/News/StatementByTheDanishPrimeMinister AndersFoghRasmussenRegardingTheDrawingsOfTheProphetMohammed.htm
(b) Prime Ministers interview in Al-Arabiya. Press release, Dansih Forein Ministry, 2 February 2006. http://www.um.dk/en/servicemenu/News/PrimeMinistersInterview WithAlArabiya.htm
(c) Prime Minister Anders Fogh Rasmussen's opening statement in English at the press conference on 7 February 2006. http://www.um.dk/en/servicemenu/News/ PrimeMinisterAndersFoghRasmussens OpeningStatementInEnglishAtThePress ConferenceOn7February2006.htm
(d) Comment by a Danish scholar, Professor Jytte Klausen, "Rotten Judgment in the State of Denmark", Spiegelonline. http://service.spiegel.de/cache/international/0,1518,399653,00. html

[2] A complete timeline is available at Wikipedia 'Timeline of the Jyllands-Posten Muhammad Cartoon Controversy'. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Timeline_of_the_Jyllands-Posten_ Muhammad_cartoons_controversy

[3] For the UK see for example Guardian unlimited, special Report, articles on: Islam, Race and British Identity from a Conference held January 21, 2005. http://www.guardian. co.uk/islam/identity/0,,1394762,00.html

[4] For France see the works of:
Roy, Olivier
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[5] Part I, Article I-2, Treaty establishing a Constitution for Europe (2005), published by the Office for Official Publications of the European Communities, Luxembourg.

[5] For repudiating these views see for example:
(a) President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, "Let's Try To Get Beyond Caricatures", International Herald Tribune, 11 February 2006.
(b) Hassan Wirajuda, Foreign Minister of Indonesia, Aljazeera 8 February 2006 'radicals exploiting cartoon backlash'. http://english.aljazeera.net/NR/exeres/B9F71476-D6A9-409E-8C01-FB0139746391.htm

[7] An interesting view is put forward by Emeritus Professor Mohammad Ariff Abdul Kareem, Comment: Lessons to be learned from the cartoon furore, New Straits Times, 18 February 2006.

[8] (a) January 31, 2006. Former US President Bill Clinton stated that he feared anti-Semitism would be replaced with anti-Islamic prejudice and condemned "these totally outrageous cartoons against Islam". Source: Wikipedia Timeline.
(b) February 3, 2006. A US Department of State spokesman stated "We all fully recognize and respect freedom of the press and expression but it must be coupled with press responsibility. Inciting religious or ethnic hatreds in this manner is not acceptable." Source: Wikipedia Timeline.

[9] BBCNnews February 6, 2006, A Clash of Rights and Responsibilities. http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south_asia/4686536.stm

[10] (a) February 7, 2006. US Presidnet George W. Bush calls the Danish Prime Minister to confirm that he and the United States support Denmark during this crisis.
(b) February 2, 2006. UK Prime Minister Tony Blair expresses his full support and solidarity with Denmark
(c) January 30, 2006. The European Union backs Denmark, saying that any retaliatory boycott of Danish goods would violate world trade rules
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[11] PM's Muslim Comments 'Offensive', Sydney Morning Herald Tribune, 20 February 2006.

[12] The Decision is published in English on the home page of 'The Director of Public Prosecutions' (file No RA-2006-41-0151 of 15 March 2006. http://www.rigsadvokaten.dk/ref.aspx?id=890

[13] See for example Kishore Mahbubani, "The Opportunity of the Cartoon Crisis", YaleGlobal online 9 February 2006.

[14] See for example: (a) Armstrong, Karen (1993), Muhammad: A Biography of the Prophet, New york: Harper Collins; (b) Ajami, Fouad (1998), The Dream Palace of the Arabs, New York: Pantheon; (c) Hooker, Virginia and Amin Saikal (eds.), (2004), Islamic Perspectives on the New Millennium, Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies.

[15] Speech by Prime Minister Dr. Mahathir Mohamad at the 10th Islamic Summit Conference, October 16, 2003: http://www.bernama.com/oicsummit/speechr.php?id=35&cat=BI

[16] For a similar approach see former President of Indonesia, Abdurrahman Wahid, "Right Islamic way to defeat radicals", The Straits Times, 17 February 2006.

[17] For an analysis of secularism in the present world see, Wang Gungwu, "The Future of Secular Values", published by Social Science Research Council, New York. http://www.ssrc.org/sept11/essays/wang.htm

[18] For a discussion of this theme see for example, Syed Farid Alatas, "Issue shows 'clash' of Part I, Article I-2, Treaty establishing a Constitution for Europe (2005), published by the Office for Official Publications of the European Communities, Luxembourg.