Article

Islamic Caricature Controversy from Jyllands-Posten to Charlie Hebdo from the Perspective of Arab Opinion Leaders

Lana Kazkaz *[iD] and Míriam Díez Bosch [iD]

Blanquerna Observatory on Media, Religion and Culture, Ramon Llull University, Plaça Joan Coromines s/n, 08001 Barcelona, Spain
* Correspondence: lanaabdalwahabk@blanquerna.url.edu

Abstract: The Jyllands-Posten Muhammad cartoons controversy began after the Danish newspaper Jyllands-Posten published 12 editorial cartoons in September 2005. Cultural and political relations between the West and the Arabic and Islamic worlds have witnessed multiple events that revealed the nature and understanding of historical relations between the worlds, and the role of contemporary media in formulating them. After this incident, the phenomenon of Western media handling of Islamic religious symbols began to arouse interest, where they faced angry responses in the Arabic and Islamic worlds, which denounced Denmark, while Denmark, as a country, refused to apologize to Muslims for what they considered a major abuse, which led some Arab countries to suspend relations with the latter. Additionally, in January 2015, the French magazine Charlie Hebdo was targeted in a deadly attack on its headquarters in Paris, killing 12 people for its "red-line cartoons" on Islam. This study seeks to understand the positions of a group of opinion leaders comprised of intellectuals and influencers who represent cultural and political currents in a number of Arab countries from the phenomenon of cartoons in Western media. This study aimed to evaluate them on the intense reactions of rage witnessed in multiple Islamic countries that occurred after the release of these drawings, and ask them basic questions: Did the Arab media, opinion leaders, and intellectuals have an inciting role that provoked the Western media's handling of Islamic religious symbols or did this practice coincide with the Arab-Islamic cultural context and its limits? Answering the above questions helped to reveal the features of continuity and change in the perception of opinion leaders in the Arab world on the role of Western media in the dialogue and cultural conflict between the Arab-Islamic and Western worlds.

Keywords: cartoons; caricature; Charlie Hebdo; Islam; Jyllands-Posten; opinion leaders

1. Introduction

In late September 2005, a series of cartoons depicting the Prophet Muhammad and his followers appeared in the conservative Danish newspaper Jyllands-Posten, causing massive protests. These cartoons were considered intensely offensive for many Muslims; they portrayed the Prophet as a terrorist, devil, and advocate of suicide bombing (Klausen 2009). In most of the cartoons, Muhammad is depicted as bearded, turbaned, and dressed in nomadic clothing, reflecting an ancient, traditional, and barbaric time and culture (Deylami 2018). The publication of these cartoons in Denmark and then around the world set off a critical debate about the relationship between Islam, free speech, and democratic freedom, as well as the role of religious tolerance in secular democratic policies. Hundreds of thousands of Muslims protested their publication and boycotted Danish companies, and some of them resorted to threats of violence (Shadid and Sullivan 2006).

It was this latter move toward violence that became the depiction of Muslim protests in almost every discussion surrounding the controversy in the West. The running narrative was that this standoff between the press and Muslim protestors was emblematic of a larger

clash of cultural and political beliefs: between secular rationality/democratic freedom and conservative irrational Islamic religiosity (Hansen 2006).

During the Danish cartoon controversy, appeals to universal liberal values were often made in ways that marginalized Muslims. An analysis of the controversy reveals that referring to 'universal values' can be exclusionary when dominant actors fail to distinguish their own culture's embodiment of these values from the more abstract ideas (Rostbøll 2010).

The media portrays only the image of "the agreed reality" (as a stereotype), which can modify people's thinking, feelings, or behavior. Cartoons in Danish newspapers caused controversies, but the freedom of speech problem distracted attention from the core problem: racism, Islamophobia, xenophobia, and Muslim's stigma in the press (Sutkutė 2019).

In this paper, we will attempt to reveal the features of the continuity and change in the intellectual speech of Islamic, National, Leftist and Liberal currents in the Arab world that deal with freedom of expression and media publishing about Islamic religious symbols 15 years after the crisis of the Danish cartoons.

2. Materials and Methods

2.1. Methodology and Tools for Data Collection and Analysis

This study depends on the perspective of descriptive social studies, with qualitative nature studies comparing two time periods, in which the study compares the intellectual positions of a group of opinion leaders in the intellectual and cultural currents that cross a number of Arab countries in two phases. The first phase followed the publication of cartoons in the Danish press in 2005. They have been republishing a number of European newspapers of the same cartoons or publishing other newspapers. This phase of intellectual and cultural attitudes, which came in the form of reactions, extends from the end of 2006 to 2008. The second stage is the current position about 15 years later, 2019–2020.

The methodology for the study is based on the identification of information-gathering tools and analysis tools, as follows:

In the first phase, the content of the opinion material represented by a number of intellectual currents in the Arab world was based on the content of three Arabic daily newspapers: Jordanian AL-Ghad, Lebanese AN-Nahar, and Egyptian AL-Masry AL-Yawm, in the 2006–2008 research period, according to the specifications of the research samples shown later.

In the second phase, the opinion material from articles and commentaries from the three previous newspapers represented the same political-intellectual currents during the period 2019 to 2020.

2.2. Analysis Tool

This study is based on the Discourse Analysis tool, where the discourse is expressed as the perception of a person, group, intellectual, religious, or cultural movement on a public issue, and thus the discourse expresses the ideas and ideology of individuals and groups. The speech can be analyzed from an understanding of the features of the ideas that prevail at some point, and the features of the media content on a given issue, and from an understanding of the intellectual and ideological reactions to what the press is offering, as in the reactions of the intellectual currents to the issue of the cartoons dealing with Islamic symbols in the Western press.

The current study will depend on a set of tools for the speech analysis method:

The main and central theme of the speech: defining the main issues that the speech is based on in each, in which the researcher identified the key issues presented by the speech, and in each case, the most prominent of the discourse's underlying proposals.

In the evidence path or argumentum, this tool is used as follows:

1. Monitoring the evidence presented by the intellectual current to prove each thesis.
2. Observing the evidence that is emerging in the form of historical, religious, political examples, etc.
3. Identifying the apparent reasons why this current has taken an attitude.

2.3. Analysis of the Actors

This tool will be used to identify the forces that the speech of the intellectual currents in the Arab world address toward the issue of cartoons in the Western press, identify the notable features of these forces, and analyze the features and roles that the speech has linked up on these forces.

The samples of opinion articles in intellectual currents, 90 opinion articles representing the most widely spread and influential intellectual currents that are more sensitive to the issue discussed in 3 Arab countries (Egypt, Jordan, and Lebanon), are as follows:

- Traditional Islamic trends represented by the Muslim Brotherhood and Salafists.
- The national and left currents represented by opinion leaders from the writers and politicians representing these currents.
- Liberal currents represented by opinion leaders from writers and politicians.

The material samples include opinion articles published by writers representing the previous currents in the following newspapers: Jordanian AL-Ghad, Lebanese AN-Nahar, and Egyptian AL-Masry AL-Yawm. The first phase extended from 2006–2008, and the second one from 2019–2020, with a maximum of 90 press materials total for the three selected newspapers in both phases.

3. State of the Art

In this section, the gap between the East and the West is discussed, from the perspective of freedom of speech vs the sanctity of religious symbols, based on the two cartoon controversies in detail. This will include the background context of cartoon publishing, how the Muslims were presented in the Western press, and the central arguments of two main positions regarding the cartoons (accepting the dialogue or rejecting it). This section also discusses studies about Arabic media and how it played a role in moving the streets against Denmark.

3.1. Is It a Matter of Freedom of Speech or Sanctity of Religious Symbols?

The crisis of "Danish Cartoons" has expressed a clear gap in the cultural communication between the Muslim world and the Western world. This contributed to the news and cultural framing practiced by the media on both sides (Idris 2020). The cartoons have caused intense and sharp public debates but are diverse in many countries, and the concept of Islamophobia has been strongly restored to the debate. Studies have gone on to increase the link between Islamic symbols in the public sphere, such as the mosque and the veil, and violence and fear (Daas 2019). That later led to the emergence of another wave of studies that monitored the confrontation of Islamophobia in the European media (Aguilar 2019).

The political and strategic environment was favorable to the development of debates going toward the perspective of the clash of civilizations (Idris 2020). The most prominent features were the events of 11 September 2011 in the United States of America, the occupation of Afghanistan and Iraq in 2003, and the "War against Terrorism" environment by which the media worked, conducting public debates, and contributed to the reactions in both the Muslim and Western worlds. This and conducted public discussions contributed to reactions in the Islamic and Western worlds and asked the question: is the clash between the two worlds inevitable or is coexistence and understanding possible (Khan 2016).

The literature describes the reactions taking place around two perspectives: holding a central thesis and refusing to give it up. The Western thesis refused to compromise the values of freedom, and the Islamic thesis refused to violate the sanctity of religious symbols (Lindekilde et al. 2009) Table 1.

Table 1. How do we differentiate hate speech from freedom of expression?

Characteristic	Hate Speech	Free Speech
Purpose	Incite Violence against others	Allows people to share their beliefs, thoughts, and ideas openly
Encourages Debate	No, it encourages violence	Yes, it presents two sides of an issue
Effect on society	Degrades the society through unnecessary factions	Improves the society through social change
Effect on oneself	Hurts oneself and gets socially punished	Generally, gets supported
Attitude towards minority	prejudiced	Protects and values
Humane	No	Yes
Hate crime	Pro	Against

However, the debate won the public of both parties and was not absolute in Denmark (Jensen 2015) between the legal debate about the protection of freedom of expression and the respect of religious sentiments and the attitude of the general attorney, who proved more than one point of view.

3.2. The Debate between Accepting the Dialogue or Refusing It

The interesting part is that both the defenders and critics of the cartoons claim to be speaking from a liberal or progressive perspective, for example, equating progressive politics of our times with fighting Islamic reactionaries and accusing the leftist movements of supporting jihadis against the West. Sivanandan (2006) argues that no freedom is absolute and that absolute freedom is being used by the right-wing parties to justify anti-Muslim racism.

This debate has spread even within the Islamic world, which has expressed various reactions according to Wise (2007). For example, the argument between the Islamic preacher and the TV star Amr Khaled, who held a conference in Copenhagen and called for a cultural dialogue between the two parties, and one of the Muslim Brotherhood symbols Sheikh Yousef Al Qaradawi, who refused the call for dialogue. The descriptions of the reactions in the Muslim world varied.

3.3. Holding Muslims the Responsibility vs. Victimizing Them

Some studies have focused on the wave of violence; Danish flags were burned, and Danish ambassadors in many Muslim countries summoned protests on the cartoons. Consumers also boycotted Danish goods in several countries and issued threats of violence against Danish people in many Muslim and Arab countries (Cass 2006).

A number of Arab countries have announced diplomatic sanctions on Denmark, such as Libya and Saudi Arabia, and have withdrawn their diplomats (Triandafyllidou 2009). Many countries witnessed violence and attempts to burn Danish and Western embassies in Syria, Lebanon, and Indonesia, even extending to Britain (Mahroum and Alawneh 2015).

Many other studies have confirmed that peaceful responses in the Muslim world could have opened wider scopes of dialogue but have been rejected. Among them is the attempt by a group of Danish Imams to file complaints for fairness from Danish courts, but they were informed that there were no legal grounds for seeking fairness (Cass 2006).

Eleven ambassadors of Islamic countries tried to meet Danish Prime Minister Fog Rasmussen Fough Rasmussen, but he refused to meet with them, which was considered a mistake committed by the Danish government (Hervik 2006).

Berkowitz and Eko (2007) explained another aspect of the political and media debate that emerged when 57 of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation OIC countries attempted

to submit a draft resolution to the United Nations that considered the defamation of religions and prophets to be contrary to the right to freedom of expression.

Freedom of speech is also the central theme for an entire issue of International Migration, which is devoted to the debate on the relationship between Danish cartoons and freedom of speech. In return, the French Le Monde newspaper described it as an attempt to reduce freedom of expression and asked: "How many of these countries respect freedom of expression? How many journalists are imprisoned in these countries? What is the value of the human rights of Western countries represented in the United Nations?" (Berkowitz and Eko 2007).

Seidenfaden and Linde-Laursen argued that according to the first wave of European studies, two perspectives dominated the Danish cartoons. The first perspective holds Muslims the responsibility for extremist reactions that are unable to understand Western freedom of expression and pluralism (Seidenfaden and Larsen 2006; Linde-Laursen 2007).

The second perspective is victimizing Muslims, and the emergence of this phenomenon in Denmark is explained by the political environment against immigrants and Islamophobia. According Lindekilde et al., in the second wave of studies, more diverse and balanced proposals have begun to emerge and have expanded to include academic specializations such as migration studies in the European context, cultural identity studies, mass and political mobilization studies, globalization, and media studies (Lindekilde et al. 2009).

The mainstream media's coverage of the cartoon crisis generally reflected Huntington's self-fulfilling prophecy about a "clash of civilizations," especially in reports of reactions that favored violent demonstrations and emphasized fundamentally different political realities across the cultural divide (Kunelius et al. 2007).

Many media studies on "Danish cartoons" have been an extension of the debates raised by transnational media. New and old issues have been raised, such as the role of media in transnational mobilization and the impact or reconstruction of news standards, such as conflict, personification, simplification, stereotypes, and the role of the new news drama. New concepts have been strongly raised, such as public penetration, and a new understanding of social responsibility of the press has been advocated (Hussain 2007).

Standard political theories have been a discussion ground in the literature that addresses these events, but these discussions reveal how well these theories understand national cultural contexts, how prejudices such as the difference between European history with colonial heritage and American history, and the contexts that define the concepts of secularism, citizenship, and pluralism among cultures (Favell and Modood 2003).

The other meaning of the context in the cartoon discussions that many studies have raised refers to the various meanings in interpreting events and in understanding symbols and signs, such as the meaning of the bomb in the turban of the Prophet Muhammad, which was understood as a reference to the historical and ideological link of Islam with violence and terrorism (Lindekilde et al. 2009), which is the same case in Ridanpää (2009), who followed the role of joke and religious popular culture in the cultural-political crises.

Studies on Danish cartoons over 18 years have provided a deeper understanding of the role of media in framing cultural conflicts, as confirmed in Idris (2020), which addressed the editorial of the Swedish newspaper *Världen idag* (60 editorials) and revealed that the main recurrent theme of the editorial was the Islamic threat, where Muslims are portrayed in terms of broad significance. It portrays Muslims as a single, consistent, and stereotyped group (Steiner 2012).

Many Arab studies have rejected what they called the "Muslim Prison within the circle of religious Identity" and the full compatibility between the Western right-wing view of Islam and the view of "Islamic fundamentalists" of Islam (Boudinar 2007).

The Western media handling of Danish cartoons brought the phenomenon of Islamophobia to a new stage, a new stage that culminated in the terrorist attack of the newspaper Charlie Hebdo on 7 January 2015, in Paris. The relationship with the other has been transformed, and that other is no longer the immigrant, regardless of his origins and creed, but it is the "Muslim" (Haddad 2019).

3.4. Arabic Media Creating a Space for Attacking Denmark (Figures 1–3)

In contrast, Cherribi studied the coverage of the controversial Danish cartoons by the "Al Jazeera news channel" in 2006 and how these disagreements appeared on the news and were developed by leading political and religious commentators. The researcher says that at the beginning of the event, there were no signs of protest in the Arab street, but Aljazeera strongly moved the Arab street, created a new media situation in the Arab mass media, and then became the most important issue on the agenda for discussion in the Arab League and Islamic countries conferences (Cherribi 2006).
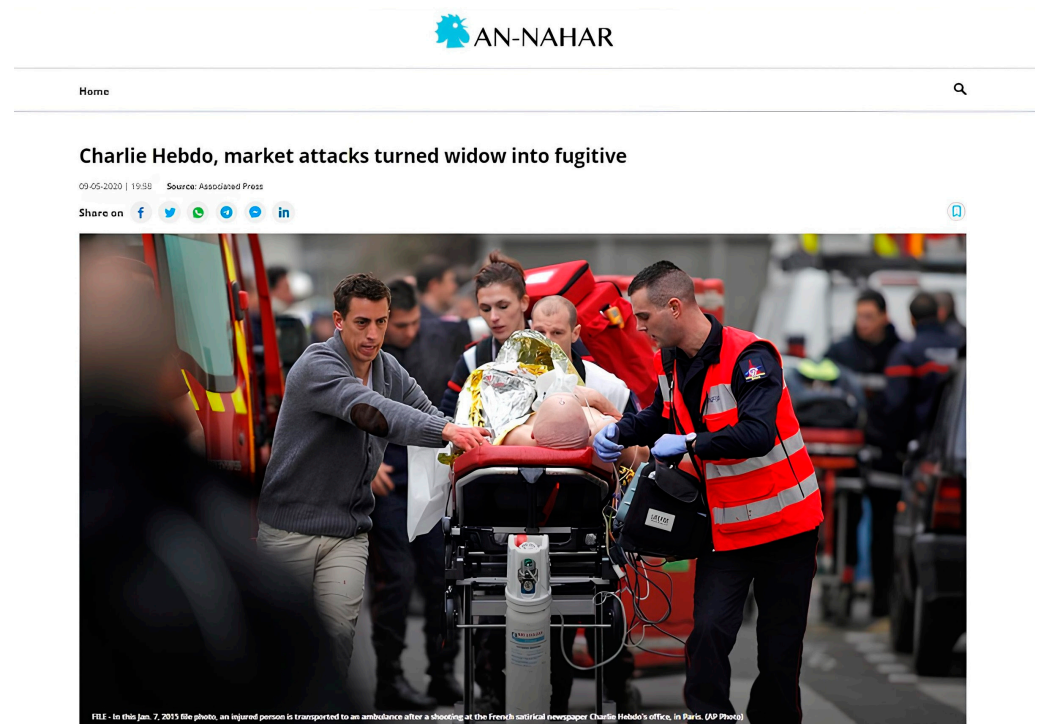

Figure 1. AN-NAHAR journal coverage for the attacks on the Charlie Hebdo Accident.

Another study confirmed that the Arab TV channels "Al Jazeera and Al Arabiya" played a pivotal role in spreading the conflict in the world through their news coverage of the spread of the animation (Müller et al. 2009). The UAE press devoted several pages to discussion, with daily reports on the early stages of violent clashes in many countries (Cass 2006).

The Gulf News newspaper went so far as to publish an article from the editor of Jyllands-Posten explaining the stance of his newspaper. This was declared a debate on the issue, but the next day an entire page was devoted to messages attacking Danish people. In Jordan, AL-Ghad daily newspaper published 99 press releases within 10 months in 2006 on Danish cartoons (Mahroum and Alawneh 2015).

Figure 2. AL-Masry AL-Yawm website: "Sheikh Al-Azhar demands Denmark to activate a law to protect religions".

Figure 3. AL-Ghad coverage for the Charlie Hebdo attack.

4. Analysis

The articles analyzed in this study were (90) from (3) Arabic daily newspapers in (3) Arab countries: Jordan AL-Ghad, Lebanon AN-Nahar, and Egypt AL-Masry AL-Yawm.

The analysis was conducted in two phases. The first phase (2006–2008) included 56 opinion articles, and the second phase (2019–2020) included 34 opinion articles.

Displaying the results includes analyzing three intellectual and political currents (Islamic, National Lefty, and Liberal). The analysis was conducted upon every speech (intellectual—political) using speech analysis tools, where the three most prominent theses were reviewed with the evidence, demonstration path, and reference frameworks that accompanied every speech. Then, the main actors were analyzed in the speech with roles or descriptions related to each actor.

4.1. First: Islamic Currents Speech (Political Islam)

4.1.1. Phase I following the Publication of the Cartoons in the Danish Press 2006–2008

Despite the multiple currents of modern political Islam in the Arab world (Salafism, Jihadist Salafism, the Muslim Brotherhood, Shiite political currents, Moderate Islamist currents, Islamic Sufism, and others), the voices of the conventional Salafism current, the Muslim Brotherhood, and Moderate Political Islam popped up more than those of the Jihadist and Takfirist through daily newspapers. The reason is that the other currents are not clearly active through newspapers, and the articles of those currents included in the analysis are 17 opinion articles, of which the main theses are the following:

1. Danish cartoons are Western conspiracy and not freedom of expression: This is the central thesis in Islamic speech in opinion articles belonging to this current in the searched newspapers. It was repeated directly 14 times. This thesis was based on a series of evidence that shaped the path of proof on which the speech was based. The most prominent of this evidence was as monitored:

    •   The world's attention has been drawn to the responses of Muslims, which came randomly and violently.
    •   This plot is part of the ongoing racist practices since the Crusades wars.
    •   An integrated approach to abuse, in coordination with politicians and journalists, and no need to apologize.

2. Is Islam a religion of violence: The speech is based on religious reference frameworks of Islamic holy texts. It is mostly selective texts or comes out of context. The speech also employed political frameworks to prove the conspiracy thesis, such as the call for offending Islam and Muslims and their symbols by history and contemporary Western leaders and politicians, which was repeated clearly and in a frame 10 times. It is complementary to the previous conspiracy, which means denying the idea of violence and linking it to Islam, and the most prominent evidence that the speech came to prove this thesis:

    •   Employ Islamic reactions to prove that Muslims practice violence.
    •   Racist views of Muslims and their sanctified landmarks.
    •   Western media practice more severe mental violence than physical violence.

The previous frameworks of reference have been repeated in basing these theses on the Islamic script, the "Quran," and providing examples of history that attempt to establish the principles of tolerance, compassion, and harmony in the conduct and behavior of the early Muslims.

In the two previous theses, three main actors followed up, emerging most prominently in the speech: Jyllands-Posten newspaper, the most prominent features and roles of the newspaper were observed as follows extreme right-wing newspaper, a newspaper that deliberately offended, spreading the culture of terrorism, a malignant, Jewish, and cheap commodity.

The second actor in the press speech, Denmark Prime Minister, who was described by the Islamic speech as: agreeing on the conspiracy, part of which, agreed to continue publication and continue abuse, and was critical of Islam and Muslims.

The third principal actor in the speech was the Arab political regime. The speech described it as multi-faceted and disparate (collusive regimes, leaders arouse anger, conspire against Islam with the West).

The speech used the main descriptions of the conspiracy that were repeated most frequently: A crusade, repeated 14 times; a racist conspiracy, repeated 11 times; and a malicious conspiracy, repeated 8 times. All of the newspapers committed themselves to describing the cartoons as offensive and used the concept in compound form in news coverage and opinion articles.

4.1.2. Phase II 2019–2020

It handled the Islamic symbols in the Western press published by the Islamic current writers in the researchable newspapers in the opinion articles and was less quantitative than the first stage, as 11 articles were written by the writers of this current and dealt with this subject. The three most prominent themes in the speech were as follows:

1. Abuses of Islam and the Prophet continue by the Western press. This thesis was repeated 11 times. It appeared that the press speech of the Islamic currents confirmed that the Western media continued to offend Islam, Muslims, and the Prophet Muhammad. The speech calls for wide and varied evidence to prove this thesis, including:

    -   Continued publication of offensive cartoons, media materials, or photographs of the Prophet or of Islamic symbols.
    -   The behavior of some Western newspapers and their insistence on offending for many years, such as the phenomenon of Charlie Hebdo and its aftermath.
    -   Western leaders continue abuse repeatedly through the Western media, the latest of which was Danish Minister of Immigration and Integration Inger Stogberg published at the end of 2017, on her Facebook page, a graphic offensive to the prophet.

The thesis was based on more political references than religious references, in which the evidence and narrative were linked with examples of political life and the media.

2. The continuation of media and civic institutions to provoke and oppose Muslims. The thesis appeared 7 times. The Islamic press said that the Western press insists under freedom of press to continue inventing events in order to provoke Muslims' feelings and speech. The thesis was also based on political and media references, rather than religious references, as the evidence and narrative that had been produced were linked to the news frameworks and media articles.

    -   Why did not all who offended Muslims and Islam be prosecuted under anti-Semitism law?
    -   Denmark's Federation of Teaching announces its desire to include cartoons offending the prophet.
    -   We will be held to question in the world and the hereafter for our silence on offending the messenger.

This thesis was based primarily on religious references by invoking examples of holy texts from the Holy Quran and the prophetic biography, second-class from historical references, and third-degree from political references.

In these previous terms, many actors emerged, most prominent of whom were the Western media. The analysis of descriptions and roles shows a matrix of descriptions and roles according to the Islamic current (Media insists on offending, repeated 11 times; extremist media, repeated 8 times; media that employs freedom for some interests, repeated 6 times).

4.2. Second: Speech of the National and Left Currents

The national and left-wing currents of the three Arab societies are numerous (Ba'athist nationalist currents, Nasserist nationalist currents, Independent national currents, leftist social currents, communist currents, nationalist and left-wing currents close to Palestinian

resistance, Independent nationalist, or leftist currents, etc.). The presence of these currents in the Arab press seems to be large, specifically in the opinion articles.

4.2.1. Phase I following the Publication of the Cartoons in the Danish Press First Phase 2006–2008

Twenty-four opinion articles were monitored in newspapers under analysis belonging to these currents and covered the Danish cartoons. The most prominent of which were written as follows:

1. Projection of the prevailing stereotypical image of terrorism on Arab societies: monitored 16 times at this phase, this was to say that:

   - The Western press campaign has a political objective linked to the war on terror that has been going on since the events of September 11 and the passing war on Iraq.
   - This campaign is the cultural face of the religious-oriented war in the East.
   - The tendency of Arabs and Muslims to be in a narrow corner of violence and awe.
   - The Arab and Islamic worlds are diverse peoples and societies.

2. Ignoring the legal and political responsibility of countries in offending religions and religious symbols. This appeared nine times in opinion articles, and the most prominent evidence it mentioned is:

   - Discrimination against persons on the basis of religion constitutes an affront to human dignity.
   - The campaign in the Western press is a violation of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.
   - The campaign in the Western press is strongly contributing to the spread of hate.

3. The extreme right in Europe and the West serves the extreme Islamic right by publishing these cartoons until it finds justification for violence and extremism. This thesis was strongly repeated 11 times in the researched newspapers and was presented by the speech through a series of evidence, including:

   - Although far-right activists are engaged in violence against Muslim immigrants, they are engaged in a hidden affinity with political Islam, which is seen as an ally against common enemies.
   - Both parties believe that there are theories of conspiracy that manipulate the world to the detriment of their own interests.
   - Each party gives the other justification and legitimacy for their existence.
   - This current is based generally on terms of political and intellectual references and provided examples of contemporary history.

The most prominent actors in this speech are: the capitalist West, which was described as trading terrorism and the description was repeated seven times; the search for an enemy was repeated five times; working for the Zionist project was repeated five times; the European media was repeated three times; serving capital agendas was repeated three times; hiding behind the lie of freedom of expression was repeated three times. The Arab political regimes: weak reactions four times, which were over three times.

4.2.2. Phase II 2019–2020

The attendance of religious symbols in the speech of the national and left currents in the daily press in these countries has retreated; the speech appeared in 11 opinion articles. These views have provided a clear and long-standing contrast between ideological positions that express conflict and those that express the call for reform and modernization. The three most prominent proposals were as follows:

1. Right-wing West insists on continuation of conflict: This thesis has been viewed 6 times and has been based on a series of evidence, including:

- The exploitation of religion in conflict to cover unjust relations and historical attempts to continue domination and subordination.
- The clash of civilizations is a strategic plan and not just an explanation of history.
- The fomenting of the conflict over offensive cartoons serves the expansionist Zionist project.

2. The anti-cartoons campaign against the messenger hurts, does not work, resends, and receives the damage. This thesis was repeated in the speech of the national and the left six times, and one of the most prominent evidences mentioned in the speech was that:

- Re-campaign against offensive cartoons offending Muslims in Europe and damaging their situations and interests.
- European Muslims can do something. They may be better than us, and better at doing so.
- Repeating the campaign again creates more mutual hate speech.

3. Restoring conflict benefits the project of oppressive and extremist forces on both sides. This thesis was repeated 4 times, and the most prominent evidence that the speech presented are:

- Restoring conflict is in the interest of restoring ISIS and the Taliban.
- The price of the verbal shows is ISIS in a fresh dress. They have been done by the Taliban monsters, destroyed the Buddha statues and raised the volume of East-hating Muslims.
- Europe today is more pro-Arab than anyone else.

In these terms, three key references were made to the speech: (1) the Political reference, by invoking examples of contemporary political practices and looking at interests; (2) ideological reference based on national and social ideas; (3) the historical reference.

The most prominent actors in the speech, as reflected in these theses, are, respectively: the right-wing forces on both sides, described as extremist, repeated 19 times, the oppressive and repeated 7 times, the alliance repeated 3 times. European Muslims came as reactive, describing them as having the ability to influence 5 times, as they were described as not needing our emotions 3 times.

4.3. Third: Liberal Currents

The liberal presence in the press in Jordan has increased significantly in the last two decades, while these currents occupy their historical position in the Lebanese press, while liberal writers have been declining in Egypt's press in the aftermath of the 2011 revolution.

4.3.1. Phase I following the Publication of the Cartoons in the Danish Press First Phase 2006–2008

Fifteen opinion articles belonging to this current were observed during this stage and dealt directly or indirectly with the subject of the Danish cartoons. The following are the most prominent liberal speeches in the Arab press concerning this issue.

1. Violence is unjustified: This proposition confirmed that the Arab and Islamic societies have the right to express their attitude and are free to do so without the use of violence that transports the event from opinion issue to an issue of terrorism and violence. Much evidence was provided:

- Attacks on Danish and Norwegian embassies and other European embassies.
- Offending churches and Christian clerics.
- Repeated threats of violence and killings.

2. The extreme European right is in a coalition with oppressive forces in the Islamic world. It has been repeated 12 times. The evidence circulated to support this thesis is:

- They raise naïve slogans seeking help from Bin Laden and Zarqawi.
- They repeat the same language and actions of the obscurantist groups.

- The publication of the cartoons, although it falls within the framework of freedom of expression, serves extremist religious groups in the first place and gives them legitimacy in their narrative.

3. Exaggeration in the reactions: this thesis, which the liberals repeated about 9 times in the articles discussed, stands for the reactions that surprised the Arab and foreign observers alike. The Arab and Islamic reactions exploded against Denmark and Norway 5 months after the incident, which took place in September 2005.

The Arab and Islamic escalation against Denmark as a whole, government, people, and economy, as a kind of violation of the well-known Islamic principle, which is the one who has committed the crime directly, should only, and this should be confined to this small newspaper itself.

Overreaction increases distortion and ambiguity: angry Arabs had no clear idea of what they were asking for from the Danish government, as anyone who knew the relevant European laws could realize that a democratic government could not interfere with the administration or coverage of newspapers, radio, and television channels.

The series of miscalculations and political calculations hit a number of Arab governments and political powers in support of the boycott, while the cartoons spread across the European newspapers, making these powers unable to further boycott.

In this thesis, the system of liberal freedoms and democracy has been more authoritative than others, along with the realistic political reference that works on the basis of interests. The most prominent actors are the Western right groups, which were described as "vigilance, obscurantism, provocation". These descriptions were repeated 10 times. Then, the Islamic religious groups, described as (obscurantism, and using conspiracy theory, raising naïve slogans), repeated 14 times. Then, the Arab regimes and decision makers were described as weakness, miscalculation, ambiguity, and hesitation, and they received these descriptions 13 times.

4.3.2. Phase II 2019–2020

At this stage, 12 article were analyzed, the United States of America and its President Donald Trump emerged as a major actor in the liberal discourse of the Arab press, where the United States were described as "absolute bias in favor of Israel, offending Islamic symbols, and standing in the way of international resolutions and the Palestinian right". These descriptions and roles were repeated 21 times in the study. In Europe, Muslim immigrants were described as incapable of understanding the European context, isolation, and contradiction, lack of respect for the values of host societies, which was repeated 9 times.

The liberal speech reiterated its reference to the value system of liberal democracy and real politics.

1. Islamophobia as a result of factors that are associated with Muslims, the most important of which is the failure of the education and tyranny systems in both the Arab and Islamic world, and the roles played by the immigrant Muslims in Europe.

    - Islamophobia is an Arab Islamic industry due to the persistence of authoritarianism, the failure of education systems, and the failure of development and the economy.
    - The large number of victims was not the major cause of the panic caused by those operations in Spain and Europe as a whole. The truer is the fact that those who carried out these bombings included Arab and Muslim elements who lived in Spain and Europe in general for different periods.
    - The context in which France has passed its law prohibits Muslim female students from wearing headscarves in French public schools.

2. The political miscalculation and the difference between the reaction of the United States of America and the reaction of small European countries

- The refusal to boycott the United States of America commercially or to use and employ economic punishment against it due to its unjust and aggressive stance against supreme strategic and political interests of Arabs and Muslims, above all, has its absolute bias toward Israel and its standing in the face of the application of international resolutions.
- What have Arab societies and countries done against the repeated insults of President Donald Trump and the abuses of religious symbols that have unleashed official and unofficial US figures against Islamic religious symbols.
- The "bullying" against small European countries that cannot be explained, on one hand, as unjustified hardness with Denmark and Norway, and on the other hand, the leniency with the United States of America on the same issue, which means insulting Islamic religious symbols.

3. Disengagement and the call for a settlement regarding freedom of expression

- There is a need to bridge the communication gap that causes repeated urban misunderstanding. This means opening up mutual channels of communication that offer more opportunities for people's dialog, not just for politicians and the people.
- The Arab and Muslim communities are characterized as having great diversity and cannot be taken once and described as one in both stance on freedom of expression and the civilized conflict.
- There is a need for making International or European-Arab understandings on the limits of dealing with religious symbols.

5. Discussion

This research aimed at revealing the features of the continuity and change in the intellectual speech of Islamic, National, Leftist, and Liberal currents in the Arab world that deal with freedom of expression and media publishing about Islamic religious symbols, through analyzing their media speech on the crisis of the Danish cartoons in two phases: first in the years of initial responses and the political, economic, information in (2006–2008), and the current crises in (2019–2020).

The analysis of the press speech of Arab political currents on this crisis has led to the fact that the reactions in these societies in the first stage were dominated by one opinion in rejecting these cartoons. Under this heading, there were various opinions, while political and intellectual currents witnessed diversity within them in a way that appreciates the situation regarding this crisis. This seems to be the magnitude of the proposals that each speech has made and the contradictions sometimes even in one speech. While a common principle prevailed in the first stage, that is, condemning and rejecting these cartoons, and under this broad principle, a multiplicity of views and diversity emerged in addressing the crisis.

The fact that intellectual currents are being challenged to the broad title of refusing to even discuss the free speech of the crisis makes media discourse more akin to the theory of Spiral of Silence that individuals are afraid of being isolated or afraid to face the prevailing trend, which is the result of the domination of one idea or a situation that constitutes a general current; thus, any social group or society at large can isolate, ignore, or exclude members because of their views.

Fear of isolation, however, keeps silent or goes along the way, rather than expressing views. The media is the most important factor in the dominant idea and people's understanding of the dominant idea. An assessment of one's social environment may not always be related to reality (Noelle-Neumann 1993). This gets along with the responses given in the first stage of the speech, as the multiplicity and diversity of opinions did not strengthen the existence of a contradictory trend but a spiral process that establishes one opinion as the dominant opinion over time. These changes in assimilation prove one view as the dominant one and change the fluid state to the solid state, which may lead to violence (Noelle-Neumann 1977).

The nature of the reactions has shown the fragile contrast between the 3 intellectual currents in the first stage, i.e., the domination of the cultural and political factors together in the formation of opinion leaders' opinions on Islamic symbols in the Arab world.

The results clearly agreed with what "Castells" said: individuals resort to the information, ideas, or goals they want. They are likely to rely on their intellectual resources to find information that supports and does not conflict with their goals (Castells 2009).

The idea of conspiracy, calling history, selective memories, and stereotypes in the responses was provided by the intellectual currents, namely the Islamic current, the national and left currents, and specifically in the first stage. Struggle makes the proposal of theory continuous, and people are lurking in believing what they want to believe in and searching for facts that support this belief. They are more careful in assessing the facts that contradict their beliefs, which happened in the media campaign that set the public to occupy Iraq in 2003 (Dornschneider 2007). The tendency to accept any economic damage and assert the principle of economic boycott also seems consistent with Jenkins' view that values affect individual choices more than economic interests, and emotions affect more than facts, arguments, and logic (Jenkins 2006).

In the second stage, there was more diversity and pluralism of views, but the change in attitudes, if happened in many terms, but overall moderate, is given two fundamental factors in the governance of change and continuity, which are the nature of the proposals and the change and nature of the descriptions and roles of the actors.

Overall, there is a small change in attitudes of the Islamic current, a moderate change in attitudes of the nationalist and leftist currents, and a moderate change in attitudes of liberal currents. It is clear that the dominant trend has retreated in the second stage, which has led the nationalist—left and liberal currents to retreat from the dominant trend. Thus, building new media frameworks in the speech, namely counter-framing, counter frame specifically in the speech on religious symbols. This happens when the level of unity and harmony among elites and the level of harmony within cultural frameworks recedes, that is, when public space produces real diversity (Ouf and El Zafarany 2018).

The political environment and the world's events and shifts over the next 10 years over Danish cartoons have overshadowed media speech in the Arab world. Cultural dominance is being seen to have declined significantly in the second phase in favor of a stronger political factor in the debate on religious symbols (Hervik 2006).

6. Conclusions

Despite dozens of Western studies on the stereotypes expressed in the Western press about Arabs and Muslims since the early twentieth century, which focused on insulting Arabs and Muslims and disregarding their cultural symbols, however, most of these studies did not directly focus on the role of the political factor and focused much on the cultural context at the expense of the political context. The analysis of the media discourse of these intellectual currents, which dealt with the crisis of the cartoons of the Danish, highlights the power of the conflict political factor, namely the position on the Arab-Israeli conflict, and the strong sense of the influence of unjust international relations in determining the nature of the responses from the Arab-Islamic East. These responses are always expected to increase or decrease according to the strength of the political factor.

It is imperative that this factor be strongly taken to analyze the future of conflict or cultural understanding and to understand the dominance of conspiracy versus understanding the context of Western liberal freedoms, understanding Western media selectivity, and the persistence of negative images of Islamic religious symbols in return for the decline of similar stereotypes in the Western press about other ethnic and religious groups.

Overall, it is impossible to criticize freedom of speech without turning the critical argument into an example of what situational irony means in practice because freedom of speech cannot be criticized without freedom of speech.

The burning of flags in front of Danish embassies all around the world became a symbolic gesture that implied not only hostility toward Jyllands-Posten, the Danish gov-

ernment, and Denmark as a country, but toward the whole Western ideology. When free speech is considered the base of democratic legitimacy, the democratic model of society as a whole became the center of criticism ironically, which was a consequence of the same base that created it. It is imperative that this factor be strongly taken into consideration in the analysis of both future conflict and cultural differences. It is also empirical to understand the differences between dominance of conspiracy versus the context of Western liberal freedoms alongside the Western media selectivity of negative images of Islamic symbols, when this selectivity seems to be absent in the Western press when discussing other ethnic and religious groups. The recent turbulence caused by the Charlie Hebdo cartoons has already shown a slight change. Unfortunately, we witnessed violence again. However, the swift and universal condemnation, as well as the collaboration between different parties to denounce it, was impossible in 2005, which creates cautious optimism in thinking that lessons have been learned from the Danish cartoon case.

Author Contributions: Conceptualization, L.K.; Formal analysis, L.K. and M.D.B.; Investigation, L.K.; Methodology, L.K. and M.D.B.; Resources, L.K.; Supervision, M.D.B.; Validation, M.D.B.; Writing—original draft, L.K.; Writing—review & editing, L.K. and M.D.B. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

References

Aguilar, Luis Manuel Hernandez. 2019. Countering Islamophobia in Germany. In *Countering Islamophobia in Europe*. Edited by Law Ian, Easat-Daas Amina, Arzu Meraliand and S. Sayyid. London and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 289–322.

Berkowitz, Dan, and Lyombe Eko. 2007. The Mohammed cartoons affair and maintenance of journalistic ideology. *Journalism Studies* 8: 779–97. [CrossRef]

Boudinar, Samir. 2007. Danish cartoons, conflict of values and identity, possibilities of the popular actions. In *Al-Bayan Journal*. Riyadh: The Arab Center for Human Studies.

Cass, Peter. 2006. A dozen Danish cartoons and the wrath of the Muslim world. *Pacific Journalism Review* 12: 148–54. [CrossRef]

Castells, Manuel. 2009. *Communication Power*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Cherribi, Sam. 2006. From Baghdad to Paris: Al-Jazeera and the Veil. *Harvard International Journal of Press/Politics* 11: 121–38. [CrossRef]

Daas, Easat Amina. 2019. Islamophobia Is on the Rise. This Is How We Can Tackle It. World Economic Forum. Available online: https://bit.ly/3hKcnMY (accessed on 12 June 2023).

Deylami, Shirin S. 2018. Fighting Rage with Fear: The "Faces of Muhammad" and the Limits of Secular Rationality College of Humanities & Social Sciences, Western Washington University, Bellingham, WA 98225-9082, USA. *Religions* 9: 89. [CrossRef]

Dornschneider, Stephanie. 2007. Limits to the supervisory function of the press in democracies: The coverage of the 2003 Iraq war in the New York Times and Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung. *Global Media Journal* 2: 33–46.

Favell, Adrian, and Tariq Modood. 2003. The Philosophy of Multiculturalism: The Theory and Practice of Normative Political Theory. In *Contemporary Political Philosophy: A Reader and Guide*. Edited by Finlayson Alan. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, pp. 484–95.

Haddad, Karema. 2019. Islamophobia: How Did Fear of Islam Developed? Available online: https://bit.ly/3nxymyS (accessed on 12 June 2023).

Hansen, Randall. 2006. The Danish cartoon controversy: A defense of liberal freedom. *EUSA Review* 19: 1–6.

Hervik, Peter. 2006. The predictable responses to the Danish cartoons. *Global Media and Communication* 2: 225–30. [CrossRef]

Hussain, Ali. 2007. The Media's Role in a Clash of Misconceptions: The Case of the Danish Muhammad Cartoons. *The International Journal of Press/Politics* 12: 112–30. [CrossRef]

Idris, Murad. 2020. War for Peace: Genealogies of a Violent Ideal in Western and Islamic Thought. *Perspectives on Politics* 18: 213–15. [CrossRef]

Jenkins, Henry. 2006. *Convergence Culture Where Old and New Media Collide*. New York and London: New York University Press.

Jensen, Tim. 2015. Blasphemy in Denmark. In *The Muhammad Cartoons, and Recent Discussions and Developments*. Edited by Miriam Diez Bosch and Jordi Sánchez Torrents. Blasphemy: Blanquerna Universitat Ramon Llull, pp. 7–24.

Khan, Minhas Majeed. 2016. Is a Clash between Islam and the West Inevitable. *Strategic Studies* 36: 1–23.

Klausen, Jytte. 2009. *The Cartoons That Shook the World*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

Kunelius, Risto, Elisabeth Eide, Oliver Hahn, and Roland Schroeder. 2007. *Reading the Mohammed Cartoons Controversy: An International Analysis of Press Discourses on Free Speech and Political Spin*. Bochum: Projekt Verlag, Bochum/Freiburg.

Lindekilde, Lasse, Per Mouritsen, and Ricard Zapata-Barrero. 2009. The Muhammad Cartoons Controversy in Comparative Perspective. *Ethnicities* 9: 291. [CrossRef]

Linde-Laursen, Anders. 2007. Is Something Rotten in the State of Denmark? The Muhammad Cartoons and Danish Political Culture. *Contemporary Islam* 1: 265–74. [CrossRef]

Mahroum, Mohammad, and Hatem Salem Alawneh. 2015. A Content Analysis of News Coverage of the Danish Cartoons Affairs in Al-Ghad Jordanian Daily Newspapers. *Al-Manarah* 21: 379–92.

Müller, Marion, Esra Özcan, and Ognyan Seizov. 2009. Dangerous depictions: A visual case study of contemporary cartoon controversies. *Popular Communication* 7: 28–39. [CrossRef]

Noelle-Neumann, Elisabeth. 1977. Turbulence in the climate of opinion: Methodological applications of the spiral of silence theory. *Public Opinion Quarterly* 41: 143–58. [CrossRef]

Noelle-Neumann, Elisabeth. 1993. *The Spiral of Silence: Public Opinion, Our Social Skin*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Ouf, Ahmed, and Nourhan El Zafarany. 2018. Diversity and Inclusion in the Public Space as Aspects of Happiness and Wellbeing. *Journal of Urban Research* 28: 109–29. [CrossRef]

Ridanpää, Juha. 2009. Geopolitics Geopolitics of Humour: The Muhammed Cartoon Crisis and the Kaltio Comic Strip Episode in Finland Geopolitics of Humour. *Geopolitics* 14: 729–49. [CrossRef]

Rostbøll, Christian. 2010. The use and abuse of 'universal values' in the Danish cartoon controversy. *European Political Science Review* 2: 401–22. [CrossRef]

Seidenfaden, Tøger, and Rune Engelbreth Larsen. 2006. *Karikaturkrisen En Undersøgelse af Baggrund og Ansvar*. Copenhagen: Gyldendal.

Shadid, Anthony, and Kevin Sullivan. 2006. Anatomy of the Cartoon Protest Movement. *Washington Post*. February 16. Available online: http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/02/15/AR2006021502865.html (accessed on 12 June 2023).

Sivanandan, Ambalavaner. 2006. Freedom of speech is not an absolute. *Race & Class* 48: 75–92.

Steiner, Kristian. 2012. The Image of Islam and Muslims in Swedish Radical Christian Press. *Journal of Religion in Europe* 5: 192–222. [CrossRef]

Sutkutė, Rūta. 2019. Media, Stereotypes and Muslim Representatoion: World After Jyllands-Posten Muhammad Cartoons Controversy. *Eureka Social and Humanities* 6: 59–72. [CrossRef]

Triandafyllidou, Anna. 2009. The Mohammad cartoons crisis in the British and Greek press is a European matter. *Journalism Studies* 10: 36–53. [CrossRef]

Wise, Lindsay. 2007. Amr Khaled vs Yusuf Al Qaradawi: The Danish Cartoon Controversy and the Clash of Two Islamic TV Titans. *Transnational Broadcasting Studies (Tbs)* 16: 18–29.