Cultural Difference or Cultural Hegemony?
Contextualizing the Danish Cartoon Controversy
within Migration Spaces

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Abstract
This article will argue that the growing polarization between what is perceived as Western society and Muslim 'communities' can neither be analyzed as a clash between identities nor as a reflection of cultural differences. This polarization operates in a context of cultural hegemony, a sort of cultural logic of late capitalism, through which power and global capital are allied and where the migrants are either invisible or hyper-visible. I will take the example of the Danish cartoon episode as a controversy that reflects the cultural hegemony and power structure deployed against undesirable groups such as migrants living in Europe. Yet, to recall Antonio Gramsci, it is in this moment of crisis where migrants' agency will be in position to destabilize the hegemonic forces because migrants are not merely victims – they hold a responsibility toward their situation. After contextualizing this controversy within the migration space, I will argue that the controversy does not concern censorship and freedom of expression. It is a question of how one can define universalism. This has implications for how multiculturalism is perceived; this article argues that issues of multiculturalism and geopolitics cannot be detached from one another.

Keywords
Euro-Islam; cultural hegemony; Danish cartoon controversy; Muslim migrants; clash of civilizations

Introduction

Sociologists and social scientists attempt to understand conflicts using many different mediums. Some are interested in primordial identity, which often

* I would like to thank the many scholars who contributed to the enrichment of the ideas of this article. First is Hossein Shahidi, with whom I initiated a statement at the beginning of the Danish cartoon controversy, parts of which are reproduced in this paper (Cartoon Controversy: A Crisis in the Making) (Shahidi and Hanafi 2006). Some 200 academics from different Arab and European countries signed the statement, which forms the basis of the first part of this
refers to national, religious, and ethnic identity. Amin Maalouf (2003) illuminated the roots of violence and hatred seen in tribal forms of identity. Samuel Huntington’s *Clash of Civilization* also belongs to this trend as Huntington sees Muslims as an identity group. Social psychology has offered major contributions in order to comprehend the emergence of conflict and the psychological basis of intergroup discrimination with the Social Identity Theory (SIT). The SIT attempts to identify the minimal conditions that would lead members of one group to discriminate in favor of the in-group to which they belonged and against another out-group (Tajfel and Turner 1986). In other words, once the boundaries are perceived as impermeable, individuals will display inter-group behavior that favors the in-group at the expense of the out-group (Chiasson et al. 1996). The advantage of this approach is that it allows the social/urban context to become a major factor in triggering an individual to think, feel, and act on the basis of his personal, family, or ethnic ‘level of self’ without the essentialist predisposition associated with the primordial ethnic/national identities. The notion of ‘salience’ is very important in this case, indicating the activation of an identity in a situation (Stets and Berke 2000). The problem of the SIT lies with its over-emphasis on the identity configuration of the individual as a leading factor to action.

On the other hand, I myself believe that ‘value theory’ is more appropriate for helping in understanding conflict more comprehensively than the other theories. In sociology, value theory is concerned with personal values and how those values might change under particular conditions. Different groups of people may hold or prioritize different kinds of values (such as social justice) influencing social behavior. For Pat Duffy Hutcheon (1972), there has been a pronounced tendency in sociology to under-emphasize the study of values and moral issues.¹

The value system is thus a theory to highlight the subjectivity of the actors without neglecting the power structure, because the value system is not only produced by religion, ethnicity or family but also by the position the individual holds in society. Some European researchers working on migration studies have not acknowledged sufficiently the fact that the forging of individual values is an interdependent system of interaction within the origin and

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¹ Hutcheon’s survey of accomplishments in value study revealed at least four rather disturbing tendencies: a failure to deal with the source and validation of values, a tendency to assume that society is antecedent to the individual, a stress on conformity and minimization of the role of reason, and finally a confusion surrounding the concept of value (Hutcheon 1972).
host society’s culture. Values, culture, and social identities are determinative of behavior, just as they are simultaneously shaped by the actions of their ‘carriers’ and members.

The French mass media reported the urban riot of 2006, with youths burning thousands of cars, as a communitarian conflict, pointing their finger towards the North African communities. They were incapable of seeing the suburban identity formation arising from the actors’ feelings towards the social injustice they had faced or as a byproduct of the differentiation between the values of these young, rioting French from migrant origin, and those of the overwhelming majority of the (North) Africans who are rather well integrated in French society with weak communitarian ties (Todd 1994). Thus, what is important here is the feeling of the social injustice as ‘jeunes de banlieue’ and not the fact of having an Arab origin or Muslim’s identity. The long process of ghettoization from above undertaken by the Republicans has not produced communitarianism but more individualism (Haenni 2006: 28).

How would one explain two contradictory trends of these migrants: integration but also radicalization? We will adopt the value approach, but which value systems are we talking about? A Muslim value system vs. a European one? Or rather the value of those who believe in cultural diversity vs. the value of those who take refuge in the cultural hegemony?

This article will argue that the growing polarization between what is perceived as Western society and Muslim ‘communities’ can neither be analyzed as a clash between identities nor as a reflection of cultural differences. This polarization operates in a context of cultural hegemony, a sort of cultural logic of late capitalism, through which power and global capital are allied, and where the migrants are either invisible or hyper-visible. I will take the example of the Danish cartoon episode as a controversy that reflects the cultural hegemony and power structure deployed against undesirable groups such as migrants living in Europe. Yet, to recall Antonio Gramsci, it is in this moment of crisis where migrants’ agency will be in position to destabilize the hegemonic forces because migrants are not merely victims – they hold a responsibility toward their situation.

After contextualizing this controversy within the migration space, I will argue that the controversy does not concern censorship and freedom of expression. It is a question of how one can define universalism. Finally, the centrality of the Arab-Israeli conflict will be addressed as the major factor galvanizing the resentment of some parts of the Muslim world and of the Muslim minorities in Europe vis-à-vis those who support the Israeli colonial practices. To this issue, the occupation of Iraq and the support for Arab dictatorships also hold major concern.
Value System of the Cultural Hegemony in the Post-Colonial Setting

In contrast to colonial power that used to maintain its dominance through coercion and armed force, certain Western powers have used a kind of hegemony which consists of political power flowing from intellectual and moral leadership. Cultural hegemony does not refer anymore to Western rationality and lifestyle conceived by the ruling classes. Rather, it refers to a more complex set of discursive strategies of combining principles from different systems of thought into one coherent ideology (Laclau and Mouffe 1985). In the American style of hegemony, democracy, liberalism, freedom of trade, and the war on terror are all discursively tied together into one coherent bundle which is being imposed by violence all over the world. It is a hegemony that is imposed in the form of an ‘empire’. The cultural hegemony here can be understood only as stemming from the power structures of the empire builder exercised with the superiority, arrogance, and fascination of the power that he carries (Said 2003).

Cultural hegemony seems to be a very powerful medium in order to read the power structures between different cultures and is much more significant than to evoke just the differentiated cultural sensitivities that could exist between the Arab and Western worlds. Ever since Edward Said analyzed the concept of an oriental ‘Other’ as a construction of colonial hegemony, we have come to know the way the ‘Other’ carried a kind of neo-racism - what Etienne Balibar called ‘cultural racism.’ In fact, racism is one of the major phenomena in European societies that threaten the integration of the migrant communities in these very societies (Wieviorka 1995). Cultural hegemony has thus not produced cultural differences but instead cultural racism, xenophobia, and Islamophobia in the majority of Western countries.

In the meantime, I would argue that the clash is not civilizational, as Bernard Lewis wrote once: ‘In the Muslim perception there has been, since the time of the Prophet, an ongoing struggle between the two world religions, Christendom and Islam’ (Khan 2007). The divide seems to be cultural and not religious. A secular Arab citizen could have much more in common with a secular German than with an Islamist neighbor. However, Lewis’s and Huntington’s self-fulfilling prophecy has been reproducing an analysis of some controversies and conflicts as a civilizational and cultural clash. The portrayal of Islamic movements as a tide of religious fanaticism threatening the West, and major participants in the coming ‘clash of civilizations,’ is bound to have a defining impact on the future of international relations. François Burgat (2003) and Tariq Ramadan (2003) argue that political Islam’s desire to restore a different culture to that which has been reclaimed
by colonization and which does not necessarily compromise its prospects for more democracy and greater tolerance.

Edward Said (2003) noted that if there is a clash, it is between empire builders on the one hand and those who believe in dialog on the other. The problem of Bush’s neo-cons and of Bin Laden’s al-Qaida has been that both sought to construct empires, forcing by violence their ideas beyond the nation-state boundaries. Olivier Roy (2007) and Gilles Kepel (2008) have recently reinforced Said’s claim. However the analogy doesn’t mean symmetry: al-Qaida’s project is not like that of the neo-cons. Al-Qaida and its franchises in Iraq and Algeria are extremist groups outside of the paradigmatic understanding of Islam, while the neo-cons govern the United States, progressively passing on their influence to Europe as well. There is no cultural hegemony in the former but there is in the latter. Building empires is the opposite of globalized and glocal circulation of cultures in a world in which migrants have played a major role (Hanafi and Tabar, 2005). However, how is the socio-cultural side of the relationship between the Muslim migrants and the European host society shaped?

**The Migration Context**

New literature in migration studies highlights the fact that movement and attachment are neither linear nor sequential. Instead, they are capable of rotating back and forth and changing direction over time. The median point on this gauge is not full incorporation but rather simultaneity of connection. But this simultaneity should not hide the power imbalance between migrants and the social structures in the host society. Migrants are subject to the hegemonic constructions and practices which are constantly created and reenacted. These conceptions and categories are in part internalized by both the dominant and the dominated alike, and create a sense of common loyalty and legitimacy for the dominant classes (Schiller et al. 1992: 13). In some Western countries, hegemonic construction speaks little of class but much more directly of culture, religion, and ethnicity.

Migrants are a site of conflict between different ideologies, values, and lifestyles, and this is why one should examine them not only in the framework of the transnational relationship that a migrant had founded between host and origin country, but also in the framework of diaspora studies. Diasporic space where a migrant lives entails an inter-polarity and multi-polarity of his/her set of relationships. For instance, one Palestinian individual or group living in France not only has ties to France and to Palestine but to many Palestinian
communities scattered all over the world. More than that, s/he is engaged in constant home-building wherever s/he lives (Hage 2008). In the relentless currents of globalization, both migrants and nation-states have undergone a major change and one should see transnationalism not in terms of unstructured flows, but in terms of tensions between movements and social orders. This issue deserves to be tackled to understand the problematic relationship between the Muslim migrants in European societies. The twentieth century was the century of the emergence of supra-national entities and the possibility of multiple citizenships, but above all the idea of different grades of citizenship.

Different grades of citizenship are completely different from the differentiated citizenship and the multicultural identities (Kymlicka 1995: 174) where one can have common ground citizenship and then differentiated rights. It is a double process: the state is tailoring citizenship according to the utility of the migrants/subjects to the ruling classes, and the transmigrants are developing a flexible notion of citizenship in order to accumulate capital and power. According to Awio Ong, flexible citizenship refers to the cultural logics of capitalist accumulation, travel, and displacement that induce subjects to respond fluidly and opportunistically to changing political and economic conditions (1999: 19). Meanwhile, the state seeks to preserve its rigid sovereignty. Thus flexible citizenship is constituted within mutually reinforcing dynamics of discipline and escape as globalization has induced a situation of graduated citizenship, whereby even as the state maintains control over its territory, it is also willing in some cases to let corporate entities set terms for constituting and regulating some domains while weaker and less desirable groups are given over to the regulation of supranational entities. ‘What results is a system of variegated citizenship in which populations subjected to different regimes of value enjoy different kinds of rights, discipline, caring, and security’ (Ong, 1999: 215).

The contribution of Giorgio Agamben (1988) to understanding the power mechanisms deployed by the sovereign is very valuable. The sovereign has the capacity to proclaim the state of exception in order to create differentiated citizenship and a different status for the population. The sovereign power according to Agamben routinely distinguishes between those who are to be admitted to ‘political life’ and those who are to be excluded as the mute bearers of ‘bare life.’ ‘Bare life’ is when people do not have a right to defend their rights as a minority or as refugees/asylum seekers spending several years in refugee camps without having any knowledge about their future destiny (Hanafi, 2005).

What is constraining from above by different globalization and state policies creating multiculturalism, interculturalism, differentiated, and flexible
citizenships should not be understood as the only process; migrant agency has been also important. All this has led to different forms of migrants’ incorporation inside of the European societies. The fault line is first social-urban but also cultural. Being city dwellers vs. suburban lower middle-class dwellers has a major impact on the integration of the migrants in the host society. Culturally, one should distinguish between the majority of migrants acculturated without major difficulty, managing different cultures without feeling schizophrenia, and those who constitute a tiny minority, who believe in the clash of civilization and whose values are very different from that of the Western world. This mode of thinking comes mainly in reaction to the posture of the hegemonic culture of the host society. Since the categorizing Huntingtonian philosophy’s ‘clash of civilization’ in the mid-90s, the paradigmatic model of constructing ‘otherness’ took the form of ‘good against evil,’ ‘being with us or against us’ and alienated above all the migrants. It is a clash of ignorance.

This kind of construction has produced anti-Semitism and Islamophobia. Without analogizing them too much, I would argue, following Matti Bunzl’s (2007) suggestion, that both historical anti-Semitism and current Islamophobia have operated because some groups in society do not fit into the narrow conception of the nation defined by the German, French, or European identity. While the target of the former is the European Jews, the victim of the latter is the Muslim migrants, especially in the context of the construction of the new Europe.

The cultural hegemony comes to help Islamophobia against the migrant communities. This hegemony entails depoliticization of culture by bringing quickly a juridical solution imposed by the majority. The example of legislation issued prohibiting the Islamic scarf in France in schools is very revealing of this point. The issued law was inspired by a commission decision by the Ministry of Education. The experts were skillfully selected among those who held a position against the scarf in schools. The law therefore came to preempt the debate inside society, while the juridism depoliticized the culture and neutralized it in the name of another majority culture (Abin, 2007): once the veiled kids are outside the public sphere (public schools) the debate can be continued, but between those who are legal subjects and those who become illegal ones, and this is one form of the Foucauldian concept of ‘bio-politics.’ This French republican secularism seems to fail to deal with the new reality of cultural diversity in France. This is the inverse of the Canadian paradigm

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2 Experts have based their decision on the fact that the scarf could be imposed on pupils by parents, a fact which is denied by several studies done in the 1990s by social scientists. See for instance Gaspard and Khosrokhavar (1995).
which has managed claims of diverse religious and ethnic groups through ‘reasonable accommodation’ and constant readjustment, in a way to have avenues for civil dialog and for accommodating diversity in a serious and equitable manner (Bouchard & Taylor, 2008).

In this complex context, the polarization is escalating with the emergence of the al-Qaida culture, i.e. a culture that considers the Western nations as enemies, mainly for political reasons such as supporting Israel and their interest in the oil of the Gulf area. The new Saudi media have been very instrumental in propagating a conservative Salafist Islam which will be not only just available for the migrants but also tailored to them through subtitles. Here the emphasis is placed on the cultural-religious aspect much more than the political one. This is the context of post September 11, of which one of the most dangerous consequences is that the polarization between opposing fundamentalisms has shunted aside the thoughtful and constructive quest for the welfare and happiness of all human societies, and of human beings as individuals and as exponents of diverse cultures that are not in adversarial relationships or hierarchically juxtaposed on the basis of some notion of good or bad (Bishara, 2006).

Having said that, I suggest approaching the Arab migrants as individuals who are sensitive to both political and cultural arenas. The concept of cultural hegemony provides a compelling conceptual framework to at least understand problems that have emerged in Western societies, including the Danish cartoon controversy.

**Cartoon Controversy: A Crisis in the Making**

On September 30, 2005, the Danish newspaper *Jyllands Posten* published 12 drawings of the prophet Muhammad, of which one portrayed him wearing a bomb fashioned as a turban. This publication was followed by many publications in a number of European newspapers and then republication by the Danish newspaper in February 2008. This led to protests in many countries of the Muslim world, including official complaints by Islamic governments, boycotts of European products, demonstrations (sometimes leading to

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3 This notion stems from jurisprudence in the realm of labor and indicates a form of relaxation aimed at combating discrimination caused by the strict application of a norm, which, in certain of its effects, infringes a citizen’s right to equality (Bouchard & Taylor, 2008).

4 Actually not all of them are of the Prophet.
The Palestinian-Israeli peace process has been used as a perfect period to triple the settler numbers and to double the settlement areas. Moreover, an Iranian newspaper launched a competition for cartoons on themes including the Holocaust.

The broad context is very testy and polemical, especially if one looks at how some parts of the Muslim world have perceived and represented this context. Appearing when memories were still fresh about reports which were later denied of the desecration of the Quran by American troops at the Guantanamo prison, the propagation of the drawings in Europe strengthened the perception among many Muslims that not only were they being exploited economically and manipulated politically by the Western powers, but also that they were insulted by the West culturally. At the same time, troops from several Western countries were deployed in Afghanistan and Iraq; Israel continued its occupation of Palestinian territory and destroying parts of Lebanon; the international community refused to recognize the Palestinian Authority after the parliamentary election which brought the Islamic Resistance Movement, Hamas, to power. Finally, tension was rising over Iran’s nuclear program. In many Western countries, Muslims and other minority communities had, for a long time, been facing what they saw as the erosion of cultural diversity and increasing prejudice. In such a highly polarized world, the continuation and escalation of this new conflict could have disastrous consequences.

Within this broad context, the local European setting is very important. There had been a build-up of anti-Muslim sentiment in Denmark before the publication of the drawings by *Jyllands Posten* and many acts of racism against some Muslim populations (interdiction of sque construction and a xenophobic declaration by the queen). Three months before the publication, the Danish government had not lived up to its international obligations when, referring to the right to freedom of expression, it refused to take a position towards the cartoons and also refused to meet with the 11 ambassadors representing the Arab countries or the imam-delegation objecting to the cartoon competition.

These cartoons epitomize the intersection of the global and local when it comes to communication in the digital age and to politics too (Abu-Laban and Abu-Laban, 2007). They reveal a boiling street in the Arab world against the cultural hegemony of some Western countries. For the first time, through transnational activism (Lindekilde 2008), a mass mobilization occurred in Arab-Persian Gulf states investing the public sphere and expressing the agency of this population. The phenomenon of popular boycott emerged against the

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5 The Palestinian-Israeli peace process has been used as a perfect period to triple the settler numbers and to double the settlement areas.
economic interest of Denmark as a pacifist mode of action. It was not, of course, the first time that a boycott campaign was launched as there have been many against Israeli companies and Western companies associated with the Israeli ones. It should be noted, however, that all such campaigns have been officially facilitated, while the Danish products boycott was motivated by popular mobilization. What is interesting in such forms of mobilization is their proclivity to restore the dissonant power structures between global capital and the mass of disempowered groups in the Arab world.

The different modes of action in relation to the cartoon controversy suddenly reflected a perceived confrontational moment with the West while reducing the West to Christianity or to its support of colonialism. This controversy tended to overshadow the long process of dialog between different cultures in our globalized world. My field work interviewing Syrian and Egyptian engineers shows a wide variation of images of the West, with cultural images (science, technology, punctuality, respect for the environment, and credibility) seen as positive and political/moral images (political support for Israel and dress of women in the public sphere) as negative (Hanafi 1997).

Freedom of Expression and Universalism(s)

Some have defended the propagation of the cartoons on the grounds of freedom of expression. In an article published with the drawings, co-editor Flemming Rose wrote that due to the right of freedom of expression, one has to be prepared to submit to ‘scorn, mockery, and ridicule’ and that religious feelings cannot be taken into consideration.6 The public prosecutor decided that the editor-in-chief could not be proceeded against. However, in his statement, the public prosecutor emphasized that the laws on racism and blasphemy contain protection of peoples’ religious feelings, and therefore there is no free and unlimited access to express oneself about religious issues. The prosecutor, however, stated that cartoons published in Jyllands Posten could not be considered a violation of the existing law.

The public prosecutor’s statement seems to be problematic if one views the event and its context, and compares it to similar events. Many events suggest

that freedom of expression, which is a basic human right, becomes problematic when intellectual rigor and social responsibility are lacking. To present the Prophet Mohammad as a symbol of terrorism, as is done in one of the cartoons, is no different from presenting Prophet Moses as the symbol of right-wing Israelis’ actions against Palestinians, an association that would be rightly condemned as anti-Semitic and is prohibited by the laws of many European countries. No Muslim has ever blamed Jesus Christ for the many atrocities that have been committed around the world in the name of Christianity. The populist reductionism that lies behind the publication of the cartoons is embedded in the tradition of European anti-Semitism that began with the demonization of the Jews, their faith, and their culture and ended in the attempt at their extermination. I am not here endorsing the symmetry with the Holocaust. However, I am strongly against the French legislation – called Loi Gayssot – which punishes ‘revisionist’ or ‘negationist’ discourse, denying the existence of the gas chambers, the killing of the Jews, etc. This is an anti-liberal law, but in this case the symmetry, as you find in the text circulated during the cartoon controversy and currently exploited by the Iranian government, was misleading and even flawed: on one side you have a symbol and on the other you have genocide.\(^7\)

At a time when the heads of some secular states proclaim that they are performing divine missions (George W. Bush’s mission for instance), the views of ordinary believers in any religion can only be ignored or denigrated by the ignorant, the arrogant, and the bigot. There is contempt for Islamic values by some Western cultural producers in opposition to the tradition of commitment to facts and rational analysis that have distinguished the best in Western thought since the Enlightenment. Writings on Islam by secular authors such as the late Montgomery Watt and the late Maxime Rodinson – British and

\(^7\) The reflections of Marek Halter, a philosopher who participated in the conference arranged by Reporters without Borders, elucidate the many dilemmas and layers of the controversy. He said ‘Voltaire didn’t like Protestants, but he always said he’d fight for their right to express themselves. I’ve known two totalitarian systems, Nazism and Stalinism, so censorship makes me shudder.’ For the same reason he was against banning the National Front party and he had the same immediate reaction to the cartoons. However he continued: ‘I felt uncomfortable when I saw the cartoons because they reminded me of the ones of Jews decades ago, with the same way of drawing Semitic individuals with a hooked nose and big ears. Then I saw the demonstrations and the calls for hatred, especially by the Iranian regime. There is the ideal of freedom of speech in democratic societies, which is a praiseworthy principle and which most people adhere to. But there is also the lurking racism behind stereotypical depictions, and there is the violent response which cannot be defended but which are a witness of anger and injustice on a more international political level.’
French biographers of the Prophet Mohammad, respectively – are regarded by many Muslims and non-Muslims as models of scholarship.

At a time when humanity is in dire need of understanding to ensure peaceful coexistence, the propagation of a set of ill-conceived drawings in several European countries has reinforced ignorance and hatred towards Muslims, and incited, albeit inadvertently, violence against European citizens and interests in Arab and Islamic countries.

Again the Muslim anger against the Danish cartoons seems not to be about the limit of freedom of expression or a kind of defence of particularism vis-à-vis universalism, but about the notion of competing universalisms. Defending one’s freedom of expression is a fundamental issue, as Etienne Balibar argues, even when it is misused. But although I prefer to defend it when it is a work of art, even a ‘blasphemy’, I do not feel obliged to fall into a trap that has been skillfully or stupidly set up by neo-con-style Danish journalists and what Neal Ascherson called ‘A Carnival of Stupidity.’

The publication of the British newspaper The Sun on July 23, 2006 of a picture of Angela Merkel semi-naked in the swimming pool of her hotel in Italy while on vacation is a publication of cheap and bad taste, while the decision of the German newspapers not to republish it is a judicious move.

Thus, defending freedom of expression raises many questions which go beyond the legal aspect. Freedom of expression as a universal human rights value is an object both cherished and necessary – always requiring the presence of limits related to the privacy and freedom of others. How can we reconcile universalism with the postmodern notion of the plurality of (mostly ethnic, sexual, or lifestyle) struggles for recognition? Or does the recent resurgence of right-wing populism compel us to rethink the limits of each movement? What is the meaning of a new trend of right-wing as well as leftist governments who define universality by how much a woman can be uncovered, in reaction to the Islamist governments who define it by how much a woman can cover her body?

Sexuality and the female body have become two major sites for moral entrepreneurs to impose their vision on a society which is increasingly defined by its diversity and thus allowing it to become a real battlefield of cultural hegemony and Islamist control. In some European countries like Germany and the Netherlands, the condition of access to status of refugee, asylum seeker, or citizen requires the acceptance of a specific vision of the woman’s body and sexuality. Following Butler, Laclau, and Zizek (2000: 2), universality

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See Neal Ascherson’s in Open-democracy: ‘a carnival of stupidity.’
is not a static presumption and is not a priori given. Instead, it ought to be understood as a process or condition irreducible to any of its predetermined modes of appearance. Wearing a mini jupe (mini skirt) is not a universalistic value but the fact that it is a woman’s choice to dress how she likes in the public sphere should be universalistic.

The possibility of choice becomes the condition for the mini jupe appearance. Wearing a scarf or having an uncovered head is not universalism, but ensuring the freedom of choice without constraint from the community or the family on the individual is true universalism. For this reason and in order not to conflate condition with appearance, Judith Butler (2000) prefers to talk about ‘competing universalisms’ to preempt the perception of universalism as a singular. In the same vain, Nilüfer Göle (2000) develops the concept of ‘multiple modernities.’ The question of some Muslim reactions to the cartoon controversy is not how much we can talk particularly in the face of universality and not to render the particular as representative of the universal, but to adjudicate among competing notions of universality. As Michel Wieviorka puts it: ‘Religion is part of an endeavor to participate in modernity rather than to exclude oneself from it’ (2004: 284).

Epilogue: A Shared Responsibility

Intellectuals and human rights organizations in European countries have different positions that have sometimes entailed some paradoxes. Concerning freedom of expression, the French philosopher Régis Debray10 was very clear in his formulation on the question of the limits of freedom of expression, as he is convinced that it ‘ends where the rights of others begin.’ This was also the point of Amnesty International: Freedom of speech ‘carries responsibilities and it may, therefore, be subject to restrictions in the name of safeguarding the rights of others’ (2006). Debray is convinced that we must oppose intolerance, but not arrogantly; the identity of others should be respected. Human Rights Watch asserted that the cartoons do not constitute ‘criminal harassment or tangible discrimination against Danish or other Muslims.’11 But what is ‘tangible discrimination’? The processes of racialization and radicalization are

9 Having said that, one should not argue against the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in the name of ‘competing universalisms’ or ‘multiple modernities.’ This declaration is a human achievement.

10 His speech in the Reporters Without Borders conference on November 22, 2005.

11 www.hrw.org
often intangible. Many studies criticized the tendency to only focus on Auschwitz and the act of annihilation of the Jews during the Second World War while one often tends to forget the processes and developments that precede such extreme acts of exclusion. Would the co-editor Flemming Rose accept to publish anti-Jewish drawings from Iran? In fact, at one stage he said he would, but he then changed his mind. This might have evoked vestiges in some people’s minds of an uncomfortable European past which is not very distant and it might illustrate the moral questions that the initial drawings inevitably raised.

The stakes of the cartoon debate have prevented us from venturing beyond its terms, blinding us from seeing its implication in the migration sphere. Highlighting European misunderstanding of the position of many activists in the Muslim world and European racism against some Arab and Muslim migrants does not mean that the latter are pure victims. It is hard to find a plausible and serene reflection on a problem where one side feels the exclusive feeling of victimhood. A solution cannot come from the pain of an experience and the risk of the emergence of the populist position is very challenging (Saghie 2001). One should think about the responsibility and the role that we should assume to bridge these two virtual worlds.

In any case, the agency of the Muslim minority in Europe is expressed in different ways and has become progressively important, ranging not only from the scientific contribution of this community to its social integration, but also the violence some groups have resorted to such as the terrorist act of al-Qaida in 2001 killing more than 3,000 Americans. While one should not make light of such acts, Muslim communities should not be victimized because of them. The recent debate in the UK about the niqab (a complete veil of the face) shows what Khaled Hroub called the ‘coquetry and abuse’ of some Muslim Europeans’ cultural diversity.\(^\text{12}\) This dress code, which is more of a political than religious expression, has raised the problem of communication inside of society and has harmed possibilities of dialog between these veiled women and society. When the suicide bombing phenomenon appeared in the UK with all its hideous damage, no more lurid and apocalyptic of course than the events of September 11, the responsibility of the migrant communities is to question their modes of incorporation inside the host society.

The effect of globalization on the multiplicity of migrant identification has sparked the polemics over the relationship between the diaspora and place of origin, particularly as they manifest themselves in three distinct but related dimensions: social and economic networks, political influence, and ideology.

\(^{12}\) Interview with him in August 2008.
In the last dimension, the nationalist sentiments of the diaspora are a major factor for feeding the radical factions in the different conflict zones (Palestine/Israel; Kurdish area of Iraq, Turkey, etc.). They also considerably account for the radicalization of the conflict. Conflicts cannot be contained locally. Recalling the work of Jan Nederveen Pieterse, multiculturalism has gone global and the identification of migrants has become flexible. Multiculturalism and foreign policy cannot be treated separately (2007). The British Council of Muslims informed the Prime Minister after 7/7 that the alienation of some members of the Muslim community in the UK was due to the complacent position of the government towards Israeli colonial practices.

Symbolically, the Arab-Israeli conflict is still central, although it is often considered as an instance of low intensity conflict, particularly when compared to the war in Iraq. The climate of degradation between the European and American empire builders (neo-cons trend) from one side and the Muslim world from the other comes from the fact that the former remains strongly supportive of the Israeli occupation and strives to control the oil in the Middle East region. The problem does not concern the support of the Western powers, to different extents, for Israel and its security in the region, but it concerns their reluctance to take a serious decision vis-à-vis the Israeli colonial practices in the Palestinian Territory. Thus global multiculturalism means an engagement with conflicts worldwide. If societies are engaged globally it means that conflicts travel too.

References


