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**Denmark as the Big Satan: Projections of
Scandinavia in the Arab World and the Future of
Multiculturalism**

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Abstract

During the winter and spring of 2006, Denmark and Scandinavia faced its most serious crisis since World War II. The conflict started as a Danish newspaper published a number of cartoons, some of which portrayed the prophet Muhammad. After the Danish government rejected their requests to censor the media, Danish Islamists distributed these pictures to some senior political and religious figures in the Middle East and requested their support against Denmark. To these pictures, they added a number of more offensive images, never published in any Danish newspaper in order to infuriate Muslims around the world. Muslim clerics, assisted by the governments of Saudi Arabia, Syria and Iran caused the region to explode in protest and violent riots, in which 44 people were killed. Danish products were boycotted across the Muslim world; Scandinavian embassies were attacked and set ablaze in Syria, Iran, Lebanon and Indonesia. Islamists promised substantial rewards for anyone who would murder Danish and Norwegian peacekeepers, and Scandinavian UN forces were attacked in Palestine and Afghanistan. The Scandinavian countries and the EU are struggling to find a way to address the issue of radical Islam within their societies, and how to defend liberal democratic values from attacks from its enemies. This process may lead to a redefinition of values, a shift from multiculturalism to an embrace of the democratic western values upon which the European states are based.

In the summer of 2005, *Världskulturmuseet*, the Museum of World Culture in Gothenburg, Sweden, decided to censure an art exhibit and remove a painting, which was said to offend Muslims. The painting removed by the museum had a sexual motif and a quotation from the Koran. A discourse of multiculturalism and fear of offending the sizable Muslim community dictated what predominantly non-Muslim museum visitors in a secular country were allowed to see. A few months later, the Tate Gallery in London cancelled an exhibit by avant-garde artist John Latham depicting the Koran, Bible and Talmud torn to pieces.¹ In September the same year, Kåre Bluitgen, a Danish writer of books for children had trouble finding an illustrator for a book about the life of Muhammad. Out of fear for terror and physical repercussions, three artists turned down the offer. When an artist, prepared to illustrate the children's book was finally found, she/he agreed only on conditions of strict anonymity.

Shortly thereafter Liberal Danish Prime Minister Anders Fogh Rasmussen was approached by a delegation of imams, demanding that the Prime Minister to interfere with the Danish press in order to produce a more positive coverage of Islam. Concerned about increasing self-censorship across the European Union, and perceiving that intellectual freedoms were under siege, Flemming Rose, citing these specific events, the cultural editor of the provincial Danish newspaper *Jyllands-Posten* decided to announce a competition about the best cartoons of Muhammad. Rose has a background as correspondent in the Soviet Union, and professes to have a particular sensitivity to censorship on the ground of insult.

¹ "Inget öppet samhälle utan hädelse," *Dagens Nyheter*, January 11, 2006. Fleming Rose, "Why I published Those Cartoons," *Jyllands-Posten*, February 19, 2006.

This is a popular trick of totalitarian movements: Label any critique or call for debate as an insult and punish the offenders. That is what happened to human rights activists and writers such as Andrei Sakharov, Vladimir Bukovsky, Alexander Solzhenitsyn, Nathan Sharansky, Boris Pasternak. The regime accused them of anti-Soviet propaganda, just as some Muslims are labeling 12 cartoons in a Danish newspaper anti-Islamic. The lesson from the Cold War is: If you give in to totalitarian impulses once, new demands follow. The West prevailed in the Cold War because we stood by our fundamental values and did not appease totalitarian tyrants.²

On September 30, 2006, the Danish newspaper *Jyllands-Posten* published 12 cartoons, some of them said to portrait Muhammad, others making fun of suicide bombers, Danish politicians, and Talibans. Few people in Denmark would have guessed the commotion that was to follow. The conflict very soon escalated into something much more than just a conflict between a newspaper and its readership. To be sure, this was not the first, nor will it be the last time representatives of religious establishments have felt their ideological or esthetic sensibilities offended. As the Finnish contribution to the Eurovision song contest in Athens, Greece later on in 2006 was a heavy metal band by the name “Lordi,” consisting of a number of axe and chain-saw wielding monsters singing a song titled “Hard Rock Hallelujah,” representatives of the Orthodox Churches of Finland, Greece and Cyprus protested, complaining about the name “Lordi” as sacrilege, and attempted to prevent them from participating in the Eurovision contest, which they subsequently won.³ These vain attempts at preventing a rock band from participating in the Eurovision on grounds of offending orthodox clergy made it to the mainstream mass media only by its curiosity value. By and large, Christian charges of blasphemy are not taken very seriously in Europe in the 21st century.

² Fleming Rose, “Why I published Those Cartoons,” *Jyllands-Posten*, February 19, 2006. Paul Reynolds, “Cartoons: Divisions and inconsistencies”, *BBC News*, February 13, 2006.

³ “Finns shocked by Eurovision band,” *BBC New Online*, April 20, 2006.

Therefore it came as a shock that an editorial decision of a provincial Danish newspaper would create an international crisis that would lead to dozens of people killed around the world and European embassies burned by fanatical mobs.⁴ Protest, formally aimed against the publications of cartoons turned into violent attack on Danish and other European embassies around the world, and an outright onslaught on their open societies. As of March 22, 2006 the conflict surrounding the cartoons has left 139 dead (not including the 146 killed in related riots in Nigeria), over 800 injured. In addition, more than 10,000 are unemployed as a result of political embargoes; dozens of buildings, not only European embassies and consulates, but also Christian churches, and fast foods restaurants have been torched and vandalized.⁵ For Denmark, one of the most secular countries in the world, this was the first time since the Thirty Years War that a conflict with religious connotation had had such an impact.

The publication of these cartoons violates a convention in the Salafi and Wahhabi strains of Sunni Islam that the Prophet should not be depicted. This influence of this strain of Sunni Islam has grown during the past decades. This is partly due to Saudi financing and increasing influence of Muslim communities world wide. There is no prohibition against depicting Muhammad in the Koran. The prohibition of reproducing images of Muhammad postdates his death. Palaces and Mosques from the earliest period of Islam contain pictures of men and animals.⁶ Images of Muhammad can be seen in mosques and museums across the Muslim world: in Istanbul, Bukhara, Samarkand and Haroun-Walat (a suburb of Isfahan, Iran). Several contemporary Iranian and Arab

⁴ By March 6, 2006, 44 people had been killed in protests against the cartoons, most of them in Nigeria, Afghanistan and Pakistan. *Svenska Dagbladet*, March 6, 2006.

⁵ See <http://www.cartoonbodycount.com/> (Accessed March 22, 2006)

⁶ Leif Stenberg and Torsten Janson, "Bildförbudet utan stöd i Koranen", *Svenska Dagbladet*, March 8, 2006.

sculptors have made busts of the prophet. One can even be seen at the building of the U.S. Supreme Court.⁷ In the Shiite tradition, there is a production, sale and public use of pictures of Muhammad and other persons Muslims consider holy. Other Muslim countries are stricter. When *Newsweek* re-published a Persian miniature of Muhammad, the issue was censored in Malaysia, Indonesia and Bangladesh.⁸

The decision to publish these cartoons outraged some high-profile Islamists within Denmark. 3,500 Muslims protested on the streets of Copenhagen against the cartoons. A 17-year old Muslim boy was arrested for attempting to kill one of the cartoonists. On October 12, eleven ambassadors from Muslim countries demanded a meeting with Prime Minister Fogh Rasmussen to discuss what they considered to be an anti-Islamic campaign in the Danish press.⁹ The Danish government, citing adherence to freedom of expression and speech, refused to see them, arguing that that would be a violation of his constitutional duties to discuss articles published by an independent newspaper with representatives from foreign states, most of which lack an independent press and democracy themselves.¹⁰ The Prime Minister's office explained that in Denmark the government is not responsible for what independent provincial newspapers publish, and communicated that protests needs to be addressed to *Jyllands-Posten*, not to the Prime Minister. On October 17, shortly after their publication in Denmark, six of the

⁷ Amir Taheri, "Bonfire of the Pieties: Islam prohibits neither images of Muhammad nor jokes about religion," *Wall Street Journal*, February 8, 2006.

<http://www.opinionjournal.com/editorial/feature.html?id=110007934> (Accessed February 9, 2006) and Paul Marshall, "Misrepresentations of Islam: Not all Muslims shun depictions of Muhammad," Center for religious Freedom: A Division of Freedom House. February 21, 2006.

<http://www.freedomhouse.org/religion/news/bn2005/bn-2005--2006-02-21a.htm> (Accessed May 10, 2006)

⁸ "Inget billedforbud i Koranen", *Verdens Gang*, February 11, 2006.

⁹ "Ambassader i Danmark protesterer mot karikatur av Muhammad", NTB October 10, 2005.

¹⁰ Ole Rothenborg, "Fogh Rasmussen Muhammedkrisens stora förlorare," *Dagens Nyheter*, March 11, 2006.

cartoons were re-published in the Egyptian oppositional paper *al-Fagr*. There were no protests on the streets of Egypt.¹¹

It seems as if the foreign minister of Egypt, Ahmed Aboul-Gheit has been the coordinating figure, pushing this issue from the beginning of October. This appears to have served a dual purpose: it helped to ease pressure from the EU, which has been demanding the Egyptian government implement a number of legal and political reforms. It also enabled him to show the people that the Egyptian government were just as good at defending Islamic principles as the Islamist opposition.¹² On October the 25 the Egyptian Foreign Ministry urged the Danish government to distance itself from the cartoons.

After both foreign pressure and street protest had failed to convince the Prime Minister of the need for censorship in Denmark, some leading Danish clerics decided to seek support among “some esteemed figures in the Muslim world.”¹³

In the end of December of 2005, a 31-year old Danish imam by the name of Ahmed Akkari traveled down to the Middle East with a 43-page folder of cartoons, letters and drawings. He represented an organization called *Islamisk Trossamfund i Danmark*, or the Islamic Faith Society of Denmark, claiming to represent 29 Muslim organizations in Denmark, with 170 000-200 000 members. Akkari was sent on this mission by a man by the name of Abu Laban, the leading imam in Copenhagen. Akkari contacted religious and political leaders in some of the most repressive states in the world, such as Saudi Arabia, Syria and Iran to put pressure on the Danish government.

¹¹ Paul Reynolds, “Cartoons: Divisions and inconsistencies”, *BBC News*, February 13, 2006.

¹² Bitte Hammargren, “Egyptisk minister drev karikatyrbråk”, *Svenska Dagbladet*, March 6, 2006.

¹³ Doug Sanders, “It is not what I want to happen”, *The Globe and Mail*, February 8, 2006.

Akkari's folder introduces the Danes as decadents and infidels. The document is written for an ignorant reader: the targeted audience is assumed to be largely uninformed of Danish and European geography and culture:

“This country has its own language. It has a constitutional and monarchic system of government. The country consists of a number of islands, its capital is Copenhagen, it has a population of five million and most of them are Protestants. Although they claim allegiance to Christianity, secularisation has gained the upper hand, so even if you were to refer to them as infidels you would not be wrong. (...) One of the issues is an atmosphere that fuels a growing racism, which has gained strength of expression since the events of 9/11. And it (the racism) has many different guises, the common denominator being the disparaging reference to Islam. (Sometimes the veil is the issue, at other times circumcision, or the diseases that prayer causes ... and so on)”.¹⁴

The document presents a gloomy picture of Denmark. The document is a prime example of orientalizing of “the other.” Its author assumes the moral superiority of Muslim culture over the Danish “infidels.” The reader gets the impression it is Denmark, not Syria or Egypt which lacks freedom of religion. For being a document produced in a European capital in the 21st century, the document is remarkable in that it makes claims of sorcery. Akkari's binder is a revealing document. It reflects the orientalist attitudes of radical Islam vis-à-vis the decadent west and its liberal democracy. The document is a mixture of ignorance, superstition, moralizing and an outright misrepresentation of Danish society. The document presents Denmark as an oppressive society, seeking a conflict with the Muslim world.

- We, all the Muslims in Denmark, are under attack from them, the Danes.
- In Denmark, they talk about the diseases caused by Muslim prayers.
- Relations between the West and Islam are entering a dark tunnel.
- And in printing 12 drawings of the Prophet Muhammad in September 2005 it was really *Jyllands-Posten's* intention to curb Muslim opinion and

¹⁴ Allan Larsen and Kåre Quist, “Imamens vantro Danmark”, *Ekstra Bladet*, January 15, 2006.

protests.

Akkari compiled twelve cartoons published in *Jyllands-Posten* on September 30, 2005. It appears Akkari must have had some doubts about the offensive nature of these cartoons, as they had already been published in the press in the Middle East without much notice. In order to make the claim of anti-Muslim sentiments in Denmark more effective, Akkari now added a number of other images, which had never been published by *Jyllands-Posten* or any other Danish newspaper. These were quite different than the cartoons published in the cultural section in *Jyllands-Posten*: one depicted a man, allegedly a Muslim, being humped by a dog while praying. Another picture depicts a “pedophile Muhammad”, presumably referring to Aisha bint Abu Bakr, whom Muhammad, according to the *Haddith*, married when she was six while the marriage was consummated when Aisha was nine and Muhammad fifty-two.¹⁶ A third picture of the Frenchman Jaques Marrot dressed up as a pig, with a plastic snout and a pink baby hat with plastic ears during the “annual pig-squealing competition” in the tiny French village of Trie-sur-Baines in Southern France.¹⁷ In Akkari’s binder, this picture carried the added text: “This is the true picture of Muhammad” in Danish and Arabic and was represented as being a depiction of Muhammad in Danish press.¹⁸

Akkari presented this binder to the Grand Mufti of Egypt, the chief cleric and the predominant scholar of Islamic law within Egypt. He also presented it to the Secretary-

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ See Hadith vol. 7, no. 65, no. 88 and vol. 5, no. 234 in Bukhārī, Muhammad ibn Ismāīl, *Hadith al-Bukhari: The translation of the meanings of Hadith al-Bukhārī, Arabic-English/ Muhammad Mushi Khan*, (Medina: Dar al-Fikr, 1981). The same claims are to be found in the Hadith of Sahih Muslim volume 2., no. 3309, the Hadith of the Sunan of Abu Dawud, vol. 2, no. 2116.

¹⁷ Rima Iraki, Hege Lyngved Odinsen, “Fransk grisehylder vist frem som Momammed-hån,” *Verdens Gang*, February 8, 2006.

¹⁸ Akkari’s folder, containing the cartoons from *Jyllands-Posten* as well as the pictures gathered to misrepresent Denmark is available online on <http://www.ekstrabladet.dk/VisArtikel.aspx?PageID=332707>

General of the Arab League and others. According to Akkari, “[t]hey stared in amazement at the images in the book, (...) and vowed to take action to help him. “They said to me, ‘Do they really say this is the Prophet Muhammad? They must really have no respect for religion up there in Denmark,’ and they said they would make it known.”¹⁹ Meanwhile, Abu Laban also tried to reach the influential Qatar-based cleric Yusuf al-Qaradawi, whose *fatwas* many Muslims consider binding. Even though the meeting was ultimately called off, al-Qaradawi called “for a global day of anger.”²⁰ Political and religious leaders in the Arab world were quick to exploit the situation, and soon distorted reports about Danish media soon circulated the Muslim world, causing millions of Muslims to believe that the Nordic countries were nests of blasphemy.²¹ After distributing these pictures across the Middle East, Akkari insisted that “he had never meant this to be more than an internal Danish conflict,”²² and denies that his representation of Danish media contributed to the violent protests in the Middle East. He insists that what made the protests turn violent were two or three of the cartoons in *Jyllands-Posten*. Akkari claimed to be unable to comprehend “why it is at all interesting that other and more offensive pictures were presented when the *Jyllands-Posten* case is discussed in Arabic and Muslim countries.”²³ Yet, when the protests broke out, many, including western media networks such as the BBC were under the impression that the picture of Marrot at his Pyrenean pig-squealing competition and others had been

¹⁹ Doug Sanders, “‘It is not what I want to happen’”, *The Globe and Mail*, February 8, 2006.

²⁰ David Rennie and Anton La Guardia, “Growth of Outrage: Danish imams credit grassroots for protests,” *National Post*, February 7, 2006.

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² Doug Sanders, “‘It is not what I want to happen’”, *The Globe and Mail*, February 8, 2006.

²³ Bjørnar Hjellen, Hege Lyngved Odinsen, “Dansk imam-delegasjon viste fram pedofil Muhammad,” *Verdens Gang*, February 8, 2006, *Ritzau*, “Imam: Ok at vise profet med grisetryne,” January 31, 2006.

presented as a picture of Muhammad, published by the Danish media.²⁴ Before the content of the folder had been translated into Danish and made available to the Scandinavian media, there was much confusion. As the public and governments of the Scandinavian governments were trying to understand what had been presented to the Muslim world, there were speculations in Scandinavian papers that the imams had presented images produced by Christian fanatics in the United States.²⁵

The misrepresentation of the Danish media was not the only lie to originate from Abu Laban. In addition to linking *Jyllands-Posten's* cartoons with material never published in Danish media, it soon turned out that many of the supposed 29 organizations on whose behalf Abu Laban supposedly acted did not exist while others were not asked, before Abu Laban spoke on their behalf. Abu Laban's claim to represent 200,000 Muslims was a fabrication. In reality Laban represented no more than 5,000 – 15,000 Danish Muslims.²⁶

Abu Laban moved to Denmark from Palestine in the 1980s, as the Muslim congregation needed an English-speaking imam. From his mosque in Copenhagen, Abu Laban is well-connected to an international network of Islamic radicals: he has had contact with almost all known al-Qaeda sympathizers residing in Denmark as well as leading figures within al-Gama'a Islamiya, who carried out the assassination of Anwar Sadat in 1981.²⁷ Through his extensive network Abu Laban was able to utilize his contacts with hard-line Salafist television stations in Saudi Arabia and the United Arab

²⁴ Paul Reynolds, "A clash of rights and responsibilities," *BBC News*, February 6, 2006. Kåre Quist, "Labans mange løgne", *Ekstra Bladet*, February 6, 2006.

²⁵ Bjørnar Hjellen, Helge Lyngved Odinsen, "Tror Muhammed-tegninger er laget av kristne ekstremister," *Verdens Gang*, February 1, 2006.

²⁶ Kåre Quist, "Labans mange løgne", *Ekstra Bladet*, February 6, 2006.

²⁷ "Vennerne er ikke Allahs beste børn", *Ekstra Bladet*, February 5, 2006.

Emirates such as al-Majd and Iqra, which were able to stir up emotions across the Muslim world.²⁸

Another leading figure behind the idea of seeking Muslim support against the Danish government was the radical imam of Århus, Raed Hlayhel. Hlayhel made headlines in Danish media when during a Friday prayer in 2004 he stated that Danish women who are scantily clad have themselves to blame if they are being raped. In March of 2005 he was sued by forty immigrant women after having claimed that women are the instrument of Satan against men and that women who visit hairdressers and use perfume on the street will end up in hell.²⁹ After the cartoon row had turned violent across the Muslim world, Hlayhel used al-Jazeera to reach large audiences with his radical message. "This type of democracy is worthless for Muslims. Muslims will never accept this kind of humiliation."³⁰ Akkari demanded guarantees that no Danish newspaper would publish cartoons of Muhammad in the future. "We want the newspaper to promise that this will never happen again, or this will never stop."³¹

Not only radicals such as Abu Laban Raed Hlayhel, but entire Muslim umbrella organizations in the Scandinavian countries and the EU sided with the dictatorships against Denmark. *Sveriges Muslimska Råd*, the Muslim Council of Sweden condemned what it labelled "a provocation against Muslims in the whole world," denied that the publication of the cartoons had nothing to do with freedom of expression and supported

²⁸ David Rennie and Anton La Guardia, "Growth of Outrage: Danish imams credit grassroots for protests," *National Post*, February 7, 2006.

²⁹ Piet Baunø, "Århusiansk imam fuld af løgn", *Ekstra Bladet*, January 31, 2006. "Invandrerkvinder politianmelder imam" *Ekstra Bladet*, March 8, 2005.

³⁰ Paul Reynolds, "Cartoons: Divisions and inconsistencies", *BBC News*, February 13, 2006.

³¹ Thomas Buch-Andersen, "Danish Muslims split over cartoons," *BBC News*, February 8, 2006.

the boycott of Danish goods.³² Hassan Moussa, the president of the Swedish Council of Imams, urging the Swedish government to protest against Denmark.³³

On January 10, the small fundamentalist Christian newspaper *Magazinet* in Norway published the cartoons. The Arab League now decided about collective action against Denmark. On January 29, OIC, the Islamic Conference and the Arab League declared that they would aim at introducing international laws against blasphemy and the desecration of religious symbols. 56 Muslim countries turned to the UN in order to protest against Denmark.³⁴ Perhaps not surprisingly, the harshest stances were taken by some of the most repressive states: in addition to Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Libya, Syria and Iran all played leading roles.³⁵

On January 26, Saudi Arabia recalled its ambassador from Denmark. It was followed by Libya on the 29th.³⁶ Syria went even further, demanding that Denmark would punish what Syria described as the “criminals” at *Jyllands-Posten*. Furthermore, Syria wanted Denmark to prevent the editors from publishing insulting material in the future.³⁷ The Organization of Islamic Conference, representing 57 Muslim states demanded a UN resolution against Denmark, backed up by economic sanctions. They also wanted a UN resolution, banning attacks on religious faith.³⁸ Given its laws and constitution, Denmark could do little to appease governments that demanded the reintroduction of a crime that had not been taken seriously since before the enlightenment.

³² Sveriges Muslimska Råd (SMR) följer utvecklingen i Danmark med stor oro, ”Press release, February 1, 2006. <http://sverigesmuslimskarad.se/firstpage.html> (Accessed February 8, 2006).

³³ “Inget öppet samhälle utan hädelse,” *Dagens Nyheter*, January 11, 2006

³⁴ “Inget öppet samhälle utan hädelse,” *Dagens Nyheter*, January 11, 2006.

³⁵ Insert footnote here about Arab league, 57 ? states, threats of UN sanctions, et.c.

³⁶ “Libyen lukker sin ambassade i Danmark”, Ritzau/DPA, January 29, 2006.

³⁷ “Syrien: JP-forbryderne må straffes”, Ritzau/DPA, January 29, 2006.

³⁸ “Kræver FN-resolution mod Danmark”, Ritzau/AFP, Jan 29, 2006.

One day later, on January 30, armed *al-Fatah* supporters storm the EU office in Gaza, demanding a Danish apology. A boycott, initiated by the Saudi Arabian government spreads across the Arab world. In the Muslim world, government-organized or – incited protests turned violent. Most eager to exploit this situation were Syria and Iran, both rogue states with beleaguered governments, desperately in need to shore up support for their fledging autocracies. Neither one hesitated to play the Islamic card. What started as a peaceful demonstration in Damascus on February 4 turned violent, apparently after protesters received text messages on their cell phones that the Koran was being burnt in Denmark. Embassy personnel tried to contact the police to keep the protesters at bay, but to no avail. The Danish and Norwegian embassies were stormed and burnt. The Swedish and Chilean embassies, located in the same building, were damaged. The crowd was guided by men with walkie-talkies, strongly suggesting involvement and support from the Syrian government. So lax was the police presence that journalists were able to accompany the rioters into the buildings and to cable the pictures to the rest of the Muslim world. Likewise in Beirut, Syrian agents guided the attack on the Danish Consulate General the next day. People were bussed in from the Lebanese countryside and Syria. According to the Lebanese authorities, as many as one third of the attackers were Syrians.³⁹ In Teheran, crowds attacked the Danish and Austrian embassies with stones and gasoline bombs on February 6.⁴⁰ Attacking embassies is a violation of the Hague Convention, and, by international law, tantamount to an act of war.

³⁹ “Manipulation av folklig frustration”, *Svenska Dagbladet*, February 6, 2006. “Syria anklages for Muhammed-opptøyer i Beirut”, NTB February 5, 2006, “Mutual incomprehension, mutual outrage,” *The Economist*, February 11, 2006.

⁴⁰ Marlowe Hood, “Protests Grow, Turn Deadly,” *National Post*, February 7, 2006.

The Syrian and Iranian governments, both being Holocaust deniers, were not slow to exploit the situation for an anti-Semitic attack on Jews. An Iranian newspaper announced they would announce a competition about the “funniest Holocaust cartoons,” while the largest private university in Ukraine, an anti-Semitic organization partly funded by Syrian, Palestinian and Saudi money, made a statement blaming a Jewish world-wide conspiracy for the publication of the cartoons.⁴¹ A Belgian Muslim group began publishing cartoons of Anne Frank in bed with Hitler.⁴²

Across Europe, in what seems to have been a centrally organized action, Muslims took to the streets. In Oslo, about 1,500 protesters gathered outside the Norwegian parliament on February the 10th, protesting the cartoons and demanded that Norway should re-activate an old paragraph, banning blasphemy.⁴³ In Germany, 1,200 Muslims protested outside the Danish embassy in Berlin, demanding censorship under banners such as “Freedom of Press – Yes, Press Impertinence No” and “We Demand Censorship of Caricatures of Muhammad”.⁴⁴ In London, protesters gathered outside the Danish embassy, some dressed up as suicide bombers, others holding posters with texts such as “behead those who insult Islam,” “Europe, prepared for the *real* Holocaust” and placards, threatening a repeat of the September 11, 2001 and July 7, 2005 attacks.⁴⁵ In the EU

⁴¹ Heorhii Shchokin, “Address of the International Personnel Academy Concerning Caricatures in European Publications”, February 7, 2006.

⁴² Michael Valpy, “Why the global rage hasn’t engulfed Canada”, *Globe and Mail*, February 8, 2006.

⁴³ Norway has an archaic constitution, from 1814, the second oldest in the world. Paragraph 142 in the Norwegian penal code, known as the blasphemy paragraph remains on the books but have not been used since 1933, when there was a legal case against Arnuld Øverland, who had delivered a lecture titled “Kristendommen – Den tiende landeplage” or “Christianity – the Tenth National Pandemic”. Andreas Fosse, “Respekter våre verdier”, *Verdens Gang*, Febraury 11, 2006. “Ny norsk lov forbyr blasfemi”, *Verdens Gang*, February 15, 2006.

⁴⁴ Thomas Hall, “Krav på bildcensur i Tyskland”, *Dagens Nyheter*, February 11, 2006.

⁴⁵ George Jones, “Scotland Yard will investigate protesters,” *National Post*, February 7, 2006.

candidate member state Turkey; radical Muslims, shouting “Allah is Great”, murdered an Italian Roman Catholic priest.

Denmark suddenly found itself in its most serious crisis since World War II. As Danish products were boycotted across the Muslim world, the farmers were paying the price for an editorial decision by a provincial paper. In Palestine, creative businessmen made money by switching their production from the customary US and Israeli to Danish and Norwegian flags in an attempt to meet the demands of the local flag burning market. Danish flags were sold for eleven dollars apiece. One of the more bizarre episodes of this conflict was an official Iranian decision to rename Danish pastries to “the Prophet Muhammad’s Roses.”⁴⁶ Apparently pastries bearing the name of the Muslim prophet are not to be regarded as blasphemous or graven images. In Afghanistan, Taliban insurgents promised five kilos of gold to anybody who would kill a Norwegian, Danish or German peacekeeper. On February 6th, 200-300 protesters armed with fire-arms and hand grenades attacked a joint Nordic-Baltic peacekeeping force in Maymaneh. The Norwegian peace keepers were forced to use tear gas and rubber bullets. When that did not deter the crowd, they open fire. Four protesters were killed and 23 wounded. Of the peace keepers, six Norwegian soldiers were wounded.⁴⁷ Mohammed Yaqoob Qureshi, minister in the Indian state of Uttar Pradesh, offered the equivalent of 13 million US dollars and his weight in gold for anyone who would kill any of the cartoonists. In Pakistan, a Muslim leader promised a million dollars and a car for every murdered Danish cartoonist.⁴⁸ On February 8, the part-Scandinavian unarmed TIPH force

⁴⁶ “Danska bakverk döps om i protest”, *Dagens Nyheter*, February 16, 2006.

⁴⁷ Robin Steiersen, Anne Vinding, “Betaler for drap på nordmenn”, *Verdens Gang*, February 8, 2006.
Robert Holender, “Svenskar angreps i Afghanistan”, *Dagens Nyheter*, February 7, 2006.

⁴⁸ “Miljoner utlovas för döda tecknare”, Lucknow/TT, February 18, 2006.

(Temporary International Presence in Hebron), established in 1994 after a Jewish settler murdered 29 Palestinians in a mosque, was attacked by hundreds of Palestinian protesters. The Danish TIPH members had been evacuated one week earlier, following violent protests. As a result of the renewed violence, TIPH temporarily ended their activities in Hebron.⁴⁹

In Copenhagen there was a feeling of anger, defiance and disbelief. The Danish political establishment, from the right to the left, raged against the imams and the Muslim organizations that had supported Abu Laban and Akhmed Akkari's campaign. The leader of the nationalist Danish People's Party, Pia Kjærsgaard, accused the Danish Islamic League of treason, accusing the imams of "conducting a smear campaign against Denmark."⁵⁰ Citing solidarity with the Danish press, papers across the EU and the world re-printed the cartoons from *Jyllands-Posten*. By early March, the cartoons had been published in 143 papers in 56 countries, nine of them Muslim. Several newspapers were closed and editors fired.⁵¹

A clear majority of Danes believed that Fogh Rasmussen had acted correctly in taking a principled stance by not receiving the Muslim ambassadors and standing by the Danish constitution and democratic principles by refusing to apologize for what an independent newspaper has written. At the same time, many Europeans felt let down by the American and British governments, which failed to take a principled stance on free speech. After all, they have increasingly relied of the pretence of spreading democracy as a justification for their war in Iraq, after failing to find weapons of mass destruction or

⁴⁹ Lotta Schüllerqvist, "Svenskar attackerades i Hebron," *Dagens Nyheter*, February 8, 2006.

⁵⁰ Bjørnar Hjellen, Hege Lyngved Odinsen, "Dansk imam-delegasjon viste fram pedofil Muhammad," *Verdens Gang*, February 8, 2006.

⁵¹ "Muhammedbilder i 56 länder", TT, March 2, 2006.

establish links between Saddam Hussein and al-Qaeda. The response from George W. Bush was limited to calls to stop the violence and be “respectful” towards religion.⁵²

The crisis brought political consequences to Denmark and Norway. A widely perceived lack of international support benefited Pia Kjærsgaard, who declared that Denmark would settle the scores with their Islamists “on their own.” Polls in both showed that the Danish People’s Party, as well as the Progressive Party in Norway, have grown significantly. In Norway, the populist Progressive Party received the support of 31.8 per cent, making it the largest party in the country. The nationalist Danish People’s Party increased its support to 17.8 per cent, making it the country’s third-largest party.⁵³ The Danish government reacted by ending the participation of imams in an integration think-tank run by the Danish government. Integration minister Rikke Hvilshøj stated “It is very clear that we cannot trust the imams any longer if we want integration to succeed in Denmark.”⁵⁴ The firm attitude of the Danish government had solid support among the Danes, who felt that Prime Minister Fogh Rasmussen had handled this crisis, the most serious since World War II, well. In an opinion poll, 58 per cent of the Danes blamed the Danish imams for the conflict, 22 per cent blamed *Jyllands-Posten*, and 11 per cent blamed the authorities in the Middle East for the conflict.⁵⁵ 79 per cent of Danes stood behind their Prime Minister’s refusal to apologize. When asked whether *Jyllands-Posten* ought to apologize, 62 per cent of Danes said no, according to a January poll.⁵⁶

⁵² “Mutual incomprehension, mutual outrage”, *The Economist*, February 11, 2006.

⁵³ Ole Rothenborg, “Fogh Rasmussen Muhammedkrisens stora förlorare,” *Dagens Nyheter*, March 11, 2006. Björn Lindahl, “Högerpopulister tar täten i Norge”, *Svenska Dagbladet*, March 8, 2006. “Norsk och dansk högerpopulism ökar,” *Svenska Dagbladet*, February 20, 2006. “Reaping the whirlwind”, *The Economist*, February 18, 2006.

⁵⁴ Thomas Buch-Andersen, “Danish Muslims split over cartoons,” *BBC News*, February 8, 2006.

⁵⁵ Camilla Ryste, “Danskene legger skylden på imamene”, *Verdens Gang*, February 10, 2006.

⁵⁶ “Ingen undskyldning til muslimske lande”, *Ritzau*, January 28, 2006.

The Danish government instead attempted to fight the disinformation spread by media across the Muslim world by having Fogh Rasmussen interviewed by Al-Jazeera. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark initiated an information campaign, responding to some of the lies about Denmark that circulated in the Muslim world. Their web site attempted to respond to the rumors and lies circulating in the Muslim world.

- **What is the status of the Danish newspaper that published the 12 drawings of the Prophet Muhammad?**

The newspaper Jyllands-Posten is a private and independent newspaper in Denmark. It has no relations, whatsoever, with the government of Denmark. The Danish government cannot in any way influence what is or what is not printed in the Danish media.

- **Is Denmark rewriting the Koran?**

The Danish government respects Islam as one of the world's major religions and no Danish authorities would ever initiate such a disrespectful project.

- **Has there been published a drawing in Jyllands-Posten or any other Danish news with the Prophet depicted as a pig?**

No.

- **Has [sic] posters been put up in Denmark with pictures of the Prophet Muhammad?**

No.

- **Will the Danish government make a movie about the Prophet Muhammad?**

The Danish government has no such plans.

- **Does religious freedom exist in Denmark?**

Yes. The Danish constitution explicitly states that there is religious freedom in Denmark. Denmark houses a considerable number of religious congregations, among them Islam, and they all enjoy full freedom to religious worship.

- **Is it correct that the Koran will be burned in Denmark?**

With reference to the rumours of burning the Koran circulated (sic) on SMS, the Danish Police has warned that participation in demonstrations, where such acts take place, can be criminal and led (sic) to a prison sentence.⁵⁷

⁵⁷ Press release, "Drawing in a Danish Newspaper: Questions and Answers", Utenrigsministeriet/Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark, February 8, 2006.

By the end of March, the Muslim boycott of Swedish-Danish dairy giant Arla Foods had cost them 500 million Swedish crowns (CAD \$ 80 million). In response, Arla launched a charm offensive by putting adds in 25 Arabic newspapers, ironically and confusingly explaining that they “understood and respected” the boycott of their products.

Our presence in the region has given us an insight into your culture and values about Islam. This understanding has, over many years, enabled us to supply high quality products which meet your preferences. Through your confidence in our products, we have succeeded in building up brands such as Lurpak, Puck, The Three Cows and Dano. Therefore, we understand and respect your reactions that have led to a boycott of our products following the Danish newspaper’s irresponsible and unfortunate action.⁵⁸

In Denmark, Arla’s campaign was immediately condemned by the leader of the governing liberal *Ventre* party as “a spineless submission to angry Muslims,” while Pia Kjærsgaard stated: “Arla says it understands the boycott. We ought neither to understand, nor accept it.”⁵⁹ In Sweden, which was not actively involved in the conflict, a scandal forced the foreign minister to resign. In January, a Swedish right-wing nationalist party attempted to capitalize on the situation by announcing their own Muhammad cartoon competition in their online journal. After the Swedish secret police got specific threats from “credible sources” that such a publication would endanger Swedish interests, the Foreign Minister authorized the closing of the internet site without consulting the Prime Minister. In the scandal that followed – this was the first case of implicit government

⁵⁸ “Arla Foods has distanced itself from cartoons: Statement from Arla Foods,” Press release from Arla Foods, March 20, 2006.
[http://www.arlafoods.com/APPL/HJ/HJ202COM/HJ202D01.NSF/2c8e5576cd3bf4c4c1256d030047be36/db7c44e9ffbf01c1257137004d4529/\\$FILE/statement%20in%20advertisement.pdf](http://www.arlafoods.com/APPL/HJ/HJ202COM/HJ202D01.NSF/2c8e5576cd3bf4c4c1256d030047be36/db7c44e9ffbf01c1257137004d4529/$FILE/statement%20in%20advertisement.pdf) (accessed March 21, 2006)

⁵⁹ “Arla startar charmoffensiv i arabvärlden,” *Dagens Nyheter*, March 21, 2006.

censure of media for a generation - Swedish Foreign Minister Laila Freivalds was forced to resign.⁶⁰

As the conflict began cooling down, a debate started in Scandinavian countries, following patterns similar to those in the Netherlands after the murder of film maker Theo van Gogh by a Moroccan Islamist, or in France following the massive 2005 riots. The immediate benefactors in this conflict were various nationalist parties. However, the long-term results of this crisis appears to further accelerate the departure from the policies of multiculturalism which until recently whereas promoted by European elites and to a re-affirmation of the western tradition of liberal democracy and civil liberties. To many Danes, this crisis has validated much of the popular dissatisfaction with multiculturalism and a reinforced the perception that the two are not necessarily compatible.⁶¹ Proponents of multiculturalism, such as Bhiku Parekh, have emphasized that a multicultural society cannot be based upon shared cultural or ethnic characteristics, but must seek other forms of identity. Neither could a multicultural society set up too ambitious goals for the integration of society, since the demographic basis of society may prove too diverse for far-reaching communal goals. The commitment to society ought to be political, and “does not involve sharing common substantive goals, for its members might deeply disagree about these, nor a common view of its history which they may read differently, nor a

⁶⁰ “JK utreder stängningen av SD-kurirens sajt”, *Dagens Nyheter*, March 20, 2006, Laila Freivalds chockad över frågan om UD:s censurering”, *Dagens Nyheter*, March 20, 2006. “Ytterligare ett skäl för Persson att peka ut sin efterträdare”, *Dagens Nyheter*, March 21, 2006.

⁶¹ By multiculturalism I mean a system of political strategies to maintain a culturally and ethnically diverse society; a doctrine which, broadly speaking, strives to maintain diversity by encouraging the identification of its members with the culture of their ancestors rather than actively encouraging integration and assimilation. This multiculturalism, broadly speaking, has been identified by Hall as pluralist multiculturalism, as system which “formally enfranchises the differences between groups along cultural lines and accords different groups rights to different communities with a more ... communitarian political order.” S. Hall, ”Conclusion: The Multi-cultural Question” in B. Hesse, *Unsettled Multiculturalisms*, (London: Zed Books, 2000) 210.

particular economic system ... commitment to the political community involves commitment to its continuing existence and well-being... and implies that one cares enough not to harm its interests and undermine its integrity.”⁶²

The behavior of the Danish imams confronted multi-ethnic Denmark with a scenario which the architects behind Danish multiculturalism had not planned for. Sometimes, liberal democratic values such as freedom of speech, expression and conscience are incorrectly referred to as “universal,” or “culture-blind.”⁶³ Therefore, in the eyes of many multiculturalists there is no conflict between multiculturalism and liberal democratic values. Such were the arguments presented in favor of *Sharia* arbitration courts when they were introduced in Ontario in 1991. The 1991 Ontario Arbitration Act granted religious leaders the right to mediate in legal disputes, such as divorce and child custody. In 2004, a group calling itself the Islamic Institute for Civil Justice (I.I.C.J.) proposed creating a formalized tribunal to implement *Sharia* law. The intention was that it would enhance Canada’s official doctrine of multiculturalism, and enrich the society through encouraging ethnic groups to preserve and share their values. The intention was to use Islamic *Sharia* law to avoid costly litigation, and to be used mainly in arbitrating family disputes, particularly divorces. The I.I.C.J. spokesperson Syed Mumtaz Ali, who had previously argued that Canadian Muslims ought to be treated similarly to Aboriginal nations in regards to their own legal systems, declared this to be “the beginning of a Sharia Court in Canada,” arguing that henceforth I.I.C.J. would offer a parallel legal system in Ontario, based upon *Sharia* law.⁶⁴ This act drew criticism both

⁶² Bhiku C. Parekh, *Rethinking Multiculturalism*. (London: Macmillan, 2000), 341-342.

⁶³ Hall, 211. Göran Rosenberg, ”Mångkultur är inget val” *Dagens Nyheter*, September 22, 2005.

⁶⁴ Marion Boyd, “Religiously-Based Alternate Dispute Resolution: A Challenge to Multiculturalism” *Canadian Diversity/Diversité Canadienne*, Vol. 4:3 (Fall 2005), 71-74.

within and outside Canada, particularly by Canadian Muslim women's groups and even caused hostile protests outside Canadian embassies abroad. The proposal was overhauled in September 2005, after a government review of the law.⁶⁵ The *Sharia* law debate may represent the high water mark of Canadian multiculturalism. Implementation of *Sharia* law would be a logical consequence of institutionalized multiculturalism. Paul Scheffer, urban sociologist at the University of Amsterdam, argues "Multiculturalism should lead, when you take it seriously, to legal pluralism," adding that Canada is about ten years behind the Netherlands in challenging multiculturalism's practical flaws. "People have never been told that their rights go together with obligations. We have simply been looking the other way in the name of tolerance."⁶⁶ The struggle against *Sharia* law has therefore been led by the weak members of the Canadian Muslim community itself. Alia Hogben, president of the Canadian Council of Muslim Women, described *Sharia* family arbitration "an abuse of multiculturalism." Homa Arjomand, an Iranian immigrant leading an international campaign against the Ontario Arbitration Act said it laid bare the greatest flaw of multiculturalism, which she described as "ghettoism."⁶⁷ Recent opinion polls show a fall in public support for multiculturalism also in Canada.⁶⁸ Yet, as Will Kymlicka has pointed out, the immigrant situation in Canada differs sharply from that in Europe. Muslims constitute a small minority, 2% of the Canadian population, and 90% of recent immigrants to Canada are non-Muslim. In France, Spain, Italy and Germany on the contrary, 80 to 90% of immigrants are Muslim. At the same time, due to its geographic

⁶⁵ Susan Bourette, "Can tolerant Canada tolerate *sharia*?" *Christian Science Monitor*, August 10, 2004. C. Mallan, "Report called 'betrayal' of women," *Toronto Star*, 21 December, 2004. Boyd, 71-74.

⁶⁶ Bruce Cheadale, "Terror in Europe, *Sharia* in Canada spark multiculturalism row," *Canoe Network*, Cnews, July 23, 2005. <http://www.cnews.canoe.ca/CNEWS/Canada/2005/07/23> (accessed May 31, 2006)

⁶⁷ Cheadale (2005).

⁶⁸ David Ley, "Post-Multiculturalism?," *Vancouver Centre f Excellence: Research on Immigration and Integration in the Metropolis Working Paper Series* No. 05-18, (September 2005), 14, n. 2.

location Canada probably has the lowest number of illegal immigrants among all western democracies.⁶⁹ Kymlicka emphasizes the connection between the number of illegal immigrants and acceptance for multiculturalism. While close to 80 per cent of Canadians express a support for the official multiculturalism, in many European countries, such as the Netherlands, the very term “is relegated to the dunghill of history.”⁷⁰ After 1996, Australian Prime Minister John Howard closed the Office of Multicultural Affairs, and the term multiculturalism itself so discredited that it is commonly referred to as the “M-word.”⁷¹ In both Canada and the European Union, the origins of immigrants seems to be the key to public acceptance of multiculturalism. Official Canadian multiculturalism was established in response to demands from groups of European immigrants, such as Ukrainians and Poles, whose allegiance to liberal democracy was not in question. European, Latin American, Caribbean and East Asian immigrants to Canada are not seen as bringing “barbaric” practices with them, such as arranged marriages of underage girls, female circumcision and honor killings. The European general public is not willing to accept the risk of multicultural policies be used as a vehicle to perpetrate or accommodate such practices. Kymlicka, a high-profile promoter of multiculturalism, argues that the experience of multiculturalism across the Western democracies “suggests that many

⁶⁹ Will Kymlicka, “The Uncertain Futures of Multiculturalism,” *Canadian Diversity/Diversité Canadienne*, Vol. 4:1 (Winter 2005), 82-85.

⁷⁰ Jeroen Doomerik, “The State of Multiculturalism in the Netherlands,” *Canadian Diversity/Diversité Canadienne*, Vol. 4:1 (Winter 2005), 35.

⁷¹ Ley, 7, citing I. Ang and J. Stratton. “Multiculturalism in crisis: The new politics of race and national identity in Australia” in I. Ang (ed.), *On Not Speaking Chinese: Living Between Asia and the West* (London: Routledge, 2001) 95-111. Furthermore, of Canada’s 580,000 Muslims, 61 per cent live in Toronto. Yet the Muslim population of Toronto is less than seven per cent of the city’s population, compared to over 25 per cent in many European cities, such as Amsterdam. Cheadale (2005).

citizens are willing to accept multiculturalism policies when they are perceived as low-risk, but oppose them when they are perceived as high-risk.”⁷²

Clearly, many people in democracies across the world see multiculturalism as a high-risk policy. The United States never embraced multicultural policies. In Australia, Italy, the Netherlands, Denmark and Norway and most other liberal democracies, multiculturalism is in drastic retreat in accordance with the desires of their populations.⁷³ Denmark and the Netherlands used to be among the European countries most open to multicultural policy claims.⁷⁴ The one exception is Canada, the only country that has elevated multiculturalism to official policy. But Canada too has seen a reaction against multicultural policies such the *Sharia* arbitration in Ontario, which was recently rejected.

In addition, while Canada has a point system in place, largely recruiting immigrants on the basis of their potential economic contributions to society, this is not the case in Scandinavia, where the vast majority are refugee claimants or given residence permits on “humanitarian grounds” such as family reunions. A result of this is that immigrants to Canada are, on average, much better educated than the average Canadian. Over 40 per cent of the immigrants to Canada during the 1990s had at least one university degree, compared to the Canadian average of 22 per cent.⁷⁵ In Denmark, 59 per cent of men and 43 per cent of women immigrants from outside the EU are active in the work force, compared to 83 and 75 percent for Danish men and women. Among some groups

⁷² Kymlicka, 83, 85.

⁷³ Veit Bader, “Dutch Nightmare? The End of Multiculturalism?,” *Canadian Diversity/Diversité Canadienne*, Vol. 4:1 (Winter 2005), 9-10.

⁷⁴ Leonie Sandercock, “Rethinking Multiculturalism for the 21st Century” *Vancouver Centre for Excellence: Research on Immigration and Integration in the Metropolis Working Paper Series* No. 03-14, (October 2003), 20.

⁷⁵ *The Annual Report of the Operation of The Canadian Multiculturalism Act 2004-2005* (Gatineau, Quebec: Minister of Public Works and Government Services Canada, 2006), 31, citing *Education in Canada: Raising the Standard*, 2001 Census: Analysis Series, Statistics Canada, March 2003).

of recently arrived immigrants the participation in the Danish work force is less than 20 per cent.⁷⁶ Furthermore, until Denmark restricted their immigration laws in 2001, an estimated 80-90 per cent of young Turks and Pakistanis in Denmark married someone from outside the country and sought to bring their foreign spouse to Denmark.⁷⁷ Arguments similar to those made by Canadian multiculturalists have been frequently raised by the intellectual elite in Sweden. Writes public intellectual Göran Rosenberg in Sweden's largest morning newspaper, liberal *Dagens Nyheter*, repeating Nathan Glazer's argument from the 1990s that "we are all multiculturalists now:"

More and more often it is claimed that the pre-condition for integration is a common set of values. I am not so sure. In any case I am not so sure of what is meant by common values. If by values you mean praxis, which find expressions within the legal norms and rules of a democratic society, then the values are already established. It is then only about implementing the most basic principles of the civil society: everybody's equality before the law. Citizens whose values allow them to break the law is a matter for the police and courts – not a cultural problem. But what is meant by common values here is something different, something going beyond the law and legal precedent, something that ultimately says define the very community, but nevertheless is not shared by everybody in the multi-cultural society. What the society subsequently then is said to require is that we set up "demands" on citizens who insist on having values opposed to those of the common set of values but are not necessarily against the law. But what demands can we have on citizens with "wrong" values beyond those that the law demands from us all? And what happens to the principle of everybody's equality before the law if we, like in Denmark and the Netherlands, nevertheless start to make such demands? And who are "we," by the way? ... [W]e are all multiculturalists now and we do not have any better alternatives.⁷⁸

⁷⁶ Karen Bird, "Multiculturalism in Denmark," *Canadian Diversity/Diversité Canadienne*, Vol. 4:1 (Winter 2005), 39, citing SOPEMI report for Denmark, 2001, as reported in Roseveare and Jorgensen (2004), p. 16..

⁷⁷ Bird, 41-42 citing Garbi Schmidt, "The right to choose: Patterns of partner choice among ethnic minorities in Denmark." Paper presented at the 13th Nordic Migration Conference, Aalborg, Denmark (November 2004).

⁷⁸ Göran Rosenberg, "Mångkultur är inget val," *Dagens Nyheter*, September 22, 2005.

However, the recent controversy over blasphemy reminds us that liberal democracy is not compatible with Islamism. To significant sections of the religious establishments in Saudi Arabia, Iran, Pakistan and other autocracies, democracy constitutes a threat. They do understand that democracy would spell and end to their systems. As much as we sometimes would like to think of them as universal, the values of Locke, Montesquieu and Mills, upon which much of the European democracy is based, are western values and products of European cultural tradition. In a legal order based upon liberal democratic principles, the rejection of Islamism needs to be accompanied by a rejection of other religious dogmas as well, in order to give the separation of the (Christian) church and state any meaning. This seems to be the direction in which the European Union is heading. Motions from the Vatican - Europe's last theocracy - about writing Christianity or Christian values into the European constitution have been soundly defeated. Other than the Polish government, few supported such a paragraph. Likewise, opposition from the Catholic Church to same-sex marriages was largely ignored in Spain. Dutch scholar and multicultural activist Veit Bader laments that "Dutch politics is now under the spell of republican or liberal assimilationism and aggressive secularism."⁷⁹

In Denmark, the government has ended its praxis of consulting imams before setting policies. Instead, the Danish government has increased its efforts to explain what democracy is and how it works, both to Muslims within Denmark and to the Muslim world. Imam Ahmed Akkari has been deposed as a spokesperson for *Islamisk Trossamfund i Danmark* after threatening to send bombers to blow up Nader Khader, a secular Muslim member of *Folketinget*, the Danish parliament, after Khader spoke out

⁷⁹ Veit Bader, "Dutch Nightmare? The End of Multiculturalism?," *Canadian Diversity/Diversité Canadienne*, Vol. 4:1 (Winter 2005), 11.

against Akkari's organization.⁸⁰ As for Imam Ahmed Abu Laban, he is under investigation by the police after threatening suicide bombings in Denmark.⁸¹ On May 11, he declared that he would leave Denmark, adding that "I think the Islamic cause has become a challenge for western democracies. It has been proven that western democracies do not allow human rights."⁸² Early in May, there were reports that twelve young men from Afghanistan and Pakistan were on their way to Denmark to murder the artists who painted the Muhammad cartoons. Soon thereafter, a video, supposedly from al-Qaeda, appeared on the internet, urging "Muslims, revenge our prophet. We deeply and solemnly wish that the little country of Denmark, Norway and France should be mercilessly attacked and devastated ... Devastate their buildings, make their soil shake and turn it into lakes of blood," a Libyan man by the name of Sheikh Abu Yahia al-Libi, stated, following three weeks after the al-Qaeda leader Osama bin Laden urged a boycott of American and European products from countries that supported Denmark during the crisis.⁸³ In France, the government has reaffirmed the republican and liberal democratic principles of separation of church and state by banning religious uniforms or visual religious symbols in public schools in order to provide a non-sectarian environment for

⁸⁰ "Danske imamen Ahmed Akkari slutar som talesman," *Dagens Nyheter*, March 25, 2006. Naser Khader was born in Damascus, Syria, and represents the liberal party *Radikale Venstre* in *Folketinget* since 2001. He was previously called a "rat" by Abu Laban after setting up the network "Democratic Muslims" and refusing to accept radicals like Abu Laban and Akkari claiming to speak on his behalf. He has received several death threats from Islamists, and is constantly accompanied by two body guards. In a recent opinion poll, 66,7 per cent of the Danes stated that he was the Danish politician with the strongest leadership skills – a number even higher than those of Prime Minister Fogh Rasmussen. Ole Rothenborg, "Fanatisk demokrat' väcker respekt i Danmark," *Dagens Nyheter*, March 25, 2006.

⁸¹ "Dansk polis skall förhöra imam," *Dagens Nyheter*, March 25, 2006.

⁸² Camilla Ryste, "Omstridt imam flytter fra Danmark," *Verdens Gang*, May 11, 2005.

⁸³ Anne Vinding, "12 menn på vei til Danmark for å drepe," *Verdens Gang*, May 4, 2006 and Roar Dalmo Moltubak, "Al-Qaida oppfordrer til angrep på Norge – Ønsker inderlig at Norge skal bli ødelagt," *Verdens Gang*, May 15, 2006.

the students.⁸⁴ French Interior Minister Nicolas Sarkozy of the Gaullist UMP party has proposed a “contract of welcome and integration” with new immigrants, in which they would have to receive education in democracy and take a test for immigrants to France, in which they will be asked to confirm their allegiance to democracy and human rights.

⁸⁴ The Scandinavian countries, which have a different tradition than France, have attempted a “softer” approach. It is also a contradictory policy. In 2003 when students at the Burgården High School in Gothenburg, Sweden started coming to school in complete burqa of the same design as those imposed on Afghan women by the Talibans, covering the entire body while their eyes were covered behind a veil, the Swedish School Authority agreed that banning burqas is in accordance with Swedish law and the pedagogical mandate of the school. The Swedish School Authority established that

“Attitudes in regards to whether the wearing of burqa or other all-covering clothing has a religious connotation or whether it is merely an expression of culture differ. The predominant opinions among historians of religion and the discrimination ombudsman (DO) seem to support the notion that the wearing of all-covering gears would be of religious importance are not supported by religious documents. However, it has not been established whether the wearing of burqa is a manifestation of religion or not. There are those who claim that our definition of religion requires that it is up to the individual to determine what his or her religion means.

Freedom of religion has a positive and a negative side. Positive freedom of religion means the right to have and manifest certain religious views. The negative side is the right not to have and not having to be subjected to religious manifestations. Despite the fact that clothing normally is something that is decided by the individual, clothing that has religious connotations is something that does not fall within the private sphere, given other peoples’ desire not to be subjected to this religious manifestation. If it was the case that the girls were wearing burqa for religious reasons we would be confronted with the question on where to draw the line between the positive right to demonstrate one’s religion and the negative aspect of religious freedom of having the right of not being subjected to religious manifestations. The precedence from the European Court has shown that the negative aspect of freedom of religion has been given much weight. However, precedent is limited. (*Tidskrift för Rettsvitenskap* 3-5/2002, professor Reinhold Fahlbeck, University of Lund) (...)

It can not be considered a right to use the school as a vehicle for religious manifestations or for very specific expressions of culture. In terms of expression of religion, school ought to be a neutral space. If burqa is a religious manifestation, the discussion of whether burqa should be allowed or not ought to be subordinated the consideration of the pedagogical mandate of the school. Thus, a school leadership do have both the right and the duty to step in and prevent expressions of religion or specific manifestations of culture, which may disturb the order. They also have the right to do so if these expressions impact the security of the school or if the school would be prevented from fulfilling its pedagogical mandate. If these expressions are otherwise perceived to stand in opposition to fundamental democratic values, the school’s freedom of action and duty to act is limited to the realm of what can be described as education of, and dialogue about values, equality, and democracy. We would not recommend a prohibition, not accompanied by such educational activities. Why do the girls want to wear burqa and how does their surrounding see this? It is important that nobody is denied education or left out of society.” “Skolverket, Skrivelse: Flickor med burqa/niqab i skolan,” Per Thullberg, General Director and Ingegård Hillbom, Senior Legal Consultant, October 23, 2003. http://www.skolverket.se/content/1/c4/05/01/svar_om_burka.pdf (accessed June 6, 2006). See also the press release “Skolor har rätt att förbjuda burqa,” October 24, 2003. <http://www.skolverket.se/sb/d/246/a/501.jsessionid=98AA932844450D4C58E16142A64532C7> (accessed June 6, 2005).

However, two years later when a school in Umeå, Sweden, banned veils and head scarves they were criticized by the discrimination ombudsman (DO) for violating the Swedish freedom of religion. Press release “Skolan skall vara öppen för alla elever,” May 22, 2006. <http://www.skolverket.se/sb/d/1271/a/6361> (accessed June 6, 2006).

Immigrants who fail to do so would face expulsion. Sarkozy also declared that France will be selective in who will be let in to the country:

We no longer want immigration that is inflicted [on us]... We want selected immigration. The system of integration to the French way no longer works. ... In case of a woman kept hostage in her home without learning French, the whole family will be obliged to leave.⁸⁵

As the Muhammad conflict took place, Germany was involved in a debate regarding a similar test, administered to immigrants to the *Bundesland* of Baden-Württemberg who are seeking German citizenship. In the test, the immigrants are required to show their allegiance to the liberal democratic principles of their new country of citizenship. They are given questions such as: “Some people accuse the Jews of being responsible for all that’s bad in the world. ... What do you think of such accusations?” and “In Germany, sport and swim classes are part of the normal school curriculum. Would you allow your daughter to participate?”⁸⁶ The introduction of the test was caused by heightened attention to Muslims in Germany following the discovery of numerous terror cells in Germany following the September 11 attacks. There have been increased efforts to integrate Germany’s 2.5 million Turks following the 2005 violent riots in France. The controversy surrounding the test has largely been centered on the state’s praxis of applying this test to immigrants from patriarchal and undemocratic Muslim societies while exempting Europeans and Americans and other immigrants from democratic states. The Netherlands implemented a similar policy, requiring all immigrants to the Netherlands to pass an integration test. As a part of the preparation for this test, immigrants have to watch a movie on the Netherlands, containing footage of two

⁸⁵ Henry Samuel, “French plan would force immigrants to integrate,” *National Post*, February 7, 2006.

⁸⁶ Charles Hawley, “A German State Quizzes Muslim Immigrants on Jews, Gays and Swim Lessons”, *Spiegel Online*, January 31, 2006.

gay men kissing each other, clips of topless women and information that handguns are illegal in the Netherlands, that female circumcision is not allowed and that Dutch law gives women equal rights under the law. The idea is to create understanding for Dutch values, and make prospective immigrants aware of what sort of society to which they are considering moving to. Much like in Germany, the critique has been that this test obviously is targeting Muslims, while EU citizens, Americans and citizens of other democracies are exempt from taking this test.⁸⁷

Proponents of multiculturalism and adherents of a neo-colonial model of explanation for the divide in European societies still have strong positions, particularly in Sweden. Following the burning of Scandinavian embassies, voices were heard in the Swedish debate, arguing a moral equivalency between the Islamists and Denmark, and even that the violence actually stems from the west. Under the headline “The New Crusade,” Masoud Kamali, professor at the Department for Multi-Ethnic Studies at Uppsala University wrote in Sweden’s largest morning paper:

Colonialism and neo-colonialism have changed their guise and been internalized. The internal colonialism is multi-faceted segregation, which defines as good every western society today. ... Jyllands-Posten's cartoons of the Prophet Muhammad are thus no coincidence. The symbolic violence against Muslims has been intensified in a number of European countries. During the past few years Denmark has conducted a racist policy and deepened the wedge between “us” and “them.”... The roots of the conflict are to be found in a long history of oppression, racism, western violence, broken promises and exploitation.⁸⁸

Given a widely perceived cultural division between immigrants and native Europeans, the question is whether a super-national, non-ethnic secular identity, which is nevertheless European, will be able to compete effectively with the national or ethnic

⁸⁷ Marianne Björklund, ”Holländsk synd skall avskräcka invandrare,” *Dagens Nyheter*, March 29, 2006.

⁸⁸ Masoud Kamali, “Det nya korståget”, *Dagens Nyheter*, February 15, 2006.

identities of the individual countries. Denmark and Sweden have consistently been among the most EU-skeptic countries in the Union. Politicians such as Pia Kjaersgaard have made a career by articulating the widespread and deeply felt concerns about immigration and European integration that many Danes feel. At the same time, the largest Danish political parties, including the Liberal *Ventre* party of Prime Minister Fogh Rasmussen, are enthusiastic EU supporters, while taking a firm stance against Islamic demands of censorship. It seems like this conflict has crystallized two political alternatives in the debate; multi-culturalists and proponents of western, liberal democratic values. Certainly, ethnic nationalists remain important actors. In the wake of this conflict they have strengthened their positions further. However, with the possible exceptions of Austria and Italy, they have not come to power in any EU country, nor have parties, such as Haider's FPÖ seriously attempted to challenge the foundations of western liberal democracy.

The debate which publication of the cartoons opened can no longer be overlooked or ignored. It is long over due, and ought to be welcomed. The suicide bombings carried out by three British-born Muslims and a Jamaican-born immigrant and convert to Islam in London on July 7, 2005 which killed 52 people highlight the urgent need for this discussion. Multiculturalism opens up the creation of fractured societies with parallel value systems and legal pluralism, which effectively has turned in to a direct affront to the liberal values of the European Union. This, in turn, has fuelled homegrown terrorism among Europe's Muslim communities. The findings of the Intelligence Assessments Branch of CSIS show that many of the radical Islamists in western societies are raised by

their fathers to become extreme believers.⁸⁹ “European Jihad” is increasingly often used to describe the new wave of young men, born in western democracies and considering these societies legitimate terrorist targets. After the arrest of seventeen young Muslim men in Toronto on June 3, 2006, planning a massive terrorist attack in Ontario, a “Canadian Jihad” appears to be underway.⁹⁰

At the core of this issue is the conflict between secularism and militant religiosity. Militant Islam demands that the state should submit itself to religious demands, and use violence or threat of force to impose its ideals upon others. Naturally, this is a conflict with many components: social inequalities, segregation and alienation feed radicalism and play into the hands of the Islamists. But at its core this remains a conflict about values and about what sort of society Europe should be. Liberal democratic values and civil liberties are vulnerable, and needs to be defended. Lee Harris fears that Denmark was too accommodating in the face of threats.

Does the so-called “cartoon war” represent the clash of civilizations? I wish I could answer “yes”, but I can’t. In order for there to be a clash of civilizations, it is necessary for there to be two civilizations, both of which are prepared to defend their deepest cultural values. ... The behavior of the Danish government does not suggest that we are in the midst of a clash of civilizations, but, rather, that we are watching a civilization that has lost its sense of purpose capitulating before a civilization that continues to believe, and believe fanatically, in its own mission. A civilization that no longer believes in itself, and in its values and traditions, is no longer in a position to defend itself from the onslaught of a civilization that does. It is only in a position to appease.⁹¹

Yet this conflict seems to suggest that respect for individual expression has become a part of European identity. No EU governments has been prepared to yield to

⁸⁹ Stewart Bell, “Nevermind foreign terrorists, why is Canada growing its own extremists?” *National Post*, June 3, 2006.

⁹⁰ Bell (2006).

⁹¹ Lee Harris, “There’s No Clash Here: Only one civilization cares to put up a fight”, *National Review*, February 7, 2006.

Muslim demands or threats in regards to central liberal democratic values such as freedom of expression. Rather, they have rejected Muslim claims that non-Muslims ought to adhere to the internal provisions of a particular stand of Islam. Demands for a global ban on blasphemy are therefore unlikely to pass in the United Nations. Few Europeans agree with the proposition that Danish society should adjust to the Islamists. The emerging consensus is that Muslims need to adjust to, or at least accept liberal democratic principles if they chose to live in western democracies. As Amir Taheri argued, “[Islamists] are not the sole representatives of Islam, just as the Nazi Party was not the sole representative of German culture.”⁹²

The Muslim communities in the western world have a lot of soul-seeking to do, and needs to take a clear stance on issues such as freedom of religion and freedom from religion, both of which are central values in the liberal democratic tradition. In Denmark, the former editor of the daily *Politiken*, the liberal humanist Herbert Pundik, started a fundraiser for a Danish mosque in order to prevent Saudi financing, which he feared would further strengthen the reactionary forces within the Islamic community in Denmark.⁹³ According to Flemming Rose, if there is one winner in this conflict, and it is the moderate Muslims of Europe.

Since the Sept. 30 publication of the cartoons, we have had a constructive debate in Denmark and Europe about freedom of expression, freedom of religion and respect for immigrants and people’s beliefs. Never before have so many Danish Muslims participated in a public dialogue. ... The radical imams who misinformed their counterparts in the Middle East about the situation for Muslims in Denmark have been marginalized. They no longer speak for the Muslim community in Denmark because moderate Muslims have the courage to speak out against them. ... The Muslim face

⁹² Amir Taheri, “Bonfire of the Pieties: Islam prohibits neither images of Muhammad nor jokes about religion,” *Wall Street Journal*, February 8, 2006.

<http://www.opinionjournal.com/editorial/feature.html?id=110007934>

⁹³ “Manifest för en ny upplysning,” *Dagens Nyheter*, March 2, 2005.

of Denmark has changed, and it is becoming clear that this is not a debate between “them” and “us”, but between those committed to democracy in Denmark and those who are not.⁹⁴

It is not the historian’s role to make projections for the future. However, there are reasons to believe that the development in Europe is one away from multiculturalism and reaffirmation of liberal democratic values and the principles of separation of religion and politics. The challenge to liberal democracy by forces fundamentally opposed to it has forced the governments of Europe to re-affirm their adherence to democratic principles, retreating from multiculturalism.⁹⁵ As the editor of the largest Swedish morning paper *Dagens Nyheter* expressed it: No open society without blasphemy.⁹⁶ London-based *The Economist* made a similar point: “It is not a good idea for newspapers to insult people’s religious or other beliefs just for the sake of it. But that is and should be their own decision, not a decision for governments, clerics or other self-appointed arbiters of taste and responsibility.”⁹⁷ Many papers in continental Europe that re-printed these cartoons did so because they do feel that freedom of press has been under threat. Danish journalists have received death threats, Dutch filmmaker Theo van Gogh was murdered for questioning Islam. The diversion of values has become a European problem. Across Europe, there is increased skepticism towards the concept of multiculturalism. Here, I use Australian political scientist Ross Poole’s definition of multiculturalism as a system where immigrants who want to become permanent members of a society get government assistance in resisting assimilation into the political cultures of their new home countries.

⁹⁴ Fleming Rose, “Why I published Those Cartoons,” *Jyllands-Posten*, February 19, 2006.

⁹⁵ See Christian Joppke, “The Retreat from Multiculturalism in Liberal Nation-States” (Russel Sage Foundation, 2003) GET COMPLETE CITATION. And Rogers Brubaker, “The Return of Assimilation?,” *Ethnic and Racial Studies*. Vol. 24 no. 4, (2001): 531-548.

⁹⁶ “Inget öppet samhälle utan hädelse”, *Dagens Nyheter*, January 11, 2006.

⁹⁷ “Cartoon wars”, *The Economist*, February 11, 2006.

Multiculturalism, Poole argues, was intended as a greater involvement in minority problems, but instead came to mean an end to the assumption that immigrants would assimilate into the existent culture. Multiculturalists assume diversity of values to be a value on its own, and that immigrants would contribute by *not* assimilating. In this quest, they would be assisted by the state, which would work to sustain diversity.⁹⁸ Poole argues against multiculturalism on the basis that identities are formed within cultures, as we are all members of a society. If that principle is abandoned, you see alienation and dislocation. Since culture, education and government require and give priority to one dominant language, the “neutral political culture” of the multiculturalists is an impossible fantasy,⁹⁹ since it ignores the cultural dimension of government. The loss of culture and language is an inevitable consequence of migration, and those who make the choice to migrate must be aware of these consequences, Poole argues.¹⁰⁰ Liberal democratic societies can make exceptions in case of refugees, knowing that their identity and commitment will lie with their native countries, given that they are temporary visitors and that they will not become full members of their host countries. The normal standard for immigrants, however, needs to be that they are treated as potential citizens, and should be included in the political systems and expected to participate in the civic life of their adopted countries.¹⁰¹

In the end of February, eleven intellectuals published an open manifesto against what they described as “a new totalitarianism,” which was reprinted across the European Union:

⁹⁸ Ross Poole, *Nation and Identity*, (London and New York: Routledge, 1999), 115-117.

⁹⁹ Bader, “Dutch Nightmare? The End of Multiculturalism?,” *Canadian Diversity/Diversité Canadienne*, Vol. 4:1 (Winter 2005), 10.

¹⁰⁰ Poole, 118-124.

¹⁰¹ Poole, 125.

After having overcome fascism, Nazism, and Stalinism, the world now faces a new global threat: Islamism. ... Islamism is a reactionary ideology, which kills equality, freedom and secularism wherever it is present. Its success can only lead to a world of domination: man's domination of woman, the Islamists' domination over all the others. ... We reject "cultural relativism", which consists in accepting that men and women of Muslim countries should be deprived of their rights to equality, freedom and secular values in the name of respect for culture and traditions. We refuse to renounce our critical spirit out of fear of being accused of "Islamophobia", an unfortunate concept which confuses criticism of Islam as a religion with stigmatization of its believers.¹⁰²

Among the signatories were Salman Rushdie, Taslima Nasreen and Ayaan Hirsi Ali, all living under constant death threats, as well as Bernard-Henri Levy and Irshad Manji. They made their point very clear: the problem is not too much freedom of expression of Denmark, the problem is fanaticism and intolerance from a global anti-democratic movement, which feeds off the lack of democratic rights in the countries where the worst excesses of anti-Danish manifestations have taken place.¹⁰³ It is the absence of an open discussion of religion in these dictatorships that is the root cause of these problems, not the discussion of these problems in the west.

To the peoples of Scandinavia, it was a shock to suddenly be singled out as an object of scorn and hatred. For the longest time, there has been the feeling that their crossed flags symbolized democracy, dialogue and faith in the international community.

¹⁰² "Manifesto: Together facing the new totalitarianism", *Jyllands-Posten*, February 28, 2006.

¹⁰³ In many Islamic countries, the authorities extend their blasphemy bans on artistic expressions that could possibly be interpreted as challenging religions, other than Islam. Curiously, Pakistan, where much of the violence following the cartoon controversy took place, took the step on June 3, 2006 to ban the movie *The Da Vinci Code* "out of respect for the country's minority Christians" since Pakistani officials claimed that it contained "blasphemous material about Jesus." "Da Vinci Code banned in Pakistan," *Edmonton Journal*, June 4, 2006. At the same time, Pakistan has a poor record regarding religious freedom for their Christian minority. While there is no death penalty on apostasy, social pressure is so strong that conversion often has to take place underground, and several Christians and members of other religions have been persecuted and punished for "blasphemy" in the past few years. "U.S. Department of State: Pakistan: International Religious Freedom Report 2004, Released by the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor." Released on September 15, 2004. <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2004/35519.htm> (accessed June 4, 2006)

Much of this has been shattered as Scandinavians in disbelief were broadcasted pictures of their flags being burned by people who most likely would not be able to find the Scandinavian countries on a map. A Danish flag or a Danish passport is longer a protection in the Muslim world. Even more disturbing was the discovery that Muslim organizations within their countries actively and openly sought assistance from brutal dictatorships in their conspiracies against their adopted countries

This shock may very well bring the Scandinavian countries closer to the European Union. It was no coincident that the manifest by the twelve intellectuals was given much attention in the Nordic countries; many Scandinavians can identify with Rushdi and Nasreen. The vast majority of Scandinavians, much like Rushdie and the editor of *Jyllands-Posten*, who has received 104 threats, refuse to live in fear.¹⁰⁴

There are few reasons to believe that appeasement of radical Islam will be a successful strategy. If cartoonists and writers in democratic countries rein in their satire and if our intellectuals and elected representatives impose a self-censorship of their language, Islamists will regard this as a victory. This would mean a betrayal not only of core European values, but also of the part of democratic Muslims who left Islamic societies due to the absence of civil societies and rule of law.

One way out of the crisis in which the EU has found itself following the French and Dutch voters rejection of the constitution may be a EU which could shift its focus from the creation of a pan-European identity and symbolism and instead provide a “civic citizenship” and a strong framework of liberal democratic values within which the individual nation states and regions states can operate. Such a solution would arguably have good chances to be successful, since liberal democratic values are agreeable to the

¹⁰⁴ Fleming Rose, “Why I published Those Cartoons,” *Jyllands-Posten*, February 19, 2006.

vast majority of EU citizens, regardless of nationality. Across the European Union, it is commonly perceived that these values have come under threat lately, both from radical Islam and the heavy-handed response to it. It is enough to look across the Atlantic to see how the reaction to an anti-democratic challenge has resulted in the Patriot Act, eavesdropping, indefinite and extralegal arrests and extralegal renditions, some done with the silent approval of some European governments. Islamism constitutes a serious challenge to liberal democratic values. The remedy spells more stressing of the importance of liberal democracy, not less.

Howard Duncan argues that liberal democracy itself is “a prerequisite to the application and very formulation of multiculturalism theory. My view is that these two concepts work at different logical levels, one being the precondition for the other. *Simply put, if you don't have liberalism you are not going to have multiculturalism.*”¹⁰⁵

My interpretation is that multiculturalism, rather than integrate immigrants into their new countries of residence can *weaken* and *undermine* the foundations of liberal democracy. Liberal democracy cannot exist in a vacuum, and is not independent of the conditions under which society works. No society is so void of values that it can provide that “neutral” cultural framework which multiculturalists so desire. The process of constructing this “neutral” society – itself an oxymoron - necessarily includes the retreat from liberal democratic values. These require equality in the eyes of the law; it requires that the principles of democratic ground rules are universally accepted by the members of society. For reasons of culture, religion and socio-economic conditions, in Denmark, the Netherlands, France and other European countries, a non-neglectable part of their

¹⁰⁵ Howard Duncan, “Multiculturalism: Still a Viable Concept for Integration?,” *Canadian Diversity/Diversité Canadienne*, Vol. 4:1 (Winter 2005), 13.

immigrant populations, often Muslim men, have not shown this commitment. In many cases, multiculturalism has fostered segregation and fractured societies. In countries such as Sweden, media and the political elite long kept silent on arranged marriages and honor killings among certain immigrant communities in fear of being coming across as xenophobic and or even racist.¹⁰⁶ In doing so, they not only failed to support women of patriarchal communities, but they failed the very principles of liberal democracy, upon which their societies are built. Policies regarding immigration and multiculturalism have been set behind closed doors, and often out of tune with the attitudes of the desires and preferences of the populations in the individual countries. This has opened up a market for various nationalist and anti-immigration parties across Europe, capitalizing off this divide between people and politicians. In some cases, these parties have benefited from the conflict regarding the Muhammad cartoons.

Poorly constructed immigration and integration policies has in many cases led to alienated and fractured societies, where many people increasingly perceive a lack of values. An increasing number of policymakers and EU citizens hold multicultural policies responsible for this development, leading to an across-the-board retreat from unpopular and counterproductive multicultural policies. The cartoon controversy did not create European dissatisfaction with multiculturalism, but forced a debate long overdue.

¹⁰⁶ One high profile case which got much media attention in Sweden and abroad was the “honor killing” of 26-year-old Fatime Sahindal in Uppsala, Sweden, by her father after she dated an ethnic Swede. Sahindal had been repeatedly abused by her brother and father and had lived under death threat for a number of years before her father murdered her. Already in 1998 did she approach leading Swedish feminists and politicians, publicly criticized them for their reluctance to speak out against patriarchal oppression against immigrant women in Sweden. She became widely known in Scandinavia when she appeared in the *Riksdag*, the Swedish parliament and spoke about her and many other Muslim immigrant women’s plight. After Sahindal’s murder Mona Sahlin, Swedish Minister of Integration expressed her regrets. “I was simply afraid to sound like [anti-immigrant party] Sverigedemokraterna: ‘Look, that’s how the immigrants are. Just thrown them out.’ I was too timid, and I closed my eyes.” “‘Jag har gråtit hela förmiddagen.’ Mona Sahlin hade hela tiden kontakt med den mördade” *Aftonbladet*, Jan 22, 2002. <http://www.aftonbladet.se/vss/nyheter/story/0,2789,125012,00.html> (Accessed May 10, 2006)

This is a debate of the greatest importance for the EU, and can no longer be avoided. In fact, it is intimately connected with the European project, and a satisfactory solution is necessary in order for the stalled constitution project to be resumed, as these are issues, the solution of which will determine the very nature of the future European societies. Liberal democracy needs to be the basis for the European Union and its member states. A gradual straying away from these principles has strengthened the enemies of liberal democracy, both among the nationalist right and the anti-democratic Islamists. This has played a role in the rejection of the constitution and to doubts about the very cornerstones of European identity and unification. The cartoon controversy is one of many warning signals during the past few years, adding to the van Gogh murder and the London and Madrid bombings. The response spells liberal democratic or republican assimilation policies, and a strong affirmation of democracy. The risks of liberal democracy and assimilationism far outweighs the risks involved in ignoring popular desires and the continuation of the multicultural policies of the 1980s and 1990s.