

## Denmark

# Analysis of Danish Media setting and framing of Muslims, Islam and racism

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### Summary

This paper presents the results of two case studies exploring the role which the Danish newspaper Media play in the reproduction of racial and ethnic inequalities. One case study analyses representations of Muslims and Islam in Danish newspapers, the other the presence and absence of discussions about racism and discrimination of ethnic minorities in Denmark. The analyses are based on, respectively, a two-month and a two-week monitoring of four Danish newspapers between mid-October and mid-December 2011.

A relatively large share of the news stories dealing with Muslims and Islam was negatively framed and restricted to certain topics such as extremism, terror and sharia, whereas positive actions and critical topics like racism and discrimination against Muslims were more or less nonexistent in the Media coverage. Constructed through an antagonistic and hierarchical relationship between 'Danes' and 'Muslims', Muslim culture and Islam tended to be represented as a threat to Danish society and so-called Danish values. The reporting was rather one-sided and exclusive of minority voices, and when Muslims were given voice, the same few publicly visible and vocal actors appeared. At the same time, the lives and opinions of the less visible majority of Muslims more or less vanished in the Media coverage. In this way, the newspapers constructed a distorted and negative picture of Muslims and their religion, and thereby contributed to a general climate of intolerance and discrimination against Muslim minorities.

## Introduction

The European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) has on several occasions pointed out the role of the Danish Media in creating negative images of ethnic minorities, thereby contributing to a general climate of intolerance and discrimination against ethnic minorities and, in particular, Muslims in Denmark (ECRI 1999, 2001, 2006). Danish Media has been ranked as the most critical towards Muslims and Islam (World Economic Forum 2008). In particular, the controversy surrounding the Muhammad cartoons – starting in 2005 with several subsequent reappearances – has made Danish Media representations of Muslims world-famous. The controversy emerged with the publication of 12 editorial cartoons, most of which depicted the prophet Muhammad, in the Danish Newspaper *Jyllands-Posten* on 30. September 2005. The publication was legitimated not only through ‘freedom of expression’ as an imperative of democratic societal values, but also by representing the (Muslim) claim on specific religious rights (to obey the iconophobia in the Koran) as contrary to such values. The cartoon affair has led to strong on-going clashes between different segments of the Danish society. In 2008, ethnic minority youth revolted against the reprint of the cartoons as allegedly an act of racist discrimination. The controversy over the cartoons may reflect more general tendencies in the Danish Media’s representation of Muslims and Islam, namely representations based on an undifferentiated perception of Islam as irrational, oppressive and traditional, which creates dichotomies between Danish (‘modern’ and ‘liberal’) and Muslim (‘traditional’ and ‘oppressing’) identities and values (Hervik 2002; Jensen 2010).

The controversy has sharpened the tone of the public debate on Muslims and ethnic minorities, making it more polarised. While the controversy over the cartoons thus provides a context for contemporary Danish Media setting and framing of Muslims and Islam, in itself the controversy formed only a part of this analysis. The aim of this working paper was more broadly to analyse how the Danish Media agenda frames issues of Muslims and Islam, racism and discrimination. The first part presents an overview of the two case studies and the methodological reflections concerning the analytical categories used in the newspaper monitoring. The second part presents our analytical findings (in case study one) of the Media’s construction of Muslims and Islam, focusing on issue-framing and the appearance of the minority actor’s voice. The last part presents the findings (in case study two) of the representation of racism and discrimination in the four newspapers. When in the following presentation we give specific empirical examples, we provide the number of the news items in the study’s database.

### *Overview of case study*

The overall aim of this report was to analyse how Danish Media was agenda-setting and framing the issue of Muslims and Islam. Moreover, we conducted a separate analysis focusing on the extent to which and how issues of racism and discrimination have been represented in the Danish Media. The analyses were based partly on a content analysis, which maps out the number of articles and specific issues concerning Islam and Muslims/racism and discrimination, and partly on a discourse analysis, which examines the Media's shaping of attitudes and of framing understandings through language, pictures and 'minority bias'. Additionally, we looked at the unsaid: 'the out of frame' which is potentially just as important in Media representations (Downing and Holland 2005). This section presents an overview of the two case studies as we introduce the procedure and the methodological reflections concerning the monitoring.

## **1. Muslims and Islam in the Danish Media**

The case study of Muslims and Islam in the Danish Media consists of a two-month period of monitoring (from mid-October to mid-December 2011) four Danish newspapers: the radical-social, liberal broadsheet paper *Politiken*, the liberal broadsheet paper *Jyllands-Posten*, the tabloid paper *EkstraBladet* and the Christian niche paper *KristeligtDagblad*. The examined newspapers are among the most widely read and largest-selling national newspapers<sup>1</sup> and vary in both political and ideological orientation (FRA 2002). Due to the sizes and variety of the selected newspapers, our empirical material was relatively representative of the Danish Media coverage of Islam and Muslims. This enabled us to carry out a nuanced comparative discourse analysis of the Danish mass media.

Initially, we included both print and online versions of the newspapers in our monitoring to take into account the specificities of Media forms and genres, e.g. to check whether the online newspapers framed the articles more harshly. However, after three weeks of monitoring, we concluded that articles appearing both online and in print were identical or almost identical. As the online articles did not bring decisive new information to the monitoring, they were excluded.

The monitoring included not only local or national sections but also world news, to examine whether foreign articles concerning Muslims and Islam influenced the Danish

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<sup>1</sup> With the exception of the daily *newspapers* that are distributed *free* of charge.

Media coverage specifically, as well the discourse generally. Moreover, the Media items examined in the case study were not only articles but also included comments, letters and editorials, as we consider them to be a part of the Media agenda-setting that is influencing the salience of an issue on the public agenda. The case study of Muslims and Islam in the Danish Media was not limited to specific events or themes that could potentially limit a presentation of a broad picture of the issues which the Media consider the most newsworthy and the importance which issues relating to Muslims and Islam were given.

### 1.1. Methodological reflections concerning the categories in the monitoring

The monitoring of the newspapers resulted in a database which was set up in Microsoft Excel. In order to ensure comparability, a methodological 'handbook' concerning the structure and categorical framework of the databases was developed beforehand. When creating the database, we first listed the full title of the article, the name of the author(s) and the coding frame (cf. column A and B in illustration), followed by the name of the newspaper, page number, the section in which the article appeared and the date of the article (cf. column C, D and E in illustration). Furthermore, we established whether the news item was a news article, an editorial, a comment or a letter, and a brief summary of the content of the item was given (cf. column E, F and G in illustration). We then examined the issue-framing, described the pictorial presentation, looked at the extent to which the news item was shaping minority bias, and identified the strength of the minority news actor's voice (cf. column H, I J and K in illustration). In the end, we simply stated the key words and phrases of the news item being examined (cf. column L and M in illustration).

### Illustration of the database and the categories

A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M
News item no.	Information	Medium and date	No of item/ page	Date	Type of item	Content summary	Issue-framing	Pictorial	Minority	Minority	Key words	Further explanations
1	Støbergaard to 'Crazy Ed'...	ISTAT: ISTAT: Ed.dk - or No page no., in sec		17.10.2011	NEWS: News	Adnan Avdic, a representative for the Salafit-group 'Abul-Sunah Wa Jamaah'...						
2	Minister wants to...	ISTAT: ISTAT: Ed.dk - or No page no., in sec		17.10.2011	NEWS: News	This article concerns a new report by SFI (The Danish National Centre for Social Research) about Salafism in Denmark...						
3	Støbergaard: Find another...	ISTAT: ISTAT: Jyllandsposten - p.03 in section 'Mila'		17.10.2011	NEWS: News	In the article it is stressed that Salafism is against democracy and it is described how the Salafit-groups in Denmark were talking...						
4	Salafit-utterances fail...	ISTAT: ISTAT: Jyllandsposten - p.03 in section 'Mila'		17.10.2011	NEWS: News	It is pointed out that the Salafits in general are against the West. The article refers to an article in another paper, Jyllandsposten, where two representatives for the Salafit-group...						
5	How to get kicked out...	ISTAT: ISTAT: Jyllandsposten - p.03 in section 'Mila'		17.10.2011	OTHER: Travel	Week. The article refers to an article in another paper, Jyllandsposten, where two representatives for the Salafit-group...						
6	Salafites cause worry...	ISTAT: ISTAT: Kristeligt Blad - in section 'Dens'		17.10.2011	COMMENT: Co	comment: Co: Soldiers in Afghanistan return in coffin. The other representative, Omar Pedersen, point out that he hopes that Kurt...						
7	The society must pri...	ISTAT: ISTAT: Kristeligt Blad - in section 'Dens'		17.10.2011	COMMENT: Co	comment: Co: Soldiers in Afghanistan return in coffin. The other representative, Omar Pedersen, point out that he hopes that Kurt...						
8	Iran carries out sect...	ISTAT: ISTAT: Jyllandsposten - p.03 in section 'Mila'		17.10.2011	NEWS: News	Iran: Westerners, who made one of the Muhammed-caricatures, will be killed. Karen Hækkerup, Minister of Social Affairs and...						
9	Religious community...	ISTAT: ISTAT: Jyllandsposten - p.03 in section 'Mila'		17.10.2011	NEWS: News	Denmark: also hoodlums and autonomies. At the end of the article it is mentioned that the two Salafit Muslims would vote...						
10	5 Islamic homages)	ISTAT: ISTAT: Kristeligt Blad - in section 'Dens'		17.10.2011	NEWS: News	Iran: Westerners, who made one of the Muhammed-caricatures, will be killed. Karen Hækkerup, Minister of Social Affairs and...						
11	Kenya are chasing in...	ISTAT: ISTAT: Kristeligt Blad - in section 'Dens'		17.10.2011	NEWS: News	Iran: Westerners, who made one of the Muhammed-caricatures, will be killed. Karen Hækkerup, Minister of Social Affairs and...						
12	Sharia-zones in Cope...	ISTAT: ISTAT: Ekstra Blad - p.17 in main-section		17.10.2011	NEWS: News	Iran: Westerners, who made one of the Muhammed-caricatures, will be killed. Karen Hækkerup, Minister of Social Affairs and...						
13	France forbids prayi...	ISTAT: ISTAT: Ekstra Blad - or No page no., in sec		17.10.2011	NEWS: News	Iran: Westerners, who made one of the Muhammed-caricatures, will be killed. Karen Hækkerup, Minister of Social Affairs and...						
14	The Netherlands tigh...	ISTAT: ISTAT: Ekstra Blad - or No page no., in sec		17.10.2011	NEWS: News	Iran: Westerners, who made one of the Muhammed-caricatures, will be killed. Karen Hækkerup, Minister of Social Affairs and...						
15	Muslims: Polygamy	ISTAT: ISTAT: Ekstra Blad - or No page no., in sec		17.10.2011	NEWS: News	Iran: Westerners, who made one of the Muhammed-caricatures, will be killed. Karen Hækkerup, Minister of Social Affairs and...						
16	5 requests that Islam...	ISTAT: ISTAT: Ekstra Blad - or No page no., in sec		17.10.2011	NEWS: News	Iran: Westerners, who made one of the Muhammed-caricatures, will be killed. Karen Hækkerup, Minister of Social Affairs and...						
17	Islamists wants to h...	ISTAT: ISTAT: Jyllandsposten - Frontpage		18.10.2011	NEWS: News	Iran: Westerners, who made one of the Muhammed-caricatures, will be killed. Karen Hækkerup, Minister of Social Affairs and...						
18	The Salafita are inea...	ISTAT: ISTAT: Jyllandsposten - p.08 in section 'Mila'		18.10.2011	NEWS: News	Iran: Westerners, who made one of the Muhammed-caricatures, will be killed. Karen Hækkerup, Minister of Social Affairs and...						
19	The true face is th...	ISTAT: ISTAT: Jyllandsposten - p.09 in section 'De'		18.10.2011	COMMENT: Co	comment: Co: The author points out that he is not Salafit. He then stress NO PICTURE SHAPING HI STRONG: In: Salafism, the Online version...						
20	Support condemned	ISTAT: ISTAT: Jyllandsposten - p.19 in section 'De'		18.10.2011	COMMENT: Co	comment: Co: An Iranian has been sentenced to death because he abas NO PICTURE SHAPING HI STRONG: In: The rights of http://www.kri...						
21	Give Muslim women	ISTAT: ISTAT: Kristeligt Blad - or No page no., in sec		18.10.2011	LETTER: Letter	Letter: I: Lead: According to Bettina Matzen, discrimination agai DESCRIPTION: NEUTRAL: TI NIL: No min: Iran, religious online version...						
22	Islamists introduced	ISTAT: ISTAT: Ekstra Blad - or No page no., in sec		18.10.2011	NEWS: News	Iran: Westerners, who made one of the Muhammed-caricatures, will be killed. Karen Hækkerup, Minister of Social Affairs and...						
23	Salafits: This is why...	ISTAT: ISTAT: Ekstra Blad - or No page no., in sec		18.10.2011	NEWS: News	Iran: Westerners, who made one of the Muhammed-caricatures, will be killed. Karen Hækkerup, Minister of Social Affairs and...						
24	Islamists introduce	ISTAT: ISTAT: Ekstra Blad - or No page no., in sec		18.10.2011	NEWS: News	Iran: Westerners, who made one of the Muhammed-caricatures, will be killed. Karen Hækkerup, Minister of Social Affairs and...						
25	Copenhagen fights in...	ISTAT: ISTAT: Jyllandsposten - p.03 in section 'Mila'		18.10.2011	NEWS: News	Iran: Westerners, who made one of the Muhammed-caricatures, will be killed. Karen Hækkerup, Minister of Social Affairs and...						
26	Four killed in car sh...	ISTAT: ISTAT: Jyllandsposten - p.03 in section 'Mila'		18.10.2011	NEWS: News	Iran: Westerners, who made one of the Muhammed-caricatures, will be killed. Karen Hækkerup, Minister of Social Affairs and...						
27	Good tone or harsh	ISTAT: ISTAT: Jyllandsposten - or No page no., in sec		18.10.2011	NEWS: News	Iran: Westerners, who made one of the Muhammed-caricatures, will be killed. Karen Hækkerup, Minister of Social Affairs and...						
28	Copenhagen wants h...	ISTAT: ISTAT: Jyllandsposten - p.05 in section 'Mila'		19.10.2011	NEWS: News	Iran: Westerners, who made one of the Muhammed-caricatures, will be killed. Karen Hækkerup, Minister of Social Affairs and...						
29	The butchers of Iran	ISTAT: ISTAT: Jyllandsposten - p.18 in section 'De'		19.10.2011	LETTER: Letter	Letter: I: Iranians, who have abandoned Islam, are being killed. NO PICTURE NEUTRAL: TI OTHER: The Iran, religious freedom...						
30	You have to want to	ISTAT: ISTAT: Jyllandsposten - p.19 in section 'Th'		19.10.2011	LETTER: Letter	Letter: I: The writer claims that the Muslims' goals are to bring c NO PICTURE SHAPING HI NIL: It is a c Muslims will online version...						
31	Salafits - it's crazy	ISTAT: ISTAT: Jyllandsposten - p.19 in section 'Th'		19.10.2011	LETTER: Letter	Letter: I: Martin Henriksen, spokesman on integration policy for NO PICTURE SHAPING HI NIL: It is a c Danish People's Party, crazy...						
32	Now is your chance	ISTAT: ISTAT: Jyllandsposten - p.19 in section 'Th'		19.10.2011	LETTER: Letter	Letter: I: Villy Sundel, Minister of Foreign Affairs, stated earlier NO PICTURE SHAPING HI NIL: It is a c policy, hostility...						
33	Get lost sharia (Re)	ISTAT: ISTAT: Jyllandsposten - p.19 in section 'Th'		19.10.2011	LETTER: Letter	Letter: I: This letter is a response to a comment made by Abdulah NO PICTURE SHAPING HI NIL: It is a c violence, sha online version...						
34	Pakistan: USA cannot	ISTAT: ISTAT: Jyllandsposten - or No page no., in sec		19.10.2011	NEWS: News	Iran: Westerners, who made one of the Muhammed-caricatures, will be killed. Karen Hækkerup, Minister of Social Affairs and...						
35	The Salafits are insa...	ISTAT: ISTAT: Kristeligt Blad - or No page no., in sec		19.10.2011	LETTER: Letter	Letter: I: The writer, who is a Muslim, argues that an imam coun DESCRIPTION: OTHER: THE STRONG: HI: Democracy, c/Online version...						
36	Klemperer used agai...	ISTAT: ISTAT: Politiken No page no., in sec		20.10.2011	LETTER: Letter	Letter: I: The writer argues that Victor Klemperer, the late Nazism DESCRIPTION: SHAPING HI NIL: It is a c Muslims, 16/10/2011/...						
37	Mayor will convert	ISTAT: ISTAT: Jyllandsposten - p.12 in section 'Mila'		20.10.2011	NEWS: News	Iran: Westerners, who made one of the Muhammed-caricatures, will be killed. Karen Hækkerup, Minister of Social Affairs and...						
38	Sharia-zones and an	ISTAT: ISTAT: Jyllandsposten - p.20 in section 'Th'		20.10.2011	LETTER: Letter	Letter: I: The writer claims that most Muslims distance themselv DESCRIPTION: NEUTRAL: TI NIL: It is a c Extreme, Sala online version...						
39	They just follow the	ISTAT: ISTAT: Jyllandsposten - p.20 in section 'Th'		20.10.2011	LETTER: Letter	Letter: I: This letter is a response to an comment made by NO PICTURE SHAPING HI NIL: It is a c Convert, sha online version...						

### *Coding frame*

The coding frame in our study consisted of the categories 'Islam', 'Muslims', 'Islamic' and 'the Muhammad cartoons', all of which were the result of a two week test coding (the Muhammad cartoons, was however, an a priori category). As the test coding aimed at finding keywords concerning Muslims or Islam, articles explicitly including these words were selected for the database and articles indirectly dealing with issues of Islam and Muslims but without using the categories were excluded. However, the amount of excluded articles is insignificant as the test coding showed that at least one of the words 'Islam' 'Muslims' or 'Islamic' occurred in almost all articles that in one way or the other were concerned with the themes of either Muslims or Islam.

Furthermore, we were interested in monitoring whether the Muhammad cartoons controversy still played a role in the Media coverage of Muslims and Islam today. Therefore, the Danish word for 'the Muhammad-cartoons' (Muhammedtegningerne)<sup>2</sup> was also included as a category in the coding frame.

### *The category 'issue-framing'*

As the categories developed from the empirical material, half-way through the monitoring period we implemented a so-called issue-framing category to address the overall framing of Muslims and Islam in each news item. Apart from that, inductively developed issue-framing subcategories were: (1) Muslim/Islam as a threat, (2) Muslims as victims of discrimination/racism, (3) Muslims as a diverse group, (4) Muslims as a resource, (5) Muslim culture/Islam as an obstacle to integration into Danish society, (6) Muslims/Islam in the Middle East as a worst-case scenario, (7) Historical or neutral representation of Muslims/Islam in the middle east and/or in Denmark and (8) 'Other'.<sup>3</sup> In the process of categorising we studied the headlines of the news items, the leading articles and the language in general, the ideological and political background of the experts interviewed, the pictorial presentation etc.<sup>4</sup>. Thus we did not, as in content analysis, focus on separate sentences or words (Downing and Holland 2005, 145ff; 43ff).

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<sup>2</sup> While it may appear insufficient to examine the so-called Muhammad cartoons controversy with one code only, the test coding showed that articles concerning the Muhammad cartoons controversy without using the word 'Muhammad-cartoons', included other categories like 'Muslims', 'Islam' or 'Islamic'.

<sup>3</sup> The fact that the positive categories are outnumbered might seem problematic, as it entails the risk of misrepresenting the Media coverage. However, as the categories were developed inductively, it is plausible that they validly represent the Media constructions.

<sup>4</sup> Sometimes one item could be categorised under more than one issue; sometimes, on the contrary, an item was unidentifiable, and was categorised under the issue 'other'.

### *The categories of 'minority bias' and 'minority actor's voice'*

The category of 'minority bias' concerns the overall tone of the news item in representing Muslims. Three sub-categories serve to qualify the category, namely 'hostility', 'inclusion' and 'neutral' (tone). Shaping 'hostility' meant that the overall tone and language of the news item was negative towards Muslims and Islam, 'inclusion' that it was more positive and sympathetic to the minority; 'neutral' denoted that the tone was impartial and objective.

With the category of 'minority actor's voice', we identified the strength of the minority voice through one of three sub-categories: 'strong', 'weak' and 'nil'. The articles were categorised according to the extent to which voices of the Muslims were integrated<sup>5</sup>, that is, in articles included as 'experts', 'representatives', 'spokespersons', and in letters and comments as authors.

## **2. Racism and discrimination in the Danish Media**

The case study concerning racism and discrimination in the Danish Media consisted of a two-week period of monitoring (5-17<sup>th</sup> of December 2011) of the four Danish newspapers earlier presented. The monitoring of racism and discrimination was set up in a separate database, but the procedure and methodological reflections in this case study were identical with those in case study one. Examining racism and discrimination in the Media, we monitored both the print and online versions of the newspapers throughout the entire monitoring period, as a test coding showed that racism and discrimination was found to be more newsworthy and given more prominence and space in the online newspapers. The main differences between the case studies were that the first concerned only Muslims and Islam, while the second concerned ethnic minorities in general.<sup>6</sup>

### *2.1. Analysis of Media-framing and agenda-setting*

What (quantitative) significance were issues relating to Muslims and Islam given in the Danish Media? How were Muslims and Islam represented? And what was the role of the Media in the reproduction of racial and ethnic inequalities in Denmark? We will examine these questions in the following sections.

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<sup>5</sup> In the monitoring we were not able to fit all items into the fabricated subcategories; consequently, we added the subcategory 'other' in both categories.

<sup>6</sup> The coding frame in the study concerning racism and discrimination in the Danish Media was 'racism', 'racist', 'discrimination', 'discriminated', 'discriminate', 'discriminates', 'discriminating', 'unequal treatment' and 'race'.

In terms of agenda-setting, we registered 304 articles about Muslims and/or Islam in the four newspapers in the period studied. About two thirds of the articles were news items, while the last third consisted primarily of letters and comments. However, the significance and newsworthiness given to the issues between newspapers varied in terms of the space they took up. *Jyllands-Posten* stood out as the paper with the largest share of articles dealing with Muslims and Islam, both when it came to articles and letters/comments. With 141 articles *Jyllands-Posten* accounts for almost half of the total number, followed by *KristeligtDagblad* (76), *Politikken* (49) and *EkstraBladet* (38). The same variations in significance were reflected in the fact that a larger share of the relevant news items in *Jyllands-Posten* were rewritten by the newspaper's own journalists. In the other newspapers many of the articles were contributed by *Ritzau* (a Danish news agency that supplies news to the Media).

Four stories dominated the Media coverage of Muslims and Islam during the monitoring period: 1) Salafism and sharia-zones in Denmark, 2) elections in the Middle East, 3) Islamic divorces and parallel conceptions of law in Denmark, and 4) the firebomb attack on the French newspaper '*Charlie Hebdo*' after the paper had put an image of the Prophet Mohammad on its cover. There was variation, however, on how much significance these issues were given, and how newsworthy they were seen to be in the different newspapers.

Thus, the story about Salafism and sharia-zones in Denmark was given prominence in all four newspapers, but particularly in *Jyllands-Posten* and to a much lesser degree in *Politiken*. The story was fuelled by statements made by two representatives of the Salafis group 'AhluSunahWaJammah' in *Jyllands-Posten*, saying that they hoped that Danish soldiers would return from Afghanistan in coffins, that they wanted to introduce sharia-zones in Copenhagen and that they hoped that one of the Danish cartoonists, Kurt Westergaard<sup>7</sup>, would be killed. These statements initiated a heated debate about Danish democratic values versus Islam and sharia.

Another major story of the period dealt with the elections in the Middle East (Egypt, Libya, and Tunisia). The elections were extensively covered in the two national broadsheet papers, *Jyllands-Posten* and *Politiken*, and in the national niche paper, *KristeligtDagblad*, with particular focus on the introduction of sharia law and the Christian minorities' concerns and fears in regards to the election of Islamic parties. The story was almost absent in the tabloid paper, *EkstraBladet*.

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<sup>7</sup> Kurt Westergaard is a Danish cartoonist who created the controversial cartoon of the Islamic prophet Muhammad wearing a bomb in his turban. This cartoon was the most contentious of the 12 Muhammadcartoons. Published in *Jyllands-Posten* in 2005.

The story about Islamic divorces and parallel conceptions of law in Denmark was given relatively more attention in *KristeligtDagblad* than in the other papers, with the main focus areas being on Muslim women's rights and whether or not parallel conceptions of law in Denmark pose a threat to democracy.

Finally, the story dealing with the firebomb attack on the French newspaper 'Charlie Hebdo' was most extensively covered in *Jyllands-Posten*, but also received attention in *Politiken* and *KristeligtDagblad*. The attack initiated a debate about extremism and freedom of speech.

#### *The representation of Muslims and Islam in Danish newspapers*

The analysis of the Media coverage showed that about 58 percent of the articles dealing with Muslims and Islam were negatively framed and categorised as contributing to shaping hostility towards Muslims and Islam. In about 32 percent of the news stories the tone was neutral that is the language avoids racial marking and stereotypical/Islamophobic commentary and the reporting and framing of the issue is balanced overall rather than presenting a one-sided argument, while about 8 percent of the stories were positively framed and identified as inclusive of Muslims and Islam.<sup>8</sup>

Looking at the positive stories about Muslims and Islam, most of them focused on Muslims as a diverse group, as victims of discrimination or (in a few cases) as a resource for society. The language and the overall tone towards Muslims and Islam in these articles were positive, and the stories contribute to constructing a more nuanced picture of Muslims and Islam, with examples like an article about discrimination in Copenhagen stating that acts of discrimination against Muslims had increased since 2012 (no. 294 in the database), a story about young Muslims who collect money to help poor Danish families get through Christmas (no. 289 in the database), and an article in which it was argued that a softer interpretation of Sharia exists (no. 98 in the database).

Still, the negative stories dominated the Media coverage of Muslims and Islam, and the Media analysis showed that most news stories in the period studied were restricted to certain kinds of topics such as extremism, terror, sharia, freedom of speech, democracy versus Islam, and women's rights. At the same time, other topics occurred to a lesser degree in the newspapers; for instance, the general contribution of Muslims to Danish society, the everyday life of the vast majority of Muslims, the value of ethnic, religious and cultural diversity, and discrimination and racism against

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<sup>8</sup> The last 2 percent fall out of category.



Muslims. Thus, while certain topics and stories were seen to be newsworthy, others were not. In the period studied, one of the stories that was only briefly covered by the Media was a fire attack on a Muslim mosque in Copenhagen that, according to the police, had political and religious motives.

While the news coverage of ethnic minorities according to other studies tends to focus on topics such as ethnic crime, political asylum, and ethnic minorities as an economic burden (e.g. Hall et al. 1978; Hussain 1997b, Van Dijk 2000, 1991), news stories about Muslims and Islam appeared in this study to deal more with overall questions of values and religion. This was manifested in stories about extremism in Denmark (nos. 3, 7, 19), parallel conceptions of law and Islamic divorces (nos. 161, 162, 163), attacks on the freedom of speech (nos. 180, 185, 186), sharia and Islamism in the Middle East (nos. 268, 178, 304), and discrimination of Christians in the Middle East (nos. 208, 238, 300). The negative stories tended to present Muslim culture and Islam as a threat to liberal democracy, Christianity, freedom of speech, and/or other 'Danish values' like individualism and secularism (Hervik 2002). Such representations of Islam as oppositional to 'Danishness' functions, according to Jensen (2010), to sustain a generally perceived polarisation between the idea of secular democracy and that of *sharia*. Furthermore, a negative portrayal of Muslims and Islam in these media, focusing on problems and deviance, contributes to a construction of an antagonistic and hierarchical relation between 'Danes' and Muslims'. The newspapers' associations of Muslims with oppression, religious fanaticism, anti-secularism and (lately) terrorism, resulted in the construction of negative stereotypes such as 'the Muslim terrorist' or 'the oppressed Muslim woman'. Such stereotypes were often reproduced in the pictorial representations of the articles, for example by showing people praying, 'ghetto areas', Muslim women wearing burkas, or Islamists with long beards wearing traditional Islamic clothing (no. 23 and 25). At the same time pictures depicting ordinary Muslims in everyday situations were almost absent in the Media coverage.

Thus, through mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion that specify who may legitimately belong to the national community and who may not, Islam and Muslim immigrants were categorised as incompatible with 'Danishness' and Danish identity (Jensen 2010, Hervik 2002). This opposition between Muslims and Danes, Islam and Christianity, was continuously constructed and reconstructed in the newspapers through topics, stories and sources that reconfirm the negative stereotypes of Muslims and leave out stories that might challenge these stereotypes. In this way the Media contributed to normalising and legitimising a prejudiced discourse on Muslims and Islam in the public sphere (Hussain 2000). Mustafa Hussain emphasises that ethnic

inequalities and prejudices in text and speech are not produced by Media discourse alone, but in joint production with other powerful actors such as politicians, government officials, professionals and academics. He argues that the Media, however, play an autonomous role in creating negative images of ethnic minorities through which they contribute to a general climate of intolerance and discrimination against minorities, Muslims in particular, 'through a discursive production and diffusion of negative images of minorities, and through manipulative strategies of persuasion, selection, repetition and emphasis' (Hussain 1997a; 2000:110).

According to Van Dijk (2000), this systematic negative portrayal of the 'other' as problematic, different and uncivilised not only contributes to the production and reproduction of stereotypes and prejudices about the 'other', but also indirectly to the enactment and reproduction of racism (Van Dijk 2000:49). This 'new' form of racism is often discursive: expressed, enacted and confirmed by text and talk, and therefore more subtle and symbolic than the 'old' racism of slavery and segregation. However, regardless of its softer and more harmless appearance, it 'may be just as effective to marginalize and exclude ethnic minorities'(Van Dijk 2000:34).

#### *Differences in regards to issue-framing*

While the overall Media coverage of Muslims and Islam was dominated by negative stories, some differences between the papers were present. Thus, while 82 per cent of the articles about Muslims and Islam in *EkstraBladet* were negatively framed and categorised as contributing to shaping hostility, this was true for 63 per cent of the articles in *Jyllands-Posten*, 45 per cent in *KristeligtDagblad* and 41 percent in *Politiken*. At the same time, a larger share of the articles published in *Politiken* were positively framed and identified as inclusive of Muslims and Islam (14 per cent.), followed by *KristeligtDagblad* (8 per cent), *Jyllands-Posten* (7 per cent) and *EkstraBladet* (5 per cent). The distribution was the same in regards to the neutral articles.

The analysis also showed that letters and comments were generally more negative towards Muslims and Islam than articles, with some differences between the newspapers, however. Thus, while around 80 percent of the letters/comments in *Jyllands-Posten* and *EkstraBladet* were negatively framed, this was true for about 50 percent in *Politiken* and *KristeligtDagblad*. Whether this reflects the opinions and perceptions among the readership, the newspaper or both is difficult to say. Irrespective of how the numbers are interpreted, the analysis points nevertheless to some differences between the papers in terms of the dissemination of a negative image of Muslims and Islam.

Two articles about Salafis in Denmark illustrate how the same issue can be differently framed in two different newspapers. Both articles were published on 19<sup>th</sup> of October 2011; one was authored by and published in *Jyllands-Posten*, the other authored by *Ritzau* and published in *Kristeligt Dagblad* (Database, nos. 29 and 61). Although both articles dealt with Salafis in Denmark, they interpreted and presented the situation differently. Thus, while the article in *Kristeligt Dagblad* stated that there was *only* 7-9 Salafis in Tingbjerg, that the Salafis did not attract young Muslims and that the problem should not be overestimated, the article in *Jyllands-Posten* stressed that there '*had already*' been 9 Salafis identified '*in Tingbjerg alone*', that the problem with extremism was bigger than assumed and that the Salafis would destroy our society, if they were not nipped in the bud. Thus, whereas the point in the article in *Kristeligt Dagblad* was that Salafism in Denmark should not be overestimated, it seemed that the exact opposite interpretation was given in the article in *Jyllands-Posten*. The choice of news source plays an important role in this respect. Both articles quote Anna Mee Allerslev, Mayor of Integration and Employment in the Municipality of Copenhagen, saying that the situation was to be taken seriously, but not overestimated. However, whereas the *Ritzau* article in *Kristeligt Dagblad* quoted a school leader from Tingbjerg, who did not see the Salafis as a problem, *Jyllands-Posten* had chosen two other sources that both warned against underestimating the problem: Lars Aslan Rasmussen, spokesperson for the Social Democrats, and Mohammed Rafiq, consultant on integration affairs.

Moreover, the overall tone and language towards Muslims in the article in *Kristeligt Dagblad* was neutral. In contrast, the tone was more hostile and negative in the article in *Jyllands-Posten*, through the choice of quotes potentially fuelling 'moral panic' (Hall et al. 1978) by painting a frightening picture of the future and by drawing parallels to another extremist Muslim group, Hizbut-Tahrir that, according to the interviewees, has grown and spread within a short time span.

#### *The representation of Muslims and Islam abroad*

Looking at the news stories about Muslims and Islam abroad, a relatively large share of these (about half) were neutral in tone as they impartially and objectively presented factual events. Many of the articles dealing with the elections in the Middle East fell within this category as they provided a relatively unbiased presentation of the political and/or historical situation in the countries in question: Libya, Egypt and Tunisia.

However, looking at the on-going flow of coverage rather than interpreting single news stories exclusively from its specifics revealed a tendency in the Media to exclude

depth and variety and to focus on certain traits and topics (Downing & Husband 2005:36). Thus, the Media coverage was dominated by stories focusing on sharia, Islamists, discrimination of Christians, terror, freedom of speech, oppression of women etc. while stories that might provide the reader with a more nuanced picture of Muslims and Islam worldwide was more or less absent. This underscores the importance of not only focusing on what was actually said in the Media about Muslims and Islam, but also on what was unsaid and thereby, out of frame (Downing & Husband 2005:36). Furthermore, it shows that while the individual stories might not be biased in terms of representing Muslims and Islam negatively, the overall selection of stories and the priority given to certain topics over others still contributed to a negative representation of Muslims and Islam.

Moreover, close to half of the foreign news stories presented Muslims and Islam in a negative, and in some cases even hostile, tone. At the same time, almost none of the articles provided a positive image of Muslims and Islam abroad. According to a study by the World Economic Forum, the Danish Media was among the most critical towards Muslims and Islam compared with the Media in a number of other Western countries (World Economic Forum 2008).

The negative focus, for example, showed in some of the articles dealing with the elections in the Middle East where the elections were described as a choice between democracy and Islam, or as pointed out in a *Jyllands-Posten* article, between sharia and burkas on one side and democracy and freedom of speech on the other (no. 304). In this way a distinction was indirectly made between the reformists and the conservatives, the secular and the non-secular, the moderate Muslims and the Islamists. According to Peter Hervik (2002), a simplified dichotomy like this is based on an undifferentiated perception of Islam in the public debate as irrational, oppressive and traditional, and he finds this characterises the Media coverage of Muslims in general. This perception of Islam materialized in this study for instance in a strong focus on women and women's oppression and in the presentation of Islam as a threat to personal freedom, democracy and freedom of speech. Furthermore, negative stories dealing with extremism in, for example, France and England and with sharia, women's oppression and discrimination of Christians in the Middle East served as a frightening picture of how the future might look in Denmark if Islam spreads. In this way the representation of Muslims and Islam abroad may contribute to the negative perception of Muslims and Islam in Denmark and potentially to racism and Islamophobia.

The other major foreign news story of the period studied dealt with the firebomb attack on the French newspaper, *Charlie Hebdo*. The incident initiated a heated debate

on the freedom of the press and freedom of expression, and parallels were drawn to the Danish cartoon affair in 2005 (when *Jyllands-Posten* printed 12 controversial cartoons of the Prophet Muhammad). Thus, *Jyllands-Posten* was also one of the first to condemn the violence against *Charlie Hebdo* and to defend the magazine's freedom of expression. In an editorial the chief editor, Jørn Mikkelsen, stressed that despite the high price it paid, the paper does not regret printing the Muhammad cartoons:

'Freedom of expression was under pressure now as then; there was still an intimidation of the public debate, and the new attack in Paris was just the latest evidence of this. In this way, the subsequent debate on freedom of expression has proved more important than we imagined back then' (Jørn Mikkelsen 2011: 'Charlie Hebdo'; article no.185).

The concept of freedom of speech continues to play an important role within Danish debates over immigration, integration and multiculturalism, and the Muhammad cartoons appear to be the ultimate battlefield for Danish and Western freedom of expression.

#### *Minority actor's voice*

In the following we will examine who got to speak in the news dealing with Muslims and Islam. Whose voices predominate and whose were marginalised or rendered silent?

The analysis of the Media coverage of Muslims and Islam showed that the reporting tended to be rather one-sided and exclusive of minority voices. Thus, in 75 percent of the articles dealing with Muslims and Islam, Muslims voices were completely absent, while they had a weak voice in 11 percent of the news stories and a strong voice in 13 percent. In this way the reporting tended to become a talk *about* specific problems associated with Muslims and Islam, rather than a talk *with* Muslims and a dialogue between Muslims and non-Muslims.

In cases where Muslims were given a voice in the Media, the analysis showed that it tended to be the same few actors who appeared time and again, and most often these were representatives of Muslim organisations. In the period studied, these actors were: Adnan Avdic and Omar Pedersen, members of the Islamic organisation 'AhluSunahWaJammah', Abu Rasheed, member of the Islamic group 'The Call for Islam' (Kaldet til Islam), Imran Shah, spokesperson for 'the Islamic Society in Denmark' (Islamisk Trossamfund), and Mustafa Gezen, spokesperson for 'the Muslims' Joint Council' (Muslimernes Fællesråd).

Furthermore, there seemed to be a tendency to select Muslim actors with the most critical point of views, those who in her Ph.D. in Muslim Studies Nadia Jeldtolf (in [http://nyheder.ku.dk/alle\\_nyheder/2011](http://nyheder.ku.dk/alle_nyheder/2011)) describes as the 'vocal and visible', who differ more from the majority population than other Muslims: the extremists, the Salafis, the

imams, representatives of Islamic organisations etc. At the same time, the 'less visible' Muslims who practise their religion outside the religious institutions and who do not attract attention tend to be overlooked in the Media, rendering their opinions, attitudes and practices invisible (Teun A. van Dijk 2000: 39, Hervik 2002; Hussain 2000; 'Muslimskhverdagslivligner det kristne' 2011). In this way the Media contributed to creating a distorted picture of Muslims and their religion.

Furthermore, *when* moderate Muslims appeared in the Media it tended to be in articles dealing with extremism, where a distinction was indirectly made between the liberal, moderate, modern Muslims and the extremist, Islamist, traditional Muslims. In this, the moderate Muslims became the good guys that were on 'our' side in the fight against extremism, like in the Media coverage of Salafism in Denmark where the Muslims' Joint Council and the Islamic Society in Denmark represented moderate Muslims as allies in the fight against the Salafis. Simultaneously, however, 'moderate Muslims' were lumped together into one homogeneous category, represented by members of only two Muslim organisations. It is also worth noting that Muslim sources were primarily included and quoted in news stories that were critical of their actions and their religion, while they were more or less absent in news stories presenting a neutral or positive tone, or when the reported actions were not categorised as *Muslim* actions. Again, we see the construction of not only a link between Islam and negativity, but also a dichotomy of Muslims versus non-Muslims, since 'Their' actions and opinions were often placed in opposition to 'Ours' (Richardson 2006:115). Such one-sided reporting, where Muslims were seldom given a voice of their own and where extremists tended to dominate the Media coverage, appears to contribute to the reproduction of negative stereotypes about Muslims and Islam, and hence indirectly to a climate of intolerance and discrimination.

### **3. The representation of racism and discrimination in Danish newspapers**

In the separate analysis of racism and discrimination represented in the four Danish newspapers, we find 41 articles in total: 12 from *Jyllands-Posten*, 11 from *Kristeligt Dagblad*, 10 from *Politiken* and 8 from *EkstraBladet*. Compared to the relatively high share of articles about Muslims and Islam found in *Jyllands-Posten* (almost half of the total in the survey), this newspaper thus appeared relatively less interested in issues of racism and discrimination.

Articles with content about racism and discrimination were categorised in terms of minority bias and minority actor's voice. When looking at the category of *minority bias*, five of the articles were categorised as shaping hostility, with all five representing Muslims as a group negatively. Eight articles were categorised as *neutral*. Seven articles were categorised as *inclusive*, for instance in calling for a debate about ethical dilemmas concerning climate refugees (no. 12); referring to a false rape accusation in an Italian Roma camp with racist motives (no. 20); calling for a plan to strengthen human rights to prevent discrimination against ethnic minorities after Denmark was criticized by the UN-council of Human Rights (no.21); presenting a Turkish man as victim (no. 32). One article was inclusive towards a Christian but hostile towards Muslims as a group (no. 23). The majority of articles – 15 – were categorised as 'other'. These articles were in 12 cases not about ethnic minorities; two cases showed hostility against Islam with Muslims as victims (nos.33, 34), and one case was about unequal treatment between ethnic minorities (no. 35).

When it came to *minority actor's voice*, it was not represented in 37 articles. In three articles minority voice was categorised as *strong*: in an article with an interview with a man with ethnic minority background (no. 32), in an article by an ethnic minority blogger (no. 14), and in an article that gave voice to Muslim women (no. 32). In one article the minority actor's voice was categorised as weak: an article in which a California senator with ethnic minority background pleads the Muslim's case by accusing a company of religious discrimination (no. 18).

Only three articles about racism and discrimination reached the front page of – in all cases – *KristeligtDagblad*. Also, in all three cases, the minority bias was shaping hostility: in one article hostility was directed towards Muslims as a group (no.2); in another Muslims were considered a threat to American society (no. 15); in a third Muslims were the victims of other Muslims (no.33).

Ways to avoid talking about racism against ethnic minorities in the Danish context

The newspapers generally avoided addressing the issue of racism either through not speaking about it or through stories about 'reversed' racism; this tendency reflects the highly contested nature of racism in Denmark.

The newspaper stories often referred to 'differential treatment' which generally revolved around issues such as gender, age, handicap, sexuality, etc. Only a few stories dealt with discrimination of ethnic minorities in Denmark. They hardly referred to ethnicity. For instance, one article focused on discrimination in Copenhagen, referring to a new survey that shows that fewer Copenhageners feel discriminated against compared to 2010. The article, however, de-emphasises that discrimination against

ethnic minorities has remained more or less the same, and that discriminatory acts against Muslims were increasing (no. 28).

The stories tended not to directly use concepts of racism and discrimination, and only dealt indirectly with racism and discrimination. The journalists tended to use lighter concepts such as 'inequality', or positive terms with a negative prefix such as 'lacking equality' and 'lacking equal rights'. These stories were characterised by a silencing of racism and discrimination against ethnic minority groups, positioning racism and discrimination 'out of frame'. Stories that dealt with racism exclusively referred to blacks in the US or other countries or to Nazism and neo-Nazism, thus constructing racism as isolated and exceptional, concerning certain ethnic groups, geographical places and historical times (Goldberg 2006; Hesse 2004), rather than reproduced in contemporary social practice and structures. The few stories that referred to racism in Denmark dealt with racism against ethnic minority soccer players as exclusive instances against more privileged ethnic minorities. News stories presenting racism as exclusive and remote instances tended to delegitimize discussions about and criticism of racism.

Several articles talked about 'reverse racism': cases in which ethnic minorities (often Muslims) allegedly acted in a discriminating and racist manner against Christians, Jews, non-practicing Muslims, women, and homosexuals. Many of these articles emphasised that the acts committed by Muslims were oppressive or violent, and also that Islam posed an ideological and religious threat to society. Most articles dealt with cases from other countries, particularly Muslim countries in the Middle East or Africa. One article (no. 26), however, dealt with the issue of the right or obligation of religious organizations to perform homosexual-marriages: this has been proposed by the Government but, according to the article, is opposed by ethnic minority religious organisations. The article concludes that if a recognised religious organisation has the right to perform marriage ceremonies, they must obey the laws and norms concerning discrimination based on gender, race etc., thereby indicating that Muslims discriminate against homosexuals, and that Islam poses a threat to a norm of equal rights.

In conclusion, articles about racism and discrimination did not generally represent the minority actor's voice. Likewise, the stories followed a tendency in the overall Media coverage to shape hostility against Muslim minorities in particular. The stories generally lacked an articulation of racism, especially in the Danish context, hereby not only sustaining an overall perception in Danish public debate that racism is non-existent (Jensen, Tørslev, Vitus & Weibel 2011), but also de-legitimising that



asymmetrical power relations between ethnic minority and majority, and racism against ethnic minorities exist, paradoxically justified by stories about 'reverse racism'.

## **Conclusion**

The main objective of this paper was to examine *how* Muslims and Islam were represented in Danish newspapers and *the role* the Media plays in the reproduction of racial and ethnic inequalities.

The analysis shows that news stories dealing with Muslims and Islam were often negatively framed in the Media and restricted to certain kinds of topics such as extremism, terror and oppression of women. Common to those stories was a representation of Muslim culture and Islam as posing a threat to democracy, Christianity, freedom of speech and/or Danish values. However, equally important in the representation of Muslims and Islam were the issues that remained unsaid or the topics that were excluded from the Media picture, such as the everyday life of Muslims or discrimination against Muslims. In general, the newspapers prioritized topics that emphasized the bad actions of Muslims in contrast to the good ones of the Danes. This constructed an antagonistic and hierarchical relation between 'Danes' and Muslims where Muslims and Islam were associated with oppression, religious fanaticism, anti-secularism and terrorism, and categorised as incompatible with 'Danishness' and Danish identity.

Furthermore, most reporting tended to be rather one-sided and exclusive of minority voices, and in cases where Muslims were given a voice, the same few actors were heard: the 'vocal and visible' (like declared Salafis, imams and representatives of Islamic organisations) who stand out from the majority population of Muslims in Denmark. At the same time, the less visible Muslims, who practice their religion outside the religious institutions, were broadly overlooked. In this way the Media created a distorted picture of Muslims and Islam that does not acknowledge the heterogeneity of Muslims' experiences and identities, but lumps them together in a homogeneous category.

The analysis also shows that the newspapers generally avoided using the term 'racism'. Instead, the journalists used lighter concepts such as 'inequality', or positive terms with a negative prefix such as 'lacking equality' and 'lacking equal rights'. Those stories that dealt with racism referred exclusively to black people or to Nazism and neo-Nazism, constructing racism as isolated incidents and exceptions rather than embedded in social structures and reproduced in social practice. Through this silencing

of experiences with patterns of racism, the articles sided with those voices in the overall rhetorical and political battle in Danish public life on whether racism exists or not who claim the non-existence of racism and discrimination. Therefore, the articles tended to de-legitimise racism, using stories of `reverse racism´ as a justification for this.

The newspapers generally contributed to constructing and legitimising a prejudiced discourse on Muslims and Islam through strategies of selection, repetition and emphasis which indirectly contributes to a climate of intolerance and discrimination against Muslim minorities in Denmark.

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