

The Charlie Hebdo Assailment: A Catastrophic Barbarism of Free Speech

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Abstract

The cartoon caricature publications of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (P.B.U.H) by the Danish Newspaper Jyllands-Posten leading to the great attack on the French satirical magazine Charlie Hebdo can be professed as a catastrophic barbarism of free speech. However, when the media started to portray the scenario it began to represent something larger: the core values, culture, race and ethnicity including beliefs and multiculturalism. However, the western media has more or less always represented the Muslims with a pessimistic approach. The study analyzes the catastrophic barbarism of free speech with reference to the attack on the satirical French magazine Charlie Hebdo. Furthermore, it examines the holocaust denials and role of the media in the diffusion of racism and discrimination against Muslims in addition to the negative framing of the Muslims in newspapers and online versions. Moreover, the study evaluates the effects of biased reporting on the conceit of the Muslim community in Europe.

Key Words: Free Speech, Jyllands-Posten, Cartoon controversy, racial discrimination, Charlie Hebdo

INTRODUCTION

The free media in succession is one of the fundamental apothegms for the democracy to subsist. The free media has a beneficial influence upon the democracy. However, according to the German media scientist Hans Matthias Kepplinger (1998), based on

the German opinion forming press, the democratic system can have dysfunctional values for the subsistence of free media.

News reporters dispose of a substantial role in the formation and establishment of social knowledge in arrears to the overriding media. Most of the journalists declare neutrality and objectivity in the news they report in accordance with the journalistic ethics. So far, the media

Operates to endorse somewhat events of negative nature; much more peripheral with reference to the socio-political reality manifested in the media account. Hence, the recreated authenticity is deformed and distorted (ibid). An alternative imperative distinctive of the media is the denial of discussion of the key efforts regarding majority people. The media espouses the agenda of the cream of the crop. They do not trace the themes that interest 80% of the society (Herman, 2006).

According to the Merriam Webster dictionary, freedom of expression is 'the right to express information, ideas, and opinions free of government restrictions based on content and subject only to reasonable limitations (as the power of the government to avoid a clear and present danger) especially as guaranteed by the First and Fourteenth Amendments to the U.S. Constitution' (Webster, 1828). However, in Denmark, this right is safeguarded in section 77 of the constitution, under article 266 of the Danish Penal Code. Legal margins are observed for hate speech, racism, liability and blasphemy (Article 266, Section 77 of the Constitution, Denmark).

Supplementary rights become a hurdle to attain and defend without the right and freedom of expression, rooted in the 17th century struggle of European legislators for the freedom of speech. A continuous struggle for the freedom of expression, including the freedom of speech and freedom of the press, every so often hand in hand with the exertion to limit the power of governments is every now and then faced by the world. The freedom of expression can be well thought-out an indispensable characteristic of the individual defense in contradiction of the government, just as the clamp down of the freedom of expression is crucial to despotism. Freedom of expression is the basis of religious and political happenings; it is often worked out in recital with the right to freedom belief, ideas, thought and assembly.

State responsibilities with reference to freedom of expression are utter and instant under the contemporary international conventions. However, with the certainty of other forms of liberty, constrained freedom of expression leads to violations on the rights of others. A number of limitations often more extensively than other rights dealt

with the expression of sentiments in contradiction of predominant organizations or societies, or religious, political or other beliefs have been dodged on to the freedom of expression. Moreover, the government often restricts the freedom of speech in the national interests during war times. As a keystone of democracy, the intricacy and status of freedom of expression has led to a widespread case-law before national courts and international supervisory apparatuses.

Under the Article 19 of both the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) and The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), the freedom of opinion and expression, Article 19 UDHR stipulates: ‘everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers.’

However, the Limitations are the exception, permitted only to protect the rights or reputations of others, national security, public order, public health, morals. Limitation is legitimate if it falls within the very narrow conditions defined in the three-part test in Article 19 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR); ‘provided by the law...’; ‘applying a law or regulation that is formally recognized by those entrusted with law making’, ‘...legitimate aim...’; ‘...respect for the rights and reputations of others, and protection of national security, public order, public health or morals’, ‘...necessity...’; ‘limitation of the right to freedom of expression must be truly necessary’. The international courts have generally judged that any action by a public body that has an actual effect on people’s freedom of expression constitutes a ‘restriction’ or ‘limitation’.

THE DANISH NEWSPAPER CARTOON CONTROVERSY

The Danish Media has preserved a consistency in framing negative images of ethnic minorities and herby contributing in creating an atmosphere of prejudice and discernment against ethnic minorities, specifically Muslims in Denmark, points out the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) on numerous junctures (ECRI, Første rapport om Danmark, 1999) (ECRI, Anden rapport on Denmark, 2001) (ECRI, Tredje rapport om Danmark, 2006).The Danish Media has been graded as ‘most critical’ towards Muslims and Islam (World Economic Forum, 2008).

The Danish cartoon controversy illustrates the unwarranted equilibrium between freedom of expression and the subjugation of expression. A Danish newspaper, 'Jyllands-Posten' published a series of 12 editorial cartoons on September 30, 2005 representing the Holy Prophet Mohammad (P.B.U.H) as a terrorist, in one illustration with a bomb in his turban. The Muslims were annoyed as blasphemy with reference to the Holy Prophet's illustrations as a terrorist and fanatic as it is prohibited in Muslim communities. Hence, this led to racial discrimination and prejudice. However, other alliances sustained the right of the paper to publish the cartoons as a freedom of expression issue. The Danish cartoons flickered mass protests all over the world leading to death and assailments in addition to extensive property damage and scorching arguments and disputes on the international law, freedom of expression and limitations of this right. However, interlinked to the German Greens, the Taz newspaper stated that the dispute was related to decreasing the impression of all religions as well as Christianity. Henry M. Broder proclaimed a feeble confession by the publishers of the Danish daily Jyllands-Posten in Spiegel.online which released the cartoon hullabaloo, as an "example of how democratic public opinion capitulates to a totalitarian standpoint" (Schwarz, 2006)

Jyllands-Posten paper consisted of 141 posts constituting to the largest number of articles, letters and comments related to Islam and Muslims written by their own journalists. The subject persisted silence in the world news media as embargoes and protests began to revolve around the Muslim world. Several European newspapers joined the fray, publishing the cartoons once again on February 1, 2006, (Cowell, 2006). Nevertheless, a form of journalistic solidarity, a broad-based support for freedom of the press was represented through this controversy and the cartoon republications. As an outrage, the assailment on the French Newspaper 'Charlie Hebdo' was an outcome of the publications of the images of the Prophet Mohammad (P.B.U.H) on its cover. However, the attack initiated an argument about freedom of expression and extremism. The in-depth analysis reveals the engagement in the subject by other news media characterizing something on a vast scale: the sustenance of a journalistic paradigm and a sacred right to use it practically in the national culture in which it is inherent in.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The study consists of the following objectives:

- To analyze the role of media in spreading racism and discrimination against Muslims
- To assess the negative representation of Muslims in Newspaper and online versions
- To find out the effects of Biased reporting on Muslim community image in Europe

THE ATTACK ON CHARLIE HEBDO

On 7 January 2015 at about 11:30 local time, two brothers, Saïd and Chérif Kouachi, forced their way into the offices of the French Satirical weekly Charlie Hebdo in Paris. Armed with assault rifles and other weapons, 12 people were killed including 10 Journalist and 2 Policeman and injured 11 others. The gunmen identified themselves as belonging to the Islamist terrorist group Al-Qaeda, who took accountability for the attack. Charlie Hebdo had attracted attention for its controversial depictions of Holy Prophet Muhammad (P.B.U.H). Hatred for Charlie Hebdo's cartoons, which made jokes about Islam as well as Holy Prophet Muhammad (P.B.U.H), is considered to be the principal motive for the massacre. In 1970, with a goal of satirizing religion, politics, and other topics the Charlie Hebdo magazine began to publish. In 2006, controversial cartoons of the Prophet Mohammed (P.B.U.H), were reprinted cartoons by the Charlie Hebdo and was originally found in the Danish newspaper JyllandsPosten.

The initial accounts from the day of attack on the French satirical magazine Charlie Hebdo headquarters are factual in nature. Retrieved from L'essentiel online are the under mentioned chronological events of the incident, in the primary minutes, the media quoted the accounts of witnesses and the police who provided information of the attackers giving out a loud cry of 'AllahuAkbar!' as they opened fire. A video was further posted by a journalist from the Premières Lignes information agency that proved the related news of the call; (L'essentiel). Further, the French President François Hollande arrived at the crime scene at 12:44 p.m. and proclaimed the act as extreme cruelty and 'terrorist attack'. Later, the British Prime Minister, David Cameron tweeted expressing his cohesion and harmony with France. Laurent Mosar, MP Deputy Speaker of Luxemburg also tweeted that he was 'staggered' and 'terrified' of the viciousness and fear of this outbreak on the freedom of speech (L'essentiel, 2007). At 1:

19 p.m. the number of victims was dispatched – 12 people killed. At 6:00 p.m., the former editor of Charb et Tignous Mourad Boudjellal stated the attack as the ‘9/11 of the press. ‘At the same time, instigated the press meeting of the Public Prosecutor’s Office in Paris. L’essentieli informed that Stephane Charbonnier (Charb), one of the slayed caricaturists, was listed in 2013 as Al-Qaeda’s most wanted for his delinquencies in contradiction of Islam. (Inspire, 2013).

According to the police, the assailants were well-equipped and well-prepared; they appeared serenely and methodically (Yahoo News, 2016). In one of the cars abandoned by the assassins, the ID card of one of the attackers, Saïd Kouachi, was found. ‘The National Union of Journalists (NUJ) described the shooting at the Charlie Hebdo offices in Paris on the day of attack as ‘an attempt to assassinate the free press.’ (Nissim, 2015). Michelle Stanistreet, General Secretary of NUJ claimed that the outbreaks by people wanting to overwhelm democracy and freedom of speech had already been the subject of the newspaper (ibid.).

DISPARAGEMENT BY THE MAINSTREAM MEDIA

Precisely, religiophobia and ethnophobia and Islamophobia are the results of ‘demonization discourse’ in representing other ‘religions and ethnic groups as a phobic enemy’. Sometimes Islam phobia is expressed when one is demonized by both religion and ethnicity. (British Muslims’ Expectations of the Government, 2007)

According to a study of Islamic perceptions, the Arab and Muslim representation in the western media is ‘typically stereotypical and negative’. “The image of Islam has been hijacked by extremists and it is time to take it back,” acknowledges Chris Yalounis (The Guardian, 2005)

After the 9/11, 2.6 million Western news stories from 10 American, British and German media outlet examined, revealed that the media’s coverage of Islam has hardly ever been positive. The typical tone of coverage sustained to deteriorate after the 9/11 span depicting Islam, Muslims, and Muslim organizations as a spring of violence and security risk. (Bridge, 2015)

After the assailment of Charlie Hebdo, the narrative created by the media faced criticism all over, specifically in the United States and the Middle East. The France Internationale Radio (RFI) informed that Sigolène Vinson, a freelance writer and novelist survived the attack on

Charlie Hebdo. After the tragedy, Vinson stated that she managed to survive as the attackers did not kill women but instead she would have to convert to Islam and veil herself. (RFI, 2015).

In his article 'NYTimes vs. RFI over Made-Up Quotes', George Conger elucidates Vinson's statement from the aforementioned interview in its text, published two days later to the attack is transformed by NY Times. The first version of the text quoted that the woman had told French news media that the man had not killed her because they didn't kill women but she would have to convert to Islam read the Quran and cover her. However, the online version of NY Times published a quote that the woman was told by the gunman not to be afraid and calm down as she would not be killed, she was a woman and what she was doing wasn't right.

Jim Teacher claims that the magazine acted cowardly, he criticized NY Times for the redrafting of the quote. According to Jim Teacher, the up-to-date example of the NY Times avoiding offending Muslims after an act of Islamic terror and censoring itself. Nothing about telling her to convert to Islam, her to read the Quran or veiling herself (Conger, 2015).

Shortly, NY Times deviated the text again as portrayed on the website of the French radio service RFI stating that the gunman had asked the woman to practice Islam, read the Quran and veil herself. In an interview, she informed The NY Times that the gunman spoke in a sturdy voice with calmness in his eyes and had asked her not to be frightened and calm down, he would not kill her, but what she was doing wasn't right. She further stated that he had turned to his companion, who was still shooting, and shouted thrice that we do not shoot women. Both Mirror (Lines, 2015) and The Guardian (Wilsher, K, 2015) cite Vinson's report in the version published by RFI.

The Media barbarity over the assailment on freedom of speech is also probed in Noam Chomsky's CNN article in which he criticizes the responses of politicians and journalists who pursue an elucidation under the Islamic ethos for the assailment on Charlie Hebdo headquarters. He inscribed that The New York Times had described the assault as a "clash of civilizations," but moreover it was corrected the columnist Anand Giridharadas through his tweet that this wasn't a conflict of or between societies but for societies in contradiction of groups on the other side of the same line. (CNN, 2015).

According to Khader, there is an archetype shift in the way media and politicians have framed these events despite scrums of the

Islam phobic rhetoric in lieu of Islamic terrorism in mainstream media. Any radical solution to the problem of fundamentalist-terrorism is pushed away by the current neoliberal framework. (Khader, 2015). A critical opinion on the issue of media is also voiced by Brandon Turbeville, he proclaims that the victim for agitation is blamed by the left-wing. A focus is needed to become politically correct, self-censoring, and linguistically negligible (Turbeville, 2015).

THE ETHNIC CONTEXT FOR JOURNALISM

According to the French Constitution of 1958, the code of impartiality of citizens deprived of any distinction on the basis of origin, race or religion is preserved. Under the law of 9 December 1905, the right to freedom of religion or belief is safeguarded (article 1), however, a strict separation inferring that the state neither distinguishes nor reserves any religion (article 2).

French civil legislation provides defense in contradiction of discrimination on the ground of religion. (2008).

French journalism is a literary journalism that has always placed the “expose of ideas” on an advanced level than the “recitation of events” (Albert, 1977). In a proportional analysis of “Anglo-American” and “Continental” European journalistic styles, Rice and Cooney perceive that the basic variance amid the two journalistic styles is their conduct of fact and opinion. A lot of effort is done by the American newspapers in order to separate facts from opinions and to be mostly “objective” in their reporting. The French and other continental European newspapers, reporters are predictable to pass judgment; the real news is a reporter’s valuation of the event (Rice, Michael, Cooney, & James, 1982). Hence, for a French journalist, adjudicating and guiding the readers’ opinion is more significant than witnessing the event. Thus, to ask French journalists to separate fact from commentary or opinion is to ask for the impossible. (Salinger, 1980) (Gaunt, Phillip, Pritchard, & David, 1990).

However, critically, modern French journalists bear a grudge being considered “news specialists” because the real form of journalism in France has always been and still is largely news analysis rather than news reporting (Albert, 1977). This is because French journalism has always been more a journalism of expression than a journalism of observation (Gaunt P. , 1990). Archeologically, it is more ingrained in a “tradition of literary style, intellectual elegance,

and Gallic ‘logic’ than in the terse exposition of facts’’ (Gaunt, Phillip, Pritchard, & David, 1990, p. 185).

In journalism, impartiality has chief importance. News should be reported neutrally and encompass ample conceivable information. Though it is tough to deliver unambiguously by mitigating explicit topics and frames of interpretation, the noteworthy social groups that influence the creation of social depictions of issues, new spectacles, conflicts and devastations are the journalists (Lisowska-Magdziarz, 2014). The media derives news from foreign media and other local official sources during crises, to interpret biased events. The media outlets have a foreseeable construction.

Settings in information are pragmatic regarding context and theme. In journalism, is the outcome of the references to a specific informational value that interlinks events is a connotation of a subject. The mixture and hierarchy of priorities entail the application of frames. As query, the causes, moral judgments and suggestions to those issues are defined as frames. (Entnam, 1993).

Journalists cannot escape from biasness as their informer’s correspondingly apply frames in compliance to their objectives. Frames pragmatic by the media are outlines of assortment that permit to high spot fragments of reality and to omit others (Gitlin, 1980).

Diverse settings of identical events liable on the country and media system are overseen by political influences and public opinions. The agenda-setting theory, however, indicates specific events as most important events of the day; subsequently, they are perceived in the same way by the audience. This theory elaborates the connection in terms of relationships between the emphasis that the mass media put as an issue and the media audiences or the public’s reaction or attributes to such issue (Littlejohn & Foss, 2009). Within the first week of attack the maximum news about Charlie Hebdo was published. On the 14th day of January, the primary issue was published and instantly became a topic of interest nationwide. The media reported on limitless lines and millions of sold copies. Six weeks later, the consequence of the gunfire tranquilly appeared in the media but to a minor degree.

As Chomsky claims, “... the issue is whether we want to live in a free society or whether we want to live under what amounts to a form of self-imposed totalitarianism, with the bewildered herd marginalized, directed elsewhere, terrified, screaming patriot slogans, fearing for their lives, and admiring with awe the leader who saved them from destruction, while the educated masses goose-step on command and

repeat the slogans they're supposed to repeat and the society deteriorates them at home. We end up serving as a mercenary enforcer state, hoping that others are going to pay us to smash up the world.” (Chomsky, 2004)

CONCLUSION

Nearly semi-partial of the overseas news stories present Muslims and Islam in a negative and in some cases even hostile tone. According to the World Economic Forum, the Danish Media has been graded as ‘most critical’ towards Muslims and Islam in comparison to the media of other western countries. The mythological Phoenix rising from the ashes personifies the massive publicity of the initial Charlie Hebdo apprehension after the attack. Though being an attempt to terrorize journalists the magazine arouses robust. Perilous views on two-facedness and lack of solidarity with journalists murdered in different parts of the world was blended with the official outrage on the freedom of speech. The pessimistic focus, for example, as pointed out in a Jyllands-Posten article, between shariah and burkas on one side and democracy and freedom of speech on the other with respect to the Charlie Hebdo assailment. 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. 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 characterizes the Media coverage of Muslims in general.

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