

Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) Cartoon Controversy in Late 2005: Conflict of Perspectives on Ethical and Moral Values

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Abstract:

Insults against Islam have long been going on, Muslims have received insults from various quarters since the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) developed Islamic religion. This situation has dragged on until now and will continue to drag on. Thus, the controversy over the issue of insulting Islam through cartoons or caricatures of the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) in 2005 through a Danish newspaper is not a new issue. Previously and until now various cartoons painted insulting Islam were spread in many other mass media. Using an analytical descriptive approach, this paper will review the controversy sparked by the production of cartoons of the Prophet Muhammad painted by Kurt Westergaard, a Danish cartoonist at the Jyllands-Posten newspaper. There are two different perspectives in looking at this controversy, the first perspective is the absence of moral elements in ethics that exclude religious sensitivity, the second perspective is also the right to freedom of speech in communication ethics which is based on the ideology of Liberalism. But the motive or purpose for which the cartoons were produced must be hidden the implied agenda that has been devised by the enemies of Islam, especially in the West, given their prejudiced attitude towards the teachings and adherents of Islam who are considered their enemies. Liberalism is a trick to justify the means, the clear agenda of which is to instil sentiments of hatred and universal hostility towards Islam. Thus various ways were created to convey intent and objectives.

Keywords: Controversy, Conflict, Ethics and morals, Cartoons, Prophet Muhammad (pbuh)

Introduction

The whole world, especially the Muslim world, has been shocked by a very nasty controversy created by some people called cartoonists. The fact is that it is not cartoonists who are seen as evil and obnoxious, but because of the controversy deliberately designed by

only a few humans these so-called cartoonists have abandoned the image and cartoon world at one time as a career or an unethical field.

In fact, the insult to Islam especially the insult to the prophet Muhammad (pubh) has long been perpetrated by the enemies of Islam from among the Jews and Christians because of their hatred of the teachings of Islam brought by the Prophet (pubh). Not just cartoons, various ways and media are used to insult and vilify muslim and the religion that he brought. Cartoons and cartoonists are the only tools used by them to fuel common hateful sentiments towards Islam.

The controversy over insults against the prophet Muhammad (pubh) began with the production of twelve caricatures of him published in the Danish newspaper Jyllands-Posten on September 30, 2005. A month later, El Faqr newspaper repeated the broadcast of 6 caricatures along with an article strongly condemning the Danish newspaper's actions on October 30, 2005. But after months of broadcasting by European newspapers such as in Norway, France, Germany and so on, only organizations such as the O.I.C. (Organisation of the Islamic Conference) began to express their protests at the end of 2005 and the Muslim world was warmed with various opposition and even protests from every country of the world.

The whole Muslim world began to hold demonstrations of protest against the press and cartoonists involved. In Malaysia, due to the controversy that has also engulfed the country, the Sarawak Tribune and Guang Ming newspapers were subject to temporary suspension of their permits by the Ministry of Home Affairs (Malaysia) in early 2006 for allegedly broadcasting cartoons insulting Islam. The New Straits Times newspaper was similarly hit by controversy for publishing an insulting caricature of the prophet Muhammad (pbuh) by depicting a street painter trying to offer cartoon services to his wife. The same controversy also occurred in Indonesia, where the country's tabloid newspapers, Gloria and PETA published the five caricatures, however, that Gloria retracted the cartoon and apologized.

Significant of the study.

The image of Islam has become an ongoing issue that is often talked about around the world. Islamic images are highlighted in various forms whether positive, negative or neutral. In this regard, the media is seen as playing a role in highlighting a certain form of the image. Negative images such as terrorism, fundamentalists, radicals and militants are often associated with Islam. According to Mohamad et al. (2000) the media plays an important role in the formation of the image of a religion and belief. In western countries, the image of Islam is often portrayed negatively by the media. Islamic images are often associated with terrorists, murderers and obsessed.

According to McQuail (1983), mass communication is a process by which media organization produces and transmits information or messages to the public, and these messages will be seen, used and understood by their audience, thus influencing them. Hence, what is said by the media can influence a matter. If a bad image is highlighted by this media, then it will have a negative impact on the intended target. In this regard, the negative image shown on the Prophet Muhammad PBUH in the mass media can bring a bad impression on those who do not know him. The posting of this derogatory image further aroused anger among all Muslims in the world, and even the entire world community who adhered to moral principles also condemned this barbaric act.

Thus, this study tries to give the impression that all such accusations and insults are untrue and violate ethical and moral values. The image of Islam, especially the image of the Prophet Muhammad PBUH, is often highlighted in a negative form, thus giving an incorrect and misleading interpretation. This erroneous and misleading interpretation needs to be corrected.

This article is also expected to shed some light on this confusion between the perspectives of ethical and moral values held by some of the different parties of thought. In the controversy sparked by the Denmark cartoonist, there is confusion in interpreting the code of ethics between freedom of speech and global religious sensitivity. The difference between two idealisms, which is a moral concept based on ethical values with the concept of liberalism that sidesteps moral principles based on the right to freedom of expression without regard to others is seen as outrageous. In this controversy, the cartoonists did not see the moral principles and ethical conduct in the works. For them, what is produced is only in a purely artistic form and that is normal in the context of freedom of speech supported by extreme liberalism. However, this is seen as outrageous and violates the moral and ethical principles of a society that does not practice liberalism.

In addition, this article is expected to provide a little guidance, rebuke and views to some parties such as: -

1. Cartoonists: Cartoonists are free to produce any artwork and are free to express their expression into the work but must respect the sensitivity of others. There should be limitations in working and always following ethical and moral values in order to maintain the harmony of the dissenting groups and so on. In addition, it is the task of cartoonists to be the presenter of good messages and images in an effort to educate a noble society.
2. Newspaper publishers and broadcasting bodies: Mass media is a widespread form of communication and has a great influence on society. A society exposed to negative elements, influences, bad images and messages will form a negative society that is prejudiced and lacks high moral values. Thus, it should be that the mass media controlled by publishers and broadcasting bodies have a high level of identity to provide social services to the people in disseminating beneficial information in order to form and inculcate good values instead of disseminating defamatory, misleading and inciting bad information.
3. World Islamic society: The Muslim community must always be patient as the Prophet Muhammad PBUH was patient in every insult and abomination hurled upon him. Being patient does not mean allowing all forms of arbitrary insults to be committed. These provocations triggered by the enemies of Islam should be dealt with as best as possible so that the image of Islam is not more tarnished by violent acts in retaliation for such provocations. If such provocations are answered by force and violence, ultimately the goal of the enemy of Islam to highlight a negative image of Islam will succeed. Muslims should be more diplomatic and wiser in dealing with these provocations by disseminating real information and displaying good moral values such as the morals of the Prophet Muhammad PBUH. It is his good manners that have spread the teachings of Islam to all parts of the world.

Ethical and Moral Definitions

Ethics is a behavioural philosophy that is often adopted in our daily lives that is always associated with moral words to refer to one's behaviour. In surah al-Ahzab 33:21, Allah the almighty has said which means:

"Indeed, there has been in the Messenger of Allah a good example for you (that is) for those who hope for (the mercy) of Allah and (the coming) of the Day of Judgment and he mentions Allah a lot"

Based on the words of Allah the almighty, it can be understood that morality is important to man in seeking His happiness and the example of the morals of the Prophet (pubh) is the best morals that every Muslim should emulate. The concept of morality mentioned in Islam includes ethical and moral concepts that have the same goal of bringing about man to a better life from his spiritual and physical aspects.

Looking at various other ethical definitions, the Kamus Dewan Dictionary (2002) refers to the word ethic as a moral (or moral) principle or moral or behavioural values that are the hold of an individual or a group (association, occupation). While the Academic American Encyclopaedia defines ethics from the French word 'one etiquette' or even one ticket, a list of rules that describe acceptable behaviour for each situation that can be challenged in court (1998).

Meanwhile, according to the interpretation given by Mackie (1990), ethics and morals are disciplines that can explain the good and bad values of an action and provide lines of distinction between one's good and bad. Berthens (2003) also argues that the word ethics referred to in the singular has many meanings, among which is the usual place of residence, pastures, stables, habits, customs, morals, dispositions, feelings, attitudes and ways of thinking. Solomon (1984) explains the meaning of ethics divided into two, namely individual temperament which explains the meaning of a good person and second is social rules that control and limit human behaviour which is called moral.

Another definition of ethics by Abdullah (1997), states that ethics is a philosophy of value theory that reflects human treatment described by norms that exist in a society. In Islam, the value of science and thought is the most important element that determines human actions and behaviour. Even value is also shown by statements such as right, wrong and satisfying.

In conclusion, according to Mohamed (2008), ethics refers to science related to what is good and bad, principles or values related to the morals of an individual held by a group of people against right or wrong actions and besides that ethics also has preventive values to control members in society called rules, laws or norms.

The term 'moral' is derived from the Latin word mores, which meaning 'norm' or 'practice'. The terms 'ethics' and 'morality' are often used interchangeably, although they can also be used differently. If referred to the word moral in the Cambridge International Dictionary (1997), it means teachings or guidelines related to bad either an action (behaviour or obligation), an attitude or way of behaviour that is based or measured in terms of good and bad provisions of a moral. Morals are also referred to as those relating to standards of good and bad behaviour, fairness and honesty that individuals believe in other than the law.

Ahmad (1981), defines ethics as morals, morals, ethics, human character in facing life. In it is formed human personality that determines good, bad, true, false life including the ethics of self, family, society, nation and human beings as a whole. If ethics is good, then overall is good. According to Peter Baelz (1977), morals and ethics often have the same meaning, however it is better to distinguish between the two, even if we often do not succeed in distinguishing them. There are differences of opinion regarding ethical and moral matters. There are opinions that say that morals belong to the ethical environment and there are also those who think morals are a separate matter from ethics. But by habit the word ethics

Cartoons and Cartoonists

The cartoonist is taken from the original word 'cartoon'. Cartoon according to the Kamus Dewan Dictionary (2002) means a picture or drawing that tells the story of everyday things, political matters and others in a joke. Antariksa et al. (1990) states that the word 'cartoon' comes from the Italian 'cartone' which means paper which is the designation for a sketch on the paper 'a lot' (stout paper) as a design plan for canvas or wall painting. While Mahamood (2004) is of the opinion that cartoons are a form that is deliberately added or reduced to show humour or jokes as well as entertainment. Gombrich (1992) thinks cartoons can be seen as caricatures or 'mock portraits'. An English cartoonist, on the other hand, described a cartoon as a drawing that depicts a candidly or symbolically in the form of a joke, it may have text and dialogue, or it may not be, and can also consist of more than one panel (Low, 1976). According to Low, editorial cartoons are a form of political or societal illustration that is presented in a caricature or not. This definition was further facilitated by Seymour-Ure (1996) who stated that editorial cartoons are a large framework in newspapers that touches on social and political matters in the form of commentary.

It can generally be understood that a cartoonist is someone who produces or draws cartoons. Cartoonists have now become part of a career in the field of art that is gaining popularity and gaining a place in the hearts of the community. The creativity of a cartoon painter or cartoonist requires great imagination and humour. The reader not only evaluates the aesthetics of the cartoon itself but also evaluates the elements of humour that the cartoonist managed to highlight. This is because cartoons are usually associated with humour but the element of humour often contains messages, criticism, sarcasm and so on other than just a mere laughing matter. There are several categories of cartoon painters based on published formats and media such as gag cartoons, editorial cartoons, comics, graphic novels and even animations.

Ethical and Moral Principles in The Prophet Muhammad Cartoon Controversy (pubh)

Whatever field or career is involved, ethics is a discipline that needs to exist for every individual. Judgments about good ethics and social values reflect a person's personality. In this case, a career as a cartoonist is also inseparable from ethical guidelines to ensure that the work produced keeps the pure values accepted by society. There is no denying that there are some cartoons that really flick emotions and feelings with satirical propaganda and sharp criticism, but as long as it is acceptable to the reading public and does not go beyond the established ethical level it is still considered 'natural'. For example, editorial cartoons that are widely circulated in the newspapers every day are full of satire and political criticism. But it is still acceptable even if there is a bit of controversy because it does not involve things that are categorized as sensitive to some parties. Cartoonists work based on their observations of a particular issue. How cartoonists creatively process issues by mixing humorous elements but full of criticism and satire depends on individual wisdom, not all cartoonists succeed in highlighting all the messages they want to convey in their cartoons. But it is necessary to line up ethical values that are seen as good and accepted by society, cartoonists need to be wise not only in expressing their ideas and creativity on sheets of paper but also need to be wise in applying good ethics in order to avoid bad perceptions and extreme controversies that may be triggered. Cartoonists should wisely avoid controversy and stick to safe ethics.

In the controversy sparked by the Denmark cartoonist there is confusion in interpreting the code of ethics between freedom of speech and global religious sensitivity. As a result this polemic sparked great anger of Muslims around the world. The Western world is

seen as unethical and has bad intentions behind it. In fact, there is no code of ethics that can be used to justify the work of cartoonists. Western thinking is more about freedom of speech than maintaining racial and religious sensitivity. The culture of most Western societies that see religion in a liberal form makes them insensitive to the sensitivities of adherents of other religions.

The concept of liberalism practiced allows them to express views and criticisms without filter on an issue. In fact, in the Western world, this concept is accepted and does not become mistakes for them because it is common in the context of freedom of speech. They still think that the cartoons do not violate ethics based on the concept of freedom of expression. In the Western world, criticisms that smell of ridicule and condemnation are allowed, they can express objections and criticism of their leaders, even against the church and even Christianity. This is accepted by the concept of freedom of expression that is supported by liberalism.

However, the ethical concepts adopted by Western societies are not accepted by Eastern societies and the Islamic world in general which still adheres to pure values and norms contained in moral principles themselves. There are no ethics or regulations in the West that restrict criticism or objection to certain things such as cultural customs, religious observances and so on, on the contrary there are prohibitions in Islam that prohibit criticism, refutation and insult to one's customs and religious beliefs, let alone anything related to insulting the Prophet Muhammad (pubh). This has been explained in the Qur'an very clearly. Between the words of Allah the almighty in surah Al-Hujurat, verse 11:

"O believer! Let no tribe (of men) ridicule and despise another tribe of men, (because) it must be that the tribe that is despised is better than them; and let not a tribe of women, scorn and demean other tribes of women, (because) it must be that the tribe that is scorned is better than them; and let not half of you declare the disgrace of the other half; And do not call each other by bad titles. These prohibitions cause the person who does it to become wicked, so it is very bad to say the name wicked (to a person) after he has believed. And (remember), whoever does not repent of his wicked deeds is a tyrant".

According to Daryati (2007) in an article he wrote on islamfeminis.wordpress.com, numbness is the foundation, and heart of the concept of liberalism for its adherents. In the concept of liberalism, freedom includes philosophical-theological basis, political rights, economics and moral freedom. In fact, the adherents of this understanding have the perception that a person is free to behave badly and is free to spread his badness. In fact, the adherents of this understanding ask that humans be freed from all forms of religious and moral constraints. Among other things, Coady (1995) states that liberalism is a philosophy that places individual freedom as the highest political value. A person who accepts liberalism is called a liberal. However, the meaning of the word liberal may change according to the context of a country.

Based on this perspective, this controversy occurs, between two ideals, namely the moral concept based on ethical values with the concept of liberalism which excludes moral principles based on the right to freedom of speech. In the controversy that erupted, these cartoonists did not see moral principles and ethical treatment in their work. For them, what is produced is only in the form of art and that is normal in the context of freedom of speech supported by liberalism. However, this matter is seen as abnormal and violates the moral and ethical order of people who do not practice liberalism, especially in the East.

The question here is, we need to see from which scope or perspective to judge the controversy. There are two different principles of thinking that have different points of view.

The production of a work of art (in this context is a cartoon or caricature) has a rating. This is stated by Zaelani (2010) who argues that art has its own moral territory, and can only be tested through its own special way. This view is referred to as an attitude of nominalism that developed along with the growth of the principles of modernism in art. A more traditional view, referred to as utopian attitude, assumes that moral art is related to the development of values in life experience. However, these two views actually have a common meeting point, where art and morals are seen as fostering increased human awareness of life values.

In the development of art today, the two views are no longer seen as two different things but are seen as two interrelated things. Obviously, although works of art have their own way of judging moral principles, they will clearly turn to moral and ethical principles that are practiced in the values of human life. The nature of ethical elements does need to be absorbed in every work of art and this is included in cartoons and caricatures.

In the scope of understanding communication ethics, Johannesen (2002) has stated seven perspectives in making an assessment of human communication ethics, one of which is a political perspective taken from Wallace (1955) which emphasizes that there are four basic values that need to exist, namely respect or belief in individual dignity and self-esteem, openness or belief in equal opportunities, freedom accompanied by responsibility and confidence in everyone's abilities to understand the nature of democracy.

In asserting that perspective, Johannesen (2002) stated that the presentation of information is necessary to the nature of search, fairness, the importance of public opinion rather than one's own opinion and respect for dissent. The nature of searching is seen as the search for information and knowledge of an issue to prevent the issue from becoming heated and controversial. Fair nature is more geared towards the importance of choice and the delivery of fair and transparent facts. This fact is supported by Wallace (1955) statement which states that the presenter of information or liaison needs to be fair and accurate on every issue and not distort the issue. The importance of public opinion rather than the individual is also necessary to ensure that there is no element of bias and respect for dissent is a compromise that should be present in the ethics of communication.

A Chronology Of Cartoon Controversies of The Prophet Muhammad (pubh)

The date of September 30, 2005 was the date that sparked worldwide controversy for Muslims when a Denmark newspaper, Jyllands-Posten published 12 cartoons insulting the Prophet Muhammad (pubh). Flemming Rose, the newspaper's cultural editor, took full responsibility when the cartoon was published. The Muslim community in Denmark has raised objections to the matter through the Organization Of Islamic Conference (O.I.C.) (Douai, 2007). From the discussion, various resolutions were highlighted among which were by punishing the editors and cartoonists involved.

According to Malek (2007) several other newspapers also issued several cartoons insulting the Prophet Muhammad (pubh) as an approval of the actions made by the Jyllands-Posten newspaper. The action provoked such anger again as Muslims around the world that newspaper editor Flemming Rose made an explanation defending his actions by relating them to freedom of speech and freedom of the press.

This hot issue raises various questions and debates. There are two opinions: pros and cons. According to Cass (2006), the Danish press action is unethical and violates the boundaries of religious principles. In fact, the publication of the cartoon is actually seen as violating the concept of social ethics. According to Carens (2006), most of the cartoons published were unethical due to western bias with their negative perception of Prophet

Muhammad (pubh). But whether the act violates the law or not cannot be justified. Another opinion that tends to Jylland-Posten's actions sees that the press action does not violate any ethics based on the concept of freedom of speech. According to Edwards (2006), "freedom of speech does not limit religious sensitivity".

Actually, the issue of cartoons of Prophet Muhammad (pubh) is not a new issue in the context of communication ethics, there are many other controversial issues involving cartoons where this polemic is seen from various angles of difference of opinion and understanding. Westerners who do not prioritize ethical values feel that the work is normal according to their liberalism mentality, but Muslims see it as an insult to the religion of Islam. The cartoon, painted by Kurt Westergaard, was published by Jyllands-Posten newspaper on a three-page letter titled 'Muhammeds insight' depicting as many as 12 cartoons of the Prophet Muhammad in various situations. According to Shearmur (2006), the cartoon was painted in various cartoons, and one of the characters that was quite offensive to Muslims was the cartoon painted depicting the Prophet Muhammad (pubh). with a bomb turbaned by him.

The cartoons are painted in various styles that are offensive to Muslims and outside the ethical limits of communication that must be practiced by a newspaper as a medium. The bias practiced by the West can further deteriorate relations between religions as well as relations between Islamic countries. According to Stromback et al. (2007), the newspaper editor, Flemming Rose responsible for the controversy, thought that the cartoons' production was a translation of the right to freedom of speech that binds the West from the Muslim sensitivity. The reaction came when Rose expressed his feelings about how difficult it was to get a cartoonist to paint the character of the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) for his book. Rose added that the cartoon does not create a new reality but highlights the existing reality. (Malek, 2007).



Visual 1: Kurt Westergaard,
Danish cartoonist who drew the ire of Muslims around the world.
Source: <https://www.dailystar.co.uk/>

Danish minority Muslims began to make accusations and pressure on the press involved with apologies and retractions of the cartoon but failed (Modood et al., 2006). According to Douai (2007), this failure has made them complain to the rest of the Muslim world for support. When the cartoon gained worldwide attention, the two sides continued to clash and put the issue in a very precarious situation. Muslims around the world continue to protest but the Western mass media is trying to further fuel the flames of Muslim anger by continuing to broadcast the cartoons in other newspapers around Europe to express their stance on the right to freedom of speech. To further protest, Muslims around the world have boycotted Danish-made goods and the Danish embassies in Damascus and Beirut have been set on fire due to mounting flames of Muslim anger. Several attempts to assassinate editor Flemming Rose and cartoonist Kurt Westergaard were also orchestrated (Stromback et al., 2007).

The O.I.C. (Organization Of Islamic Conference) and the Arab League have then urged the United Nations to impose international penalties on Denmark. On February 7, 2006, Iran officially severed trade ties with Denmark (quoted from detikNews.com). On February 12, 2008, Danish police arrested three Danish men of Moroccan descent and two Tunisians, on suspicion of murdering cartoonist Kurt Westergaard. The Danish man was released after being questioned, but the two Tunisians will be deported after being declared a threat by Danish intelligence officials.

Departing from the idea of freedom of speech by manipulating cartoons with satirical satire, the Jyllands-Posten newspaper still said the publication of the cartoons was to show that freedom of speech applies to everyone. However, some people, especially Muslims, consider the cartoons an insult to Islam and show Islamophobia in Denmark. Although the Jyllands-Posten newspaper has apologized for insulting Muslims, but still arguing that they have the right to publish the caricature, arguing that Islamic fundamentalism cannot control the things that can be published in Danish media.



Visual 2: The publication of the cartoon in other newspapers in

Europe to uphold the right to freedom of expression.

Source: <https://www.denverpost.com/>

United Nations Secretary General in that time, Kofi Annan voiced his concerns in the controversy and argued that freedom of speech as well as the right to freedom of the press should be exercised through respect for the proponents and beliefs of all religions. Therefore, all parties must tolerate and respect each other. Quoted from [kompas.com](https://www.kompas.com), the Vatican also voiced the same case where freedom of speech does not mean free to attack one's religion or religious beliefs. The act of publishing the cartoon was an act of provocation that was totally unacceptable. However, the actions of the Jyllands-Posten press should also not be attributed to the Danish government by punishing the government.

Conclusion

The controversy generated by the Danish newspaper Jyllands-Posten is only a small part of an insult to Muslims. The controversy spread and became heated throughout the Muslim world due to the role played by Muslim community organizations in Denmark and resolutions issued by the O.I.C. and the Arab Leagues. There are actually many more derogatory cartoons and caricatures was produced before this controversy erupted again. It's just that the difference doesn't get widespread coverage. There is a cartoon that is even greater in his contempt for Islam if we look at the mainstream mass media today, namely the internet. How many blogs and websites publish cartoons and caricatures and images insulting Islam? This humiliation occurs because of the prejudice and phobia of non-Muslims towards Islam itself apart from being injected by the vengeful and rotten nature of this group. There must be certain agendas designed to provoke Muslims that will provoke anger and unwanted things happen that end up labelling Muslims as terrorists.

Actually, this concept of liberalism rejects all religious and moral beliefs that limit human freedom. It is a weapon of the enemies of Islam used to corrupt Muslims. The right to freedom of speech should have certain guidelines and not be influenced by a culture of liberalism that justifies any way to translate the meaning of freedom without restrictions. Freedom of speech does not mean being free to attack and provoke anything. Tolerance and respect for the differences of other people's opinions need to exist in communication ethics such as recommended by Wallace (1955).

In this Jyllands-Posten controversy we can see two different perspectives in which the right to freedom of speech and freedom of the press with the ideas and concepts of liberalism has rejected the moral and ethical elements adopted by Muslims. There are two disagreements in this controversy, two quite different ethical perspectives have been adopted. The West uses the concept of ethics from the lens of Liberalism which excludes moral matters, but Islam practices ethical concepts that covers moral issues in all aspects of life. This conflict of ethical and moral concepts is the cause of this conflict. However, does this controversy stem only from a conflict of concepts or deliberately designed to rekindle the flames of hostility in addition to a hidden agenda?

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