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**Transnational Activism among Danish Muslims
during the Muhammad Caricatures Controversy:
A Negative and Reversed Boomerang Effect**

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Abstract

The paper delivers an empirical analysis of the effects of Danish Muslims' transnational activities during the Muhammad caricatures controversy in 2005/06 on subsequent Muslim claims-making. The paper argues that the envisioned "boomerang effect" of the transnational activities – the attempt to put pressure on Danish authorities through contacting political and religious authorities in the Middle East - backfired on Danish Muslims. This seems especially to be true for the actors involved in the so called "imam-delegations" – the delegations of preliminary religious authorities that travelled to Egypt, Lebanon and Syria in December 2005. These actors were forced into a more defensive mode of claims-making soon after their return to Denmark. Building on the case study of Danish Muslims' transnational activities during the Muhammad caricatures controversy, the paper concludes by suggesting some theoretical modifications/specifications of the boomerang model of transnational activism, and by discussing briefly the more long term implications of what happened during the Danish controversy.

Keywords

1. Introduction[*]

In the first couple of months after the publication of the twelve caricatures of the prophet Muhammad in September 2005 in the Danish newspaper, *Jyllands-Posten*, the debate was largely confined to a Danish context. Some early international protests of the caricatures were displayed by regimes in, for example, Pakistan, Iran and Egypt, however, until January 2006 Danish Muslims fought a primarily internal battle for some kind of recognition of hurt religious feelings from the newspaper and the Danish government. A coalition of Muslim organisations, with *The Community of Islamic Faith* [Det Islamiske Trossamfund] and its affiliated imams at the lead, tried in October 2006 to put pressure on the Danish government by involving Muslim ambassadors posted in Denmark. However, the request for a meeting with the Danish prime minister by the Muslim ambassadors was turned down, as was other attempts by Danish Muslims to raise claims with the government. As a reaction to the lack of progress in regard to Muslim claims within Denmark, some Danish Muslims thought to internationalize the conflict through transnational activities at, at least, two levels: 1) sending delegations to the Middle East to meet with political elites and religious authorities in an attempt to secure external support of their claims, and 2) the use of e-mail campaigns, chain SMS's, web-sites, blogs and chat-forums of a transnational scope, as well as transnational TV-stations like *Al-Jazeera* and *Al-Arabiya*, as a way of diffusing knowledge of the caricatures. Many of these transnational activities, especially the so called "imam-delegations" in late December 2005, were received with scepticism in the Danish public: What were the motivations and interests of making the caricatures an international affair? Were some Danish Muslims deliberately stocking the fire abroad? Were they presenting a fair and accurate picture of the situation in Denmark? The fact is the agenda of the Danish debate about the caricatures changed in January 2006 as the conflict escalated abroad with the first mass-demonstrations against the caricatures, flag-burnings, consumer boycott of Danish products and ultimately the violent attacks on Danish representations in Damascus, Beirut and Tehran in the first week of February 2006. It is likewise a fact that Danish Muslims involved in the imam-delegations consequently were forced into a defensive in this period.

An extensive academic literature exist that deals with the causes and dynamic effects of transnational activism by sub-state actors. The vast majority of these existing studies of "political transnationalism" or "transnational activism" has been case studies of how specific groups or movements have managed to lift their local, national or regional grievances into the transnational arena, and how this has benefited their original claims (see e.g. Olesen 2005; della Porta and Tarrow 2004; Guiraudon 2001). The same account for the sub-literature which has focused on immigrant transnational activism, that is the triangular relation between the country of origin, the country of settlement and the immigrant group (Bauböck 2003). Here it has often been emphasised how immigrants to a large extent have remained socially, culturally, economically and politically involved in their home-countries with important positive implications (investments, democratic know-how, trade etc.) for the target societies (Basch et al. 1994; Danese 1998; Portes 1997; Van Hear 1998; Guarnizo and Portes 2003). Some scholars have specified that the amount of transnational involvements of immigrants depends on the opportunities for integration and political participation in the country of settlement (see especially Koopmans and Statham 1999a; Koopmans and Statham 2001). The core idea is that "closed" opportunities in the country of settlement make immigrants more engaged in the home-country. Following a similar note of "closed" and "open" opportunity structures Keck and Sikkink have proposed their "boomerang model" of transnational activism (Keck and Sikkink 1998). The idea of the boomerang effect was originally developed to account for cases of

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human rights improvements in authoritarian regimes. Faced with a repressive regime at home (closed political opportunity structures) national human rights NGO's appealed to the governments of other states, to international institutions or NGO's in other countries to put pressure for change on the repressive regime. Thus, for example, external resource-rich allies push for political change through material or symbolic repercussions of non-compliance. Sikkink has later together with Thomas Risse expanded the "boomerang model" into the so-called "spiral model", which recognizes that the effect of domestic-transnational linkages on domestic political change is not a single move, but a longer term process/dynamic with distinct phases (Risse and Sikkink 1999).

If we look at the instances of transnational activism by Danish Muslims following the publication of the Muhammad caricatures in the light of this existing literature on transnational activism two things become evident. First, the transnational activities of Danish Muslims, especially the imam-delegations, followed the logic of the "boomerang" or "spiral" model of transnational activism. The idea was to lift the issue of the caricatures out of a Danish context – to perform a "scale-shift" (Tarrow and Tilly 2006: 217) – and in doing so put external pressure on the Danish government to make concessions. Secondly, the transnational dynamic put into motion seems to have worked contrary to the hopes and expectations of the involved Danish Muslims, and contrary to the wisdom of existing literature on transnational activism. Thus, the transnational activities had, through the way they were perceived in the Danish public, very negative effects on the subsequent realization of Muslim claims in Denmark. Taking these observations as its starting point, this paper sets out to explore in more detail 1) the choice by Danish Muslims to engage in transnational activities, 2) the way in which these activities "backfired" on the involved Danish Muslims, 3) the theoretical implications/aspirations raised by this "exceptional" case of transnational action, and 4) the possible long term effects of the events on both Danish Muslims and the Danish political elite.

The paper builds methodologically on an approach of political claims analysis (Koopmans and Statham 1999b), which aims at integrating elements of protest event analysis, discourse analysis and frame analysis. It draws on an empirical database on claims-making during the controversy. The database contains detailed codings (inspired by Koopmans 2002) of all newspaper articles touching on the crisis which appeared in the Danish daily *Berlingske Tidende* from the publication of the caricatures on the 30th of September 2005 till the beginning demobilization of the issue in late March 2006. The choice of *Berlingske Tidende* is based on an assumption that the paper in their coverage of the controversy can be said to be more balanced, and representing the interest of the public more, then any of other of the large Danish dailies.[1] The database also includes codings of other types of material (news-letters, pamphlets, interviews, organisational documents, Friday sermons and recordings of internal debates/meetings etc.) containing claims by identified Muslim actors referring to the Muhammad caricatures. This data-base will be used to trace the effects of the transnational activities of Danish Muslims on a) the Danish debate of the caricatures in general, b) the content of Muslim claims-making, and c) mobilization/de-mobilization among different Muslim actors in Denmark. The analysis is further supported by conducted interviews with representatives of the Muslim organisations active in the debate.

2. The Choice of Danish Muslims to Engage in Transnational Activities

The choice of Danish Muslims to engage in transnational activities aiming at elevating the issue of the caricatures into a transnational arena and finding external allies can, as already indicated, be seen as a reaction to an experience of "closed" political opportunities within the Danish political context.

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[1] In the newspaper landscape, *Berlingske Tidende* placed it self somewhere in between the two poles of *Jyllands-Posten*, who insisted on the subordination of other values/rights to freedom of speech, and *Politiken*, who was the main critical voice of the caricatures and the Danish governments handling of the crisis. *Berlingske Tidende*, thus, chose not to publish the caricatures out of respect for Muslim feelings, but supported JP's right to publish them, and the governments "non-intervention" strategy of dealing with the crisis.

Through demonstrations, letter-writing, diplomatic contacts, petitioning and law suits the coalition of Muslim organisations in Denmark, which spearheaded the protests of the caricatures, tried to raise claims vis-à-vis the political and the juridical system in Denmark. All these actions proved to be fruitless. Thus, in December 2005 the coalition decided to actively "internationalize" the issue of the caricatures. As the spokesperson of the coalition of Muslim organisations, Ahmed Akkari, put it: *After two months of trying to explain our viewpoints in Denmark without anybody listening or responding to it, we saw no other way than to contact influential people abroad hoping that they could make our voice heard* (Material 25). The transnational move was, as prescribed also by the literature, a reaction to closed political opportunity structures at home. On the other side at least three factors made the transnational arena "open" for such a move. First, the very nature of the imposed grievance on Danish Muslims – the mocking of the prophet Muhammad – made Muslim communities abroad receptive of Danish Muslims' claims for an apology. In many ways the prophet Muhammad is *the* uniting figure in Islam, bringing together Muslims of all kinds of observance and in any place. Thus, to many Muslims the attack on Muhammad became an attack on all Muslims. In this way the publication of the Muhammad caricatures were inscribed with a certain transnational (conflictual) potential. Secondly, the Muhammad caricatures were a welcome opportunity for several Muslim regimes in the Middle East, and elsewhere, to show that they stood guard around the respect of Islam, and in doing so, soften the critique of Islamic opposition within. Here was a case which was highly value-loaded, and at the same time, almost costless as a diplomatic conflict. Thirdly, the involved Danish Muslim actors possessed the necessary resources in order to make the transnational move possible. Most importantly they possessed valuable transnational network ties to powerful religious authorities in countries such as Egypt, Lebanon and Syria – the "home countries" of several of the participants in the imam-delegations. Thus, among others the delegations met with Arab League secretary Amr Moussa, the grand imam of Al-Azhar University, Sheikh Muhammad Sayyid Tantawi, and the influential Sunni scholar, Yusuf al Qaradawi.

The imam-delegations were the most visible, and as we shall see below, also the most decisive, of the transnational actions by Danish Muslims in the controversy. However, there were others. Danish Muslims made use of both micro and macro media in diffusing both offensive and defensive claims of the caricatures transnationally (see also Olesen 2006). By micro media I mean e-mail campaigns, chain SMS's, web-sites, blogs and chat-forums, which Danish Muslims used to a large extent, taking advantage of the speed and ease by which claims are diffused transnationally or even globally through such IT-based communication. However, the "uncontrollability" of these media and the ease by which claims are spread through such micro media are also some of its drawbacks. Thus, rumours, misinformation and misunderstandings tend to have good conditions and tend to get a life of its own within these media. The Muhammad caricatures controversy showed several examples of this. One example is the rumours of Koran burnings in Denmark that spread to the Middle East via SMS on February 4th 2006, and which apparently set of the angry mob of protesters outside the Danish representation in Damascus that same afternoon. Another example is the lists of Danish products/companies to be boycotted, which flourished in Muslim chat rooms and blogs on the internet, and which included several companies that are not (and never were) Danish. In an attempt to counter such misinformation and misunderstandings members of a Danish Muslim organisation, *Muslims in Dialogue* [Muslimer i Dialog], logged on to transnational Muslim chat-forums in order to monitor discussions of the caricatures and correct the widespread misunderstandings of the situation in Denmark. A representative of the organisation explained the initiative in the following way:

> We have to avoid further escalations. There are a lot of misunderstandings in the controversy, which have contributed to the sad situation we are facing. Therefore we find it evident to use the same media to tell what the facts are, what Danish Muslims feel and that dialogue always is better than confrontation. We hope that our message to Muslims anywhere will spread like ripples across the bay in the same way as the misunderstandings did (MID 2006).

In the case of macro media, we saw several instances of how Muslim organisations or Muslim individuals in Denmark took advantage of contacts to media in the "home-country" to display claims,

and how the attention to the issue of the caricatures from truly transnational networks like *Al-Jazeera* and *Al-Arabiya* made it possible for Danish Muslim representatives to speak to a large transnational community of Muslims (and non-Muslims) abroad. Thus, Danish Muslims were at this time involved simultaneously in claims-making in different arenas – within for example the mosques, within the Danish public sphere, within foreign public spheres and on a transnational level. However, in at least one instance did this strategy create problems for the involved Muslim actors as inconsistency in claims-making was detected across arenas. This was the case with Ahmed Abu Laban, imam of *The Community of Islamic Faith*, who in late January 2006 seemingly gave contradicting statements to Danish and Arabic press, thus, lending support to the boycott of Danish products in an interview with *Al-Jazeera*, while expressing sympathy with the Danish companies hit by the boycott in an interview with a Danish newspaper. This episode, and especially the perceived escalating effects of the imam-delegations, made the transnational activities of Danish Muslims central to the following debate, though in a negative way. Notions of "two-tongued talk", "hidden agendas" and "Janus-faced imams" became common descriptions of Muslim claims-making.

3. The Effect of Muslim Transnational Activities on Subsequent Muslim Claims-making

In the beginning of the Muhammad controversy there were some signs that the transnational dialectic between events in Denmark and reactions/events abroad was working to the advantage of Danish Muslims. Or put differently, it seemed like the "internationalization" of the controversy was going to have positive effects on the recognition of Muslim claims. Thus, the unconditional attitude of the Danish government towards the Muslim ambassadors in Denmark led to growing criticism from actors abroad, especially Egypt and the OIC, but also a range of non-Muslim actors, including national ministers and EU and UN representatives. The Danish government and *Jyllands-Posten* found themselves under serious international pressure to resolve the conflict. However, the nature of the transnational dialectic changed with the escalation of the conflict abroad throughout January 2006. After the rapid escalation, Danish Muslims who had helped internationalize the conflict came under increased fire, and with the violent developments in early February 2006 came a full "bandwagoning" of the Danish government by Western governments and international institutions. What had happened?

Shortly after the imam-delegations had returned to Denmark in late December 2005, the first large demonstrations against the caricatures in the Middle East occurred, and in mid January 2006 the consumer boycott of Danish products spread rapidly in the region. The escalation of the conflict abroad culminated with the violent attacks on Danish diplomatic representations in early February 2006. However, whether or not the imam-delegations through their activities abroad "triggered" this escalation of the conflict in the region is a matter of great contestation, and a question I will not go into here. I just notice that the imam-delegations, and the motivations behind them, re-entered the Danish public sphere in January 2006, and became central issues in the following public debate, with serious implications for the involved Muslim actors. Thus, we see an overall issue-shift of the debate in this phase of the controversy[2] as indicated by the main issues of claims raised in the debate:

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[2] The cross time analysis uses a four phase periodization of the controversy as its "unit of time". The periodization builds on the application of two criteria of demarcation: 1) the scope of contention, and 2) the intensity of contention. Put very simplistically we can say that phase one (30-09-05 to 25-12-05) is characterised by being local/national in scope and by relatively low intensity of contention; phase two (26-12-05 to 03-02-06) by an international scope and medium level of intensity; phase three (04-02-06 to 25-02-06) by an international/global scope and high level of intensity, and; phase four (26-02-06 to 20-03-06) by a national scope and low to medium level of intensity.

Table 1. Issues of all Claims by Phases[a] of the Controversy[b]

	Phase 1		Phase 2		Phase 3		Phase 4		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Muslim handling	10	7.1	62	29.1	40	13.5	15	8.8	127	15.5
Freedom of speech	26	18.6	18	8.5	42	14.1	30	17.6	116	14.1
Government handling	25	17.9	25	11.7	23	7.7	30	17.6	103	12.6
Conflict resolution	13	9.3	41	19.2	32	10.8	15	8.8	101	12.3
Discrimination	23	16.4	13	6.1	18	6.1	11	6.5	65	7.9
Integration	1	0.7	9	4.2	26	8.8	22	12.9	58	7.1
Violence	11	7.9	5	2.3	31	10.4	10	5.9	57	7.0
Tolerance/Respect	14	10.0	8	3.8	22	7.4	6	3.5	50	6.1
Islam as a religion	4	2.9	9	4.2	10	3.4	14	8.2	37	4.5
Media actions	6	4.3	11	5.2	15	5.1	2	1.2	34	4.1
Equality/Parity	4	2.9	7	3.3	9	3.0	7	4.1	27	3.3
Globalization	0	0.0	1	0.5	13	4.4	5	2.9	19	2.3
Other Issues	3	2.1	4	1.9	16	5.4	3	1.8	26	3.2
Total	140	17.1	213	26.0	297	36.2	170	20.7	820	100

a. Phase 1: 30-09-05 to 25-12-05, Phase 2: 26-12-05 to 03-02-06, Phase 3: 04-02-06 to 25-02-06, Phase 4: 26-02-06 to 20-03-06

b. The table should be read as follows: The percentages in each cell show the percentage of a specific issue of all issues raised within a given phase

Table 1 shows how issues of discrimination, free speech and government handling of the conflict (the non-meeting with the Muslim ambassadors) are dominant in phase one of the controversy, while issues of the legitimacy of Muslim handling of the conflict, foremost of the use of transnational activism, dominates heavily in phase two of the controversy (almost 30% of all claims raised in this period touches on this issue). Thus, several aspects of the imam-delegations were publicly scrutinized.

One issue was the content of the dossier that the imams had brought with them to Egypt, Lebanon and Syria. Besides the twelve Muhammad caricatures and Arabic translations of the articles that accompanied them in *Jyllands-Posten*, the dossier contained copies of letters that the coalition had sent to politicians, the letter from the Muslim ambassadors to the Danish prime minister, the reply of the prime minister, as well as a number of mocking images, which were never published, but sent to Danish Muslims as hate mail. However, many criticised that it could be difficult just looking at the dossier to delineate the material that had been published from the material that had not. Likewise it was pointed out that Danish-Arabic translations of Danish names of the Muslim organisations in the protest coalition was done in a way that they artificially boosted the magnitude and support of the involved actors (e.g. "Danish" became "Scandinavian" in one name) (Lykke Nielsen 2006). One particular image of the dossier was discussed extensively. The image showed a man with pig ears and snout, and read in the captation "here is your prophet Muhammad". In a BBC news report on the controversy one of the Danish imams of the delegation, Abu Bashar, was seen showing this picture to

the general secretary of OIC, Ekmeleddin Ihsanoglu. Many voices in the Danish debate did not see the relevance of this picture, sent to a Danish Muslim in private mail, in regards to the Muhammad caricatures debate. Moreover, it was noticed and discussed in the Danish public sphere in January 2006, how articles containing "misunderstandings" of the situation in Denmark (e.g. that the radical right and islamophobic party, *The Danish People's Party*, was a part of the Danish government or that Danish Muslims were not allowed to establish purpose-built mosques) appeared in Arabic press simultaneously with the visits of the Danish imams. A Danish scholar monitoring the Arabic press said: *It is striking that every time a visit from the delegation is mentioned the article contains very wrong information about the situation in Denmark. I have to say that is a very suspicious coincidence* (Ziadeh 2006). By adding these observations to the timing of the delegations and the following escalation of the conflict in the Middle East, many claimants in the Danish debate, including actors within the political elite, concluded that the imams had helped stock the fire abroad. The social minister, Karen Jespersen, formulated it in this way:

> The imams pour gasoline on the fire through their travels abroad. In this way they gave their contribution to the intensifying hysteria, which ended with the boycott, mass demonstrations, flag burnings and the attacks on Danish diplomatic representations abroad (Jespersen and Pittelkow 2006: 27)

Thus, arguments of "loyalty" and "security" became central. Put differently, the imam-delegations were upon their re-entry into the Danish public debate "securitized" (see Buzan and Wæver, 1998). In this perspective the imam-delegations had jeopardized national security by channelling the wrath of Muslim regimes and extremists against Denmark. Accordingly, the involved Danish Muslims became "the enemy within" or simply "traitors". This line of reasoning was taken to the extreme by the *Danish People's Party*, which called for an investigation of the possibility of revoking the Danish citizenship of four named imams, who had participated in the delegations, on the grounds of treason. The securitization of the issue of the imam-delegation at this time of the controversy resonated well with a sense of "state of emergency" among the Danish population and the political elite: Denmark was facing its worst foreign policy crisis since the Second World War. In a situation where national security was at stake, accusations of "treason" and "fifth column activities" did not, to many people, seem so far fetched.

However, it was not only the radical right that de-certified the central actors of the Muslim protest coalition, who was behind the imam-delegations. The de-certification by the political elite was almost complete. This was demonstrated by a suggestion of the minister of integration, Rikke Hvilshøj, to stop involving Danish imams in integration projects. This suggestion won wide support across the political spectrum in February 2006. The proposal reflects the idea that the imam-delegations had shown that the involved actors had not shred themselves sufficiently from old loyalties, norms, identities and connections to be trustworthy partners working for integration into Danish society. This massive criticism and de-certification of especially *The Community of Islamic Faith*, with imam Ahmed Abu Laban in front, and the protest coalition, represented by the young imam Ahmed Akkari, had serious effects on these actors further claims-making in the debate. This can be seen by table 2 below:

Table 2. Amount of Claims raised by Different Muslim Organisations by Phases[a] of the Controversy[b]

Muslim Organisations	Phase 1		Phase 2		Phase 3		Phase 4		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
The Community of Islamic Faith	14	22.6	42	39.6	16	14.4	13	19.7	85	24.6
Muslims in Dialogue	6	9.7	16	15.1	30	27.0	10	15.2	62	18.0
Democratic Muslims	2	3.2	14	13.2	19	17.1	18	27.3	53	15.4
Muslim Protest Coalition	23	37.1	15	14.2	1	0.9	12	18.2	51	14.8
Hizb ut-Tahrir	3	4.8	6	5.7	17	15.3	7	10.6	33	9.6
Critical Muslims	1	1.6	1	0.9	10	9.0	4	6.1	16	4.5
The Network	0	0.0	2	1.9	9	8.1	2	3.0	13	3.8
Others	13	21.0	10	9.4	9	8.1	0	0.0	32	9.3
Total	62	18.0	106	30.7	111	32.2	66	19.1	345	100

a. Phase 1: 30-09-05 to 25-12-05, Phase 2: 26-12-05 to 03-02-06, Phase 3: 04-02-06 to 25-02-06, Phase 4: 26-02-06 to 20-03-06

b. The table should be read as follows: The percentages in each cell show the percentage of all Muslim claims raised within a given phase

Table 2 shows how the share of claims-making by the Muslim protest coalition dropped by more than 50% moving from phase 1 to phase 2 of the controversy. After the violent escalation of the conflict abroad (phase 3) the protest coalition almost disappears as a claimant in the public debate. *The Community of Islamic Faith*, who had large stakes in the protest coalition, and who ran a close collaboration with the coalition leaders, seem to pick up the lead of the protests in phase 2. However, after the violent attacks *The Community of Islamic Faith* was also forced into a more defensive role (their share of Muslim claims-making drops from about 40% to 15%). My argument here is that this retreat of the two dominant actors of the initial protests of the caricatures at this specific time should be understood as a consequence of their role, perceived or real, in furthering the escalation of the conflict abroad through transnational activities. Faced with harsh criticism the dominant actors of the first wave of protests saw their chances of further successful claims-making reduced. The retreat of the actors who had contributed to the imam-delegations paved the way for new Muslim actors in the debate, who took advantage of the situation by positioning themselves in opposition to the Muslim actors of the first wave of protests. Thus, through critique of the imam-delegations actors like *Muslims in Dialogue*, *Critical Muslims* [Kritiske Muslimer], *The Network* [The Network], and especially the newly created *Democratic Muslims* [Demokratiske Muslimer] gained momentum in the debate in phase two and three (see table 2). *Democratic Muslims* was launched as a "alternative" voice to the "radical" imams in the debate:

> What is needed is an organisation which protests the religious enveloping of the youth by fundamentalist imams, and which ensures that moderate Muslims are heard in the debate about Islam. Muslims who are against capital punishment and sharia, and who endorse religion as a private matter (Naser Khader quoted in Arpi and Brøndum 2006).

The actions and claims of the dominant actors of the first round of protests were in this way "radicalized" by both non-Muslim commentators/authorities and fellow Muslim organisations. Thus,

while these "radical" actors were being de-certified, the new "moderate" Muslim actors on stage, especially *Democratic Muslims*, were being certified by Danish authorities. This happened through a very symbolic meeting between *Democratic Muslims* and the Danish prime minister on February 13 2006. The parallel certification/de-certification of different Muslim actors at this point in the controversy can be seen as an example of what has been called the "radical flank effect" within social movement theory. The logic of the mechanism is that radical (e.g. violent) protests/claims of some actors lead to counter-mobilization among more moderate voices and increased resources for this new flank (Herbert 1984).

The large public focus and criticism of the transnational activities by some Danish Muslims in the second and third phase of the controversy did not just have effects on the relative level of claims-making among Muslim actors. As indicated by table 1 above, it changed to some extent the overall conditions of the debate. Where Danish Muslims prior to the imam-delegations and the subsequent escalation of the conflict abroad had stressed, with some weight, that Danish Muslims were the victims of a gratuitous offence and in need of some kind of (symbolic) reparation, this became more difficult to argue as the controversy moved into its third and fourth phase. That Danish Muslims adapted to this new situation by partly changing the line of reasoning and their call for actions as seen by table 3 and 4 below. Table 3 shows the prognostic frames – the envisioned solutions to the conflict - of Muslim claims throughout the controversy:

Table 3. Prognostic Frames of Muslim Claims by Phases[a] of the Controversy[b]

	Phase 1		Phase 2		Phase 3		Phase 4		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Muslim actions	15	44.1	21	31.3	23	4.8	6	6.9	65	33.7
Tolerance/respect	5	14.7	14	20.9	14	23.8	6	20.7	40	20.7
Media actions	9	26.5	8	11.9	1	1.6	0	0.0	18	9.3
Government actions	2	5.9	8	11.9	3	4.8	2	6.9	15	7.8
Freedom of speech	2	5.9	7	10.4	2	3.2	3	10.3	14	7.3
Equality/Parity	1	2.9	4	6.0	3	4.8	3	10.3	11	5.7
"Benchmarking"	0	0.0	1	1.5	4	6.3	4	13.8	9	4.7
The Caliphat	0	0.0	2	3.0	5	7.9	2	6.9	9	4.7
Integration	0	0.0	1	1.5	2	3.2	3	10.3	6	3.1
Discrimination	0	0.0	1	1.5	3	4.8	0	0.0	4	2.4
Other	0	0.0	0	0.0	2	3.2	0	0.0	2	1.0
Total	34	17.6	67	34.7	63	32.6	29	15.0	193	100

a. Phase 1: 30-09-05 to 25-12-05, Phase 2: 26-12-05 to 03-02-06, Phase 3: 04-02-06 to 25-02-06, Phase 4: 26-02-06 to 20-03-06

b. The table should be read as follows: The percentages in each cell show the percentage of a specific prognostic frame of all prognosis proposed within a given phase

Table 3 shows how Muslim calls for action in the first phase of the controversy were largely about either raising awareness of the caricatures (calls for protest/defence of the prophet and calls for spreading the word abroad) or about receiving some kind of symbolic reparation (an apology from *Jyllands-Posten* or a diplomatic meeting with government). From phase two onwards calls for

dialogue became central to Muslim prognostic framing. Likewise, following the embassy attacks in the Middle East, Muslim calls for non-violence boomed in phase three (19,3% of prognostic frames in this phase). My argument here is that the linking between the imam-delegations and the escalation of the conflict abroad in the public debate, put heavy pressure on Muslim claimants in Denmark to officially distance themselves from the use of violence and actively embracing dialogue and calls for tolerance. To do so became a condition for further participation and claims-making in the debate. A change in the same direction is observed when looking at the developments in the way Danish Muslims justified their claims:

Table 4. Justificational Frames of Muslim Claims by Phases[a] of the Controversy[b]

	Phase 1		Phase 2		Phase 3		Phase 4		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Injustice/victimage	13	41.9	14	26.9	7	14.0	16	41.0	50	29.1
Rights-based justification	5	16.1	12	23.1	10	20.0	6	15.4	33	19.2
Religious justification	10	32.3	13	25.0	25	50.0	10	25.6	58	33.7
Cultural justification	0	0.0	4	7.7	3	6.0	0	0.0	7	4.1
Historical justification	2	6.5	2	3.8	1	2.0	3	7.7	8	4.7
Consequensialist justification	1	3.2	5	9.6	3	6.0	2	5.1	11	2.9
Ethical justification	0	0.0	2	3.8	1	2.0	2	5.1	5	2.9
Total	31	18.0	52	30.2	50	29.1	39	22.7	172	100

a. Phase 1: 30-09-05 to 25-12-05, Phase 2: 26-12-05 to 03-02-06, Phase 3: 04-02-06 to 25-02-06, Phase 4: 26-02-06 to 20-03-06

b. The table should be read as follows: The percentages in each cell show the percentage of a specific justificational frame of all justifications given by Muslim actors within a given phase

Table 4 shows the contour of a shift away from "blaming" *Jyllands-Posten* and others, through injustice/victimage frames, and towards more "neutral" justifications (rights-based, moral/ethical and consequential justifications), which sets in from phase two, but really materializes in phase three of the controversy. Danish Muslims became less occupied with establishing victimage and more occupied with affirming, through their framing of claims, values and norms of freedom of speech, public virtue and democracy. It is especially interesting to see how a similar shift can be detected within the use of religious justifications. Thus, from phase two onwards we see an increase in religious justifications of a certain type; religious affirmations of values stressed loudly by many non-Muslim actors in the debate such as freedom of speech, rational deliberation and democracy. The authoritative sources of Islam (Koran and the *Sunna* of the prophet Muhammad) were used to highlight certain aspects, norms and values of Islam. My argument here is that when Danish Muslims re-emphasize that freedom of speech, democracy, tolerance and non-violence are fundamentally Islamic values (without judging whether or not this is true) at exactly this point in the debate, it can be seen as a way of turning external pressures for affirmation of certain values into an internal Islamic obligation of being a good and rightful Muslim - a way of religiously justifying "sameness" and affirmation. This is seen for example in the following quote: "*Some Muslims have forgotten the words of the prophet: Islam is exemplary behaviour. The example given by the prophet demands forgiveness, indulgence and tolerance. Besides, it demands of us to meet our opponents with the best and most beautiful arguments*" (CM 2006). Rational dialogue and non-violence here become religious imperatives. In a

situation where some Danish Muslims were being accused of being at least partially responsible for the violent escalation of the conflict, this more defensive version of religious justifications made good sense.

4. A Negative and Reversed Boomerang Effect: Theoretical challenges and aspirations

My empirical argument, as presented above, can be summarized like this: The transnational activities, especially the imam-delegations of certain Muslim actors in Denmark were in the public debate in Denmark percieved as the "trigger" of the conflict's escalation in the Middle East. Thus, the involved Muslim actors, foremost the protest coalition and *The Community of Islamic Faith*, were accused of deliberately stocking the fire abroad and of disloyalty towards Denmark. This change in the overall contour of the debate had important implications for further Muslim claims-making. First, we saw how the actors behind the imam-delegations reacted to this de-certification by downgrading their level of claims-making in the public sphere, while other and new Muslim actors became more active. These new actors on stage were rewarded for their "moderateness" (e.g. their insistence on religion as a private affair and on confining the controversy to the Danish context) through certification from authorities. Secondly, we saw how Muslim actors on a general level adapted to the new situation and focus of the debate, by changing partly their calls for actions and their justifications of claims.

Returning to the theoretical model of the "boomerang effect", this empirical argument has several implications. First, what is striking about the effect of Danish Muslim's transnational activities in the case of the Muhammad caricatures controversy is that it is overwhelmingly *negative*. Thus, contrary to Muslim expectations, and the classic boomerang/spiral model, the transnational move backfired, and seriously impeded Danish Muslim's claims for some kind of recognition of hurt religious feelings, rather than promoting them. Secondly, the transnational move backfired because it was perceived and framed by powerful actors in the target society as an act of aggression, disloyalty and even "treason". In other words, the effect of the envisioned boomerang became negative because the transnational move was successfully "securitized". Thirdly, the securitization of the transnational activities was fuelled by the timing of subsequent developments of the crisis, and the fact that the logic of the boomerang model in this case was *reversed*. In this case we saw citizens of immigrant descent placed in a comparatively well-functioning democratic setting, who appealed to regimes and religious authorities in societies with less impressive records of democratic participation and human right observance, for help and support in being heard in the first context. Thus, instead of the "democratic import" idea of the classic boomerang model, we are here rather looking at "un-democratic import". It created an outcry in the Danish public sphere that Danish Muslims, some of whom had come to Denmark as political refugees, were reaching out to the same regimes that they had fled. Commentaries and letters to the editor in newspapers were, thus, flooded with accusations of the involved Muslims "not showing gratitude" towards the Danish state, and with invitations to "go back where you come from" if that is where "your sympathies really are". Likewise, many claimants pointed to the apparent paradox: Danish Muslims were actively using their freedom of speech to protest the publication of the caricatures by involving on their side foreign actors who wanted to limit the scope of free speech. Thus, even before the transnational activities of Danish Muslims were "constructed" as the trigger of the escalation of the conflict in the Middle East from around mid January 2006, these activities were harshly criticised in their own right. The *reversed* logic of the intended boomerang effect made the imam-delegations dissonant vis-à-vis public perceptions of acceptable political activism.

The study of the transnational activities by Danish Muslims during the Muhammad caricatures controversy suggests some modifications/specifications of the boomerang/spiral model of transnational activism. Thus, when transnational activities become successfully "securitized" in context A (the "country of settlement" of the claimants) the envisioned boomerang/spiral effect is likely to become *negative* on the subsequent likelihood of realization of the claimants goals. This is particularly inclined to happen when the logic of the boomerang/spiral model is *reversed*, so that context B (the "home-country" of the claimants and the target of the transnational outreach) is less

democratic than context A. What I am suggesting here is some specifications of the scope conditions for the boomerang/spiral model of transnational activism: The boomerang/spiral model will only work after the intention when the transnational move is not securitized and the logic of the move not reversed. To be fair: Several of the case studies in Keck and Sikkink's book implies that the boomerang effect depends on the legitimacy of the actors involved in transnational actions as well as their targets. However, these limitations remain implicit, and so does the implication that the successful use of the boomerang effect is not equally open to all kinds of actors in a society. To some actors, immigrant actors in particular, the boomerang effect is a tricky game that must be played carefully not to backfire. In this sense, immigrant actors' possibilities for external alliance building are narrower than for other types of actors. In fact, actors of immigrant background who involve the "home country" in order to change their situation in the "country of settlement" might be the least likely to have success with the boomerang effect. In this situation some kind of securitization and sovereignty dispute is almost inevitable, and consequently, the danger of the transnational move backfiring is high. However, things might have looked differently if Danish Muslims had instead primarily lobbied foreign human rights NGOs or relevant UN/EU bodies to intervene on their behalf.

The case of transnational activism by Danish Muslims in the Muhammad caricatures controversy can serve as a good reminder of not over-estimating the positive potential of transnational activism as it has often been done in the literature. The legitimacy of pressure for political concessions put on a state/sub-state actor through transnational activism can be brought in doubt, and turned against the transnational activists. So far too little attention has been devoted in the literature to the risks and potential drawbacks of engaging in transnational activism, especially for actors with immigrant backgrounds (e.g. the case with Kymlicka 2007). There has been a tendency in much work on transnational activism to take for granted that as the amount of transnational activism increased, with the spread of transnational communication tools and increased mobility, the rate of successful transnational campaigns would increase as well. The study of the negative and reversed boomerang effect in the case of the transnational activities of Danish Muslims in the Muhammad caricatures controversy suggests, at least, that when more actors, including actors of immigrant background, become involved in transnational activities the success-rate of such campaigns might be falling. However, if the immediate effects of playing the transnational card were negative, what about the more long term effects?

5. Positive long term effects?

As a way of putting into perspective the results of the empirical analysis and theoretical discussion above, I will now briefly discuss the more long term effects and lessons that has been drown from the experience of Danish Muslims transnational activism during the Muhammad caricatures controversy – both in regards to Danish Muslims and the Danish political elite. I will do so by discussing what has happened in the three years that has passed since the controversy ebbed out in March-April 2006. Especially, I will discuss what happened during what is sometimes referred to as the "second" Muhammad caricatures controversy in Denmark in February 2008, following the re-publication of the Muhammad caricatures in several Danish newspapers and weekly magazines in response to the disclosure of concrete plans to kill the Muhammad-illustrator, Kurt Westergaard.

The activation of the boomerang effect by Danish Muslims during the 2005/06 controversy proved to have negative effects on the realization of Danish Muslims' claims of some kind of reparation or symbolic recognition. However, it might have had more positive long term effects. When looking at how the re-publication of the Muhammad caricatures in Denmark in February 2008 was dealt with there are signs of a mutual learning process. Thus, the Danish Muslim actors behind the imam-delegations of 2005/06 abstained from playing the transnational card this time round. In fact, these actors tried deliberately to contain the conflict within a Danish context. These Muslim actors seem to have been "socialized" through the first conflict into a better understanding of the risks of backfire when playing the transnational card. Reflecting on what one could have done different in the 2005/06

controversy, Ahmed Akkari, who was the spokesman of the *Muslim protest coalition* and who participated in the imam-delegations said: *If we could have anticipated that our visits in the Middle East would be turned against us politically, and that they in this way skewed the debate away from its real focus, we would probably think twice about going and whom to visit* (Interview with Ahmed Akkari, 27-12-07). Faced with the re-publication of the caricatures the involved actors anticipated that transnational activism, using the same kind of reversed boomerang logic as in 2005, was doomed to backfire once again. Furthermore, the main reason for engaging in transnational activism in the first place – closed domestic opportunity structures – was less prominent this time, as the Danish government proved more responsive to Muslim complaints. In the wake of the re-publication of caricatures the Minister of Integration accepted to meet with *The Community of Islamic Faith* to discuss the situation, and she agreed to a future official community visit. This is the kind of symbolic recognition that was absent in the Danish government's handling of the controversy in 2005/06. Whether this new willingness to accommodate Muslim claims should be seen as sincere or merely as a strategic move in order to avoid conflict escalation cannot be determined. No matter the underlying intentions, the reactions to the re-publication of the Muhammad caricatures in February 2008 indicate that some "socialization through conflict" followed the Muhammad caricatures controversy in 2005-2006.

The empirical analysis above shows especially how the imam-delegations and their perceived escalating effects activated a process of simultaneous de-certification and certification of different Muslim actors in Denmark. Actors engaged in the imam-delegations were forced in the background while other Muslim actors filled their space in the public debate. In this way the debate about the Muhammad caricatures initiated a re-configuration of the public representation of Danish Muslims. This re-configuration process seems to have continued during the three years since the first publication of the caricatures. Again the re-publication of the caricatures in 2008 can serve as an example. As in 2005/06 *The Community of Islamic Faith* was the strongest Muslim opponent of the re-publication of the Muhammad caricatures. However, in contrast to the original controversy the protests of *The Community of Islamic Faith* in 2008 was immediately questioned and denounced by a range of other Muslim organizations in Denmark. Most notably were the critical comments from some of the large Turkish Muslim organizations e.g. *The Association of Turkish Muslims in Copenhagen* [De Tyrkiske Muslimers Trossamfund i København] and *The Union of Muslim Imimmigrant Associations* [Sammenslutningen af Muslimske Indvandrer Foreninger], two organizations who kept relatively quite in public debates concerning Islam in Denmark, including the 2005/06 controversy. Spokesperson of *The Association of Turkish Muslims in Copenhagen*, Erfan Kurtulos, said: *We share a common religion, but they do not represent us, and we are in opposition to the way the imams of* The Islamic Community of Faith *are participating in public debates. Fanatics cannot patent Islam and the integration-work in Denmark* (quoted in Lumby 2008). In a similar way the status of *The Community of Islamic Faith* as representing "Danish Muslims" has been challenged by two new Muslim umbrella organizations, which have been established after the 2005/06 Muhammad caricatures controversy as attempts at uniting the majority of Danish Muslims, and giving them a common voice. The two organizations are *The Muslim Common Council* [Muslimernes Fællesråd], which was an initiative driven by *Muslims in Dialogue*, with more than 40.000 members, and *The Danish Muslim Union* [Dansk Muslimsk Union], an initiative by the *Union of Muslim Imimmigrant Associations*. It seems that the failure of bringing together Danish Muslims during the Muhammad caricatures controversy has renewed the interest in building a common organizational platform, which can work as the centre of claims-making in future debates.

To sum up: The transnational activism of Danish Muslims during the 2005/06 Muhammad caricatures controversy impeded the subsequent chances of realizing the goal of securing some kind of symbolic recognition of Muslim grievances. This was true for all Danish Muslims who shared this goal, but for the Muslim actors involved in the imam-delegations in particular. However, as the above view to what happened next has shown, the debate about the transnational move might have had more positive long term effects. Of course the assessment of whether these long term effects are positive or negative depends on whom you ask. As for the *Community of Islamic Faith* and other organisations

involved in the *Muslim protest coalition* also the long term implications of playing the transnational card seem negative. The position of the *Community of Islamic Faith* as the leading representative voice of Danish Muslims in public debates has been seriously challenged. From the perspective of other Muslim organisations, such as the newly established ones and the previous publicly mute ones, the developments look more positive as their room of manoeuvring, their support and thereby their willingness to engage in public debates has increased. Seen from the perspective of those who were critical of the Danish government's handling of the 2005/06 controversy there is comfort to find in the fact that the Danish government has seemingly learned the lesson of how important and effective symbolic recognition is as a means of conflict management. Thus, there is hope that Danish Muslims will not be met with hermetically closed political opportunity structures in future times of crisis. Finally, many individual Danish Muslims, as well as non-Muslims, regard the development of a more plural public representation of Danish Muslims as a positive development. The transnational activism during the 2005/06 Muhammad caricatures controversy and the public debate that followed was, in this perspective, a welcome opportunity to break the "monopoly" of public representation held by certain Muslim actors. "Cultural Muslims" has gained public momentum in Denmark in the three years that has passed since the first publication of the Muhammad caricatures, while ultra-orthodox and some neo-orthodox groups have been further marginalized. The relative balance of power among Muslim actors pushing different interpretations of Islam seem to have shifted, at least in public debates, in favor of those actors who unconditionally embrace integrationism as their goal, and who work for Muslim unity rather than departmentalization. However, it has to be seen whether Danish political authorities will understand to fertilize this development without de-legitimizing the involved actors in the eyes of the wider Muslim community.

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