



BACKGROUND ANALYSIS 09/02/2006

CARICATURES OF MOHAMMAD: THE HISTORY AND CONSEQUENCES OF A GLOBAL MANIPULATION

by Claude Moniquet, Chairman of ESISC

Introduction

Since the beginning of February, hardly a day has gone past without demonstrations and violence. In Damascus and Beirut, Danish and Norwegian embassies and consulates have been wrecked and burned. In Tehran, the Austrian embassy (the country is presiding over the EU for six months) was stoned, and the Revolutionary Guard closely linked to the regime of the mullahs tried to set it on fire. Twice on 7 February other *Bassidjis* (volunteer Islamic soldiers) tried to invade the Danish embassy.

In Delhi there were clashes between demonstrators and police, and in Surabaya in Indonesia protestors tried to besiege the Danish and American consulates. In Afghanistan at least ten demonstrators were killed and others injured in clashes with security forces or while trying to attack NATO troop encampments. In Brussels, Paris and London, thousands of (often very young) Muslims demonstrated. The marches passed off peacefully, it is true, though in London there were widespread appeals to hatred and murder. In Beirut, a Christian neighbourhood was attacked by vandals, and a Catholic priest was murdered in Turkey after Mass on Sunday by a young man crying "*Allah Akbar*" (God is great). In Iraq, Shiite extremists published a *fatwa* calling for the murder of the caricaturists. In Iran a daily newspaper closely allied with President Ahmadinejad launched a contest for cartoons on the Holocaust.

In Europe, measures were taken to ensure the security of certain media organisations.

And each day **the crisis worsened and turned into a global stand-off between the international Islamist movement on the one hand and a Europe perceived as an enemy on the other.** And of course calls for the boycott of goods from Denmark and other countries where the offending caricatures were published grew more widespread.

How did it come to this, and what is likely to happen tomorrow? Those are the two questions this paper will try to answer.

1. On the "clash of civilisations"

It is important to make one thing clear at the outset: we read and hear more and more often that this matter of the caricatures is a sign of the reality of a "clash of civilisations". We do not think this vision of things is the right one. Yes, more and more violent demonstrations have taken place. They affect a great number of countries, in the Middle East, in Central Asia, in the Far East and Africa, but two remarks have to be made:

- **One billion three hundred million people in the world are Muslims. However the demonstrations have most often only mobilised a few hundred or a few thousand people.** Where are the Muslim masses in this matter? It seems the majority of them are staying away.
- **And, almost everywhere, in Europe but also in Muslim countries themselves, moderate voices are being raised to condemn the violence.**

Thus, for the leaders of the **Alhewar Islamic Center** in Ontario, Canada, "Over-reaction, to put it as mildly as possible, is more harmful to Islam and to Muslims than the caricatures ever could be"¹.

In **Iraq**, while **grand ayatollah Ali Sistani**, the main Shiite religious authority, publication of the caricatures, he also severely criticised the image given of Islam by the extremists².

In **Tunis**, professor of political science **Hamadi Redissi**, stated, "*You must not give in. If you bend, it is finished. Then they will use any and every excuse. There will be no limits. It is understandable that it is forbidden for Muslims to insult the Prophet. But in this case, they are trying to extend that ban to you, westerners. It's an attempt to impose sharia, Islamic law, on the rest of the world*"³.

In **Great Britain**, the country's main Islamic organisation strongly condemned the extremists who marched on 3 February calling for "*death to those who insult Islam*" and for Europe to suffer its own "9/11" (September 11). "**These placards are scandalous and, in our view, constitute incitement to violence and even to murder,**" said **Inayat Bunglawala**, spokesman for the **Muslim Council of Britain**. "**We hope the police will examine closely images from these demonstrations and gather the proof needed to prosecute these extremists**"⁴.

In France the MRAP (*Movement against Racism and for Amity between Peoples*, an organisation whose name has changed from the former *Movement against Racism and Anti-Semitism and for Peace*) decided to file suit against France Soir after it last

¹ *Islam prohibits collective punishment*, a statement put out by **Alhewar** on 8 February 2006.

² From a communiqué published in Arabic on Ali Sistani's website.

³ Quoted in a dispatch from Agence France Presse on 8 February 2006.

⁴ Reuter's, 5 February 2006.

week reproduced the offending caricatures. In addition, a communiqué signed by various personalities and a dozen local organising committees with Muslim members condemned the action in the strongest terms and demanded the withdrawal of the lawsuit. *"We understand that believers are shocked by one of the caricatures published in France Soir showing the Prophet with a bomb on his head in place of a turban. **This caricature should be criticised for making a non-existent link between terrorism and the Muslim religion, in a context of increasing intolerance. But it is not acceptable to submit the freedom of the press and of caricature to the subjective interpretations of the content of a drawing. The caricatures which appeared in the Danish press in September 2005 and used for manipulative purposes in recent weeks provide a pretext for the eruption of religious fanaticism. Journalists are threatened with death, embassies are sacked, and a worrying mass racism is orchestrated by fundamentalists. It is clear that these outbreaks of fanaticism in certain Muslim countries is the result of action by political and religious extremists, while pressure on the press in Europe proceeds not with the aim of battling anti-Muslim racism, but to punish blasphemy on behalf of religion. That is a major threat to fundamental liberties at risk from religious demands. The undersigned fundamentally adhere to the principle of freedom of religion. They affirm that freedom of conscience includes the right to be atheist or to practice any religion, as well as the right to criticise or even ridicule all religions**"*⁵.

It seems clear at this time that the **vast majority of Muslims condemn the extremist violence that smears all of them – even though many if not all regretted the publications of caricatures of the Prophet. These people refuse for the moment to associate themselves with the extremists.** That is true in the Muslim world and above all in Europe, where reactions were moderate or minor (1,000 demonstrators in Paris, or one Muslim in 6,000; and 4,000 in Brussels, or one in 1,000).

This element has to be kept in mind, to **avoid entering into the logic of global confrontation that considers the crisis as an opposition between "the Muslims" and "the West".** The problem we have today is purely political, manipulated by extremist organisations, principal among them the ***Muslim Brotherhood.*** **The first victims of these organisations have always been the majority of moderate Muslims.**

2. An artificial crisis from the beginning

We return to the origins of the crisis and its chronology.

But first underline that the manipulation that brought thousands of Muslims across the world into the streets is based on a **disputable interpretation of the basic texts of Islamic law (the Quran, the hadiths); the kind of biased reading we have become used to from the Salafist tendency.**

In fact, we can find in the texts as many justifications for violence, hatred and combat against the "infidel" as appeals to reason, moderation and

⁵ Communiqué released by the lay organisation *Algérie ensemble*, 8 February 2006.

justice. One's reading, and what one extracts from the texts will determine one's attitude towards life, and one will become an extremist or, as is the case with the majority of Muslims, a sincere believer who lives his religion as a personal relationship with God – even if the collective and community dimension is particularly important in Islam.

Thus we find in recent days certain inflammatory texts on Islamist websites. On 1 February, for example, **Ribaath.org** put up an 8-page text by **Sheikh Abu Mohammad al Maqdici** entitled **The Sword Unsheathed Against the Messenger**⁶ (*the Messenger* is one way of referring to the Prophet Mohammad). Sheikh al Maqdici is an important Salafist theoretician, of Palestinian origin. Greatly influenced by Ibn Taymiyyah (1263-1328) one of the main historical reference points for Salafists and Wahhabism, al Maqdici was arrested in Jordan in 1994 for subversive activities and links with terrorism and sentenced to 15 years in prison. In eight pages, then, al Maqdici uses certain verses of the Quran, statements by the Prophet (hadiths) and historical examples to prove that "**He who insults Allah or the Faith or the Messenger is an apostate and infidel [...] and his blood and his goods are forfeit, whether he is of Muslim origin or not**". In modern words, **the fact of stating the "blood and goods" of the blasphemer are "forfeit" signifies that he may be assassinated and his belongings taken or destroyed. In short, a simple appeal to murder justified by recourse to debatable theological references.**

As we will see later, another reading of the Quran and events is possible. But to return to the beginnings.

On 30 September a Danish newspaper of a circulation of a little more than 150,000 copies, the **Jyllands Posten**, published 12 caricatures of the Prophet. Ten of them are innocuous, but the two others may be considered dubious: in one the Prophet is shown with a knife in his hand, and in the second his turban is transformed into a time-bomb.

Reactions locally came immediately, as some Danish Muslims felt insulted. Two problems in fact were encountered: **those who oppose publication maintain that the representation of the Prophet (as any representation of the human form) is forbidden by the Muslim religion (as it is in Judaism). In addition, the drawing were perceived by some as an attack on their religion.** We have noted that only two could be perceived as insulting, but what of the matter of the representation of the Prophet?

The majority opinion of doctors of Islamic law is clear: representation is indeed forbidden. Though while a majority opinion, the view is not unanimous. In past times there existed currents of Islam in which paintings, engravings and drawing representing Mohammad were tolerated, and even commissioned by rulers. We will not go too deeply into this debate, only to cite the journalist and intellectual **Amir Taheri**, an Iranian exiled to the US (he was director before the Islamic revolution of **Kayhan**, the main Tehran daily paper): "**There is no Quranic injunction against images, whether of Muhammad or anyone else. [...] The issue has never been decided one way or another, and the claim that a ban on**

⁶ See www.ribaath.org/modules.php?name=News&file=print&sid=2145

images is 'an absolute principle of Islam' is purely political. Islam has only one absolute principle: the Oneness of God⁷. The ban on depiction, then, arises from custom and tradition (and recent tradition, dating back only a few centuries, and not from dogma or religious fiat.

In any case, **even admitting that Islamic law prohibits all depictions of the Prophet, the question arises of whether this prohibition applies to non-Muslims**. Numerous commentators consider sharia can only apply to Muslims and cannot be imposed on others. The researcher **Chafik Chehata** stresses that *dhimmi* (non-Muslims living in Islamic lands and enjoying a protected status) do, indeed, have to pay a special tax, but that "*On the other hand, their differences are ruled on by the heads of their respective communities. The Islamic state takes no interest*"⁸.

The interpretation that has it that sharia and its prohibitions can only be applied to Muslims is strengthened by two verses of the Quran which lay the basis for Islam's approach to tolerance:

- "No constraint on religion"⁹
- "And I shall not worship that which you are worshipping. Nor will you worship that which I worship. To you be your religion, and to me my religion"¹⁰.

Finally, and supposing that Islamic law can be applied to those who do not practice the Muslim religion, Islam is also a religion of forgiveness:

- ***So because of their breach of their covenant, We cursed them, and made their hearts grow hard [...] And you will not cease to discover deceit in them, except a few of them. But forgive them, and overlook (their misdeeds). Verily, Allah loves the doers of good***¹¹.

In conclusion, let us stress that Islam prohibits collective punishments: "And no bearer of burdens shall bear another's burden, and if one heavily laden calls another to (bear) his load, nothing of it will be lifted even though he be near of kin"¹².

Without getting into a complex theological debate, there is reason to conclude:

- A. As non-Muslims, the editors and cartoonists of Jyllands Posten committed no offence as regards the religion.
- B. If they had committed an offence, it was possible to forgive them (the newspaper in any case published an apology).
- C. In any event, if there was an offence, it is not right from a religious point of view to cause a whole society or country to carry the burden.

This tolerant interpretation was not, it seems, shared by the promoters of the global protest movement we have been seeing over the last few days.

⁷ Amir Taheri, Bonfire of the Pieties, The Wall Street Journal, 8 February 2006

⁸ In *Dictionnaire de l'Islam*, Encyclopedia Universalis, Albin Michel, Paris 1997.

⁹ Surat 2, The Cow, verse 256.

¹⁰ Surat 109, The Disbelievers, verses 4 - 6.

¹¹ Surat 5, The Table Spread, verse 13.

¹² Surat 35, Originator, verse 18.

3. A chronology and a strategy that reveal a hidden political agenda

What started, then, from the point of view of the religion and law of Islam as a non-story over the course of weeks took on a more important dimension.

On 14 October, some 5,000 demonstrators (of about 170,000 Muslims living in Denmark) protested in Copenhagen. Other more minor demonstrations took place in other towns. On 12 October the ambassadors to Denmark of ten Muslim countries wrote to prime minister **Anders Fogh Rasmussen** to demand he "*reprimand those responsible*". They asked to be received and were politely but firmly turned down: the Prime Minister had nothing to say to foreign ambassadors on the subject of what is or is not published by newspapers who are, in any case, independent.

At the end of October, a regional prosecutor looking into a complaint filed by a group of Muslim organisations decided not to prosecute the *Jyllands Posten*.

In November and in January next to nothing happened, apart from **a delegation of Danish Muslim leaders made a tour of the Middle East to raise awareness of Arab opinion to their concerns.**

The trip was the initiative of two men, **Ahmed Abdel Rahman Abu Laban**, a Palestinian-born Danish imam of 60, and **Ahmed Akkari**, a community leader. Abu Laban is known to several European security and intelligence services, who believe he is linked to the **Muslim Brotherhood** and keep watch on him. In Copenhagen he presides over the **Islamisk Trossamfund** mosque, considered particularly radical. In their luggage, the two men carried a 43-pages dossier resuming the "scandal" and illustrated by the 12 offending caricatures – but not only those. **Three other drawings had "accidentally" found their way into the dossier**, and they were the most hideous. **One showed the Prophet dressed up in a pig's snout, the second suggested he was a paedophile, and the third showed a Muslim at prayer being sodomised by a dog.** This time the insult and the racism were obvious. The only problem is that the three drawings had never been published by the *Jyllands Posten*, nor indeed by any other newspaper. They appear, in fact, to originate at an extreme right-wing website in the United States¹³. The image representing the Prophet with a pig's snout, meanwhile, came from a photograph made in France at a pig-squealing competition! The individual depicted is a bearded French mechanic named Jacques Marrot, who won the contest¹⁴.

Abu Laban and his friends claim they took care to warn those they were meeting that the three extra drawings did not come from the Danish press but had been enclosed with "threatening letters" sent to Muslims who protested at the publication of the twelve original caricatures. This is possible, but the problem is that **despite numerous promises, no reporter has yet been able to meet a single one of the victims of these threats or see the letters they are supposed to have**

¹³ See the weblog of David Rennie, Europe correspondent of the Daily Telegraph, Extra Cartoons: More Evidence, 6 February 2006:

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/main.jhtml?view=BLOGDETAIL&grid=P30&blog=newsdesk&xml=/news/2006/02/06/bleurope106.xml>

¹⁴ Le Figaro, 9 February 2006.

received¹⁵. In addition, we have no independent source for what was or was not said at these meetings. **Even if we give credence to the version of Abu Laban and Ahmed Akkari, it is an inescapable fact that inclusion of these repellent racist images provoked a futile emotion. At best it was a grave mistake, at worst a cynical but well-planned manipulation.**

In Cairo, the Danish "delegates" met **Amre Moussa**, secretary of the Arab League, and **Sheikh Mohammad Sayed Tantawi**, the grand imam of Al Ahzar. In the Gulf they tried to meet with **Sheikh Yussuf Al Qaradawi**, who is probably the most influential Sunni religious leader in the world today. Their attempts were in vain, they said, as Sheikh Al Qaradawi was busy preparing a conference tour and could not receive them. But Abu Laban and his friends left a copy of their dossier with the Sheikh's entourage. They did manage to meet with **Sheikh Faisal Mawlawi**, a close collaborator with Sheikh Al Qaradawi on theological matters. We will come back to this point later.

Abu Laban's argument is always the same: the question of the caricatures is only the tip of the iceberg. Denmark is a racist and Islamophobic country in which the rights of Muslims are breached daily.

It should be noted that in the tradition of the Muslim Brotherhood, **Abu Laban is a master of double-speak**, depending on whether he is addressing one audience or another, speaking Danish (or English) or Arabic. On Danish state television a few days ago, he condemned the boycott of Nordic products, yet on *Al Jazeera* at almost the same moment he said he was "*happy*" with it¹⁶. His attitude was the same on the subject of integration: he is all in favour when meeting the prime minister Anders Fogh Rasmussen, but in an interview with the Egyptian newspaper *Al Ahram* he criticised Danish crèches "who indoctrinate Muslim children" with Danish culture¹⁷.

4. An approach disowned by many Danish Muslims

In Denmark as elsewhere, the extremists are a minority within the Muslim community, and the crisis has had this one good effect: that moderates have been given the courage to stand up and express themselves publicly. So is born a network of moderate Muslims who can claim to speak on behalf of their communities.

One of the initiators, **Bünyamin Simsek**, a town councillor in Aarhus, said: "***A large part of the Muslims of this town want to live in a secular society that sticks to the principle that religion is a matter between a man and his God and not something that concerns the whole of society***"¹⁸.

The position is shared by **Hadi Khan**, a consultant in information technologies and chair of the **Association of Pakistani Students in Denmark** (*Organisation af Pakistanske Studerende og Akademikere*, OPSA) who describes himself as a "*modern Muslim living in the Western world*" and feels hardly represented by the imams.

¹⁵ See the weblog of David Rennie.

¹⁶ See David Rennie, How Clerics Spread Hatred over Cartoons, Daily Telegraph, 7 February 2006.

¹⁷ Quoted in <http://www.brusselsjournal.com/node/758>, 5 February 2006.

¹⁸ Quoted in "Denmark: Moderate Muslims Oppose Imams", Brussels Journal, www.brusselsjournal.com/node/689

Two Danish imams, Fatif Alev and Abdul Wahid Pedersen, pointed out in an interview with *Arab News*¹⁹ that the *Jyllands Posten* apologised for offending Muslims, that the Danish press is not under the control of the government and that Muslims are very well treated in the country and would themselves suffer the effects of a boycott of Danish products.

The Syrian-born Danish MP Naser Khader (who had severely criticised the government's anti-terrorist measures) told the *Jyllands Posten*, "***After all, no-one is forced to live in Denmark. They [extremist imams] could always emigrate to a country of the Middle East governed by the Islamic values on which they insist. It seems their loyalty is principally to Saudi Arabia, so I think they should move there. I am tired of hearing them complaining about the situation in this country that has given them asylum, freedom of expression, freedom of religion and so many opportunities for their children. If they cannot be loyal to the values of this country they should at least leave, and they would be doing a big favour to the majority of Danish Muslims. The imams should stop criticising the cartoons and instead criticise the terrorists who cut the throats of innocent hostages in the name of Allah, and abuse the name of Islam. But on that we haven't heard a word from them. They are hypocrites***"²⁰.

Unfortunately, it was not the moderate voices that were heard on an international level, but those of the extremists.

5. The affair is taken over by the Muslim Brotherhood

Messrs. **Al Qaradawi** and **Mawlawi**, whom the Danish delegation met or tried to meet in November and December 2005, are no strangers to controversy. The former is president of the ***European Council for Fatwa and Research*** (ECFR) created in 1997 and based in Dublin. It has four aims:

- to unify the *Fiqh* (sharia jurisprudence) of the various European countries;
- to apply it in countries where Muslim communities live;
- to carry out research on Islam; and
- to guide European Muslims, and especially young people, towards a true Islam.

Among other texts, **the Council has published fatwas justifying suicide bombings.**

Sheikh Al Qaradawi is president of the Council, while Sheikh Mawlawi is vice-president. He has defended terrorism and "martyr operations" on several occasions and in public, and without the slightest ambiguity. In April 2004, Al Qaradawi said: "*Certain clerics oppose martyr operations in Palestine. By these operations Allah has compensated the Palestinians for their lack of power. They do not have Apache helicopters, warplanes, tanks or missiles like the Zionists. Allah has given them human bombs as compensation. It is divine justice [...] God offers the weak a*

¹⁹ In *Jyllands Posten*, 2 February 2006.

²⁰ *Jyllands Posten*, 3 February 2006.

*weapon of self-defence against the strong who cannot resist, despite their military and nuclear arsenal. Certain clerics condemn these actions and declare they are contrary to Islam. We need for religious law to rule on this question. We find among those who carry out acts of jihad people who have deserted the side of the Americans, Jews and Zionists. They have abandoned the enemy and point their arrows towards their own people"*²¹.

But above all, **Al Qaradawi is an important leader of "head office" of the Muslim Brotherhood, their Egyptian branch, which remains the most important to this day.** This fact is as important as the man's boasts about it. In an official biography published on a French-language Islamic website, we read: "***Yûsuf Al-Qaradâwî joined the movement of the Muslim Brotherhood when he was in secondary school at the Azharite institute of Tantâ. He had great admiration for Sheikh Hassan Al-Bannâ***"²² [founder of the Brotherhood].

His activities within the Brotherhood earned him three arrests in Egypt: in 1949, 1954 and 1962. A preacher in a mosque in Cairo, he was forbidden from preaching. Today aged 80, he lives in Qatar and is universally respected by adherents of orthodoxy and by fundamentalists.

Even if Abu Laban and Ahmed Akkari were not able to meet Sheikh Al Qaradawi on their Middle Eastern tour, he clearly understood immediately the Brotherhood's interest in involving itself in this fight.

In January, at the time of the Hajj, or pilgrimage to Mecca, preachers close to the Brotherhood stoked up the crowds of faithful. Then, taking advantage of his major media exposure in the Arab-Muslim world (he is among other things the permanent guest of the programme *Ash-Sharî`ah Wal-Hayâh* – Islamic Law and Life – on the pan-Arab station Al Jazeera) Sheikh Al Qaradawi issued a fatwa turning 3 February into a "**Day of Anger**". Other organisations rivalling the Brotherhood, like Hizb al-Tahrir al-Islami (also known as Hizb ut-Tahrir) or Islamic Liberation Party which arose out of a split within the Brotherhood in 1952, would go even further.

6. A far from transparent *modus operandi*

One of the "traces" left by the Muslim Brotherhood in this worldwide manipulation is, paradoxically, a "negative footprint" – a proof by absence. We look in vain to find the organisers of demonstrations, whether violent or "peaceful" (though even then marked by appeals to hatred and murder).

Thus, when 1,000 people marched in Paris, and 4,000 in Brussels on Sunday 5 February, **no authorisation was requested, no official or public call was put out either on the radio, on websites or on discussion forums. Nothing, in short, that would allow the identification (in the event of things going badly?) of any kind of leader at all.** The demonstrators, often young people, were notified by SMS, and improvised forces of "order" were on the spot to accompany the marchers and prevent things getting out of hand.

²¹ Al Jazeera, 25 April 2004.

²² www.islamophile.org

These demonstrations are presented as "spontaneous," but **who sent out the telephone messages? Who organised the security? Is it really likely one or two isolated individuals could, without any publicity, bring together 4,000 people in Brussels, or about one in a thousand of the Belgian Muslim community? There is, inevitably, an organisation behind this mobilisation.** This way of working while keeping a low profile is typical of the Muslim Brotherhood, an organisation well-used to working clandestinely.

The same technique (calling people out by SMS or phone-call) was also used in other countries like Lebanon and in Africa. Thousands of kilometres apart, but the identical MO: one piece of evidence among many that these are the same specialists in manipulation at work everywhere.

Listen to the French specialist **Alain Chouet**, former director of the *Security Intelligence Service* in the *Directorate-General for External Security* (DGSE) or France's foreign intelligence service: "*If the Muslim Brotherhood is being accused it's because they seem everywhere to be at the origin of the phenomenon of violent confrontation. In France, within the CSCM [High Council of the Muslim Religion] the difference in attitude between Dalil Boubakeur and the representative of the UOIF [Union of Islamic Organisations in France, reputed to be close to the Muslim Brotherhood and zealous followers of the thinking of Sheikh Al Qaradawi] is symptomatic. In Lebanon, the embarrassment of religious leaders, the Mufti of the Republic at their head, is palpable. Their personal, direct intervention with rioters led by the Brotherhood is a revelation of the identity of the real instigators of the violence*"²³.

7. The political agenda of the Muslim Brotherhood

There remains the central question, of motive: in whose interest was it to turn this minor matter into a global crisis?

Consider: in the beginning a rather insignificant matter, a dozen caricatures published in a Danish newspaper of about 170,000 circulation which, by definition, is only read by Danes. That the Muslims living in the country feel insulted and attacked is understandable. That feelings found its outlet in several local demonstrations which took place in the course of October 2005. But then after that? Why did the affair bounce back at the risk of provoking exactly the kind of thing it claimed to be against? It is clear that the whole problem would have disappeared into oblivion without the worldwide mobilisation of recent days – a mobilisation of serious excess which set off the boomerang effect we have seen: caricatures published in a newspaper with a tiny global impact have now been reproduced in dozens of papers and magazines across the world, and been seen by millions of people.

It has certainly not been in the interest of Danish Muslims to create a tension that can only be bad for their integration. At the same time we have seen the vast majority of Muslims in the world stay away from demonstrations.

²³ Alain Chouet, in an interview with Famille Chrétienne, 6 February 2006.

The Muslim Brotherhood have a political agenda that explains their interest in this insignificant affair later knowingly stoked up and manipulated.

Their agenda is in fact a double one: global and European.

On a world level, the Brotherhood supports jihadist movements, when they have not created them purely and simply. In this global power struggle, **everything that strengthens the Islamist camp and allows it to gather more support around it is fair game for the Brotherhood**. In this context, the affair of the caricatures gave as a godsend, as it allowed them to "prove" that far from restricting itself to a "*war against terrorism*" the Western world was in fact engaged in a "*war against Islam*". And we might add that **this affair comes at a time when Hamas, a pure product of the Brotherhood** (see the background analysis by Dimitri Delalieu, *Hamas and the problem of its participation in the Palestinian legislative elections* of 14 January 2006) **had just won the elections to find itself confronted by the general hostility of the international community**. The current crisis could push the West to be more conciliatory in an attempt to be forgiven for the error of the caricatures and avoid reviving the cycle of confrontation.

On a European level, the agenda of the *Brotherhood* is known: **pressing the issue of communitarianism as a means of isolating Muslim communities from the societies they live in, to allow them to be "taken in hand" by associations close to the movement**. Along the way, of course, we see a resurgence of one of the dominating strategies of the Muslim Brotherhood: **the imposition of certain aspects of sharia to the non-Muslim world** – which is particularly noticeable in this case (see above).

But while they were able to launch the dynamic in the hope of withdrawing the dividends of their investment, the Muslim Brotherhood obviously could not dominate it entirely. At a given moment, the monster escaped from its creator. **Other interests and countries got together to keep tension up**.

That is also the conclusion of Alain Chouet, quoted above: "*It looks now as if every Muslim country has taken possession of the affair in its own way. So regimes that have problems with extremist Islamists – and there are many of those – stage an attack of indignation as there are no internal issues at stake. They turn the anger of the Islamists round onto foreign targets [...] The case of Syria is an example. Syria is a totalitarian country governed by a minority considered by Islam as heretical. 'Spontaneous' demonstrations don't exist there unless they're allowed, or even organised by the government. The Muslim Brotherhood have been pitilessly repressed there since the 1980s. For several months, international pressure on the country has encouraged the Sunni extremists to raise their voices. By allowing them to burn the Danish embassy, the authorities are sending a double message. To their Islamists, they are showing that they can let their anger out on Denmark if they feel like it, as long as they don't question the regime. To the West, they give an indication of the dangers they face if they keep trying to destabilise the regime. The Syrian influence remains strong on Lebanon via the special services of Damascus still in place, allows that country to play the same game. In Palestine, Hamas has found a good pretext to send the ball back to the Europeans who have been snubbing them.*"

*In Iran, the regime – busy on all fronts trying to negotiate its way around the nuclear question – jumped at the opportunity, all the more so since their rivalry with the Sunnis and with Saudi Arabia makes them reluctant to miss any chance to profit from this sort of question. And so on."*²⁴

8. How will this crisis develop?

It is impossible at the present time to predict how this crisis will develop in the days and weeks to come.

Certain commentators and journalists think they have been able to see a return to calm since Wednesday 8 February, but the change is fragile: other media, in France and elsewhere, have either already published the offending caricatures or plan to do so. New demonstrations can be expected in Europe as well as in the Arab world, and from that point on any deterioration could take place.

At the same time, the movement to boycott Danish and Norwegian products (which could logically now extend to other countries that have published, like France, Spain, Italy or Australia) will mark the move to a new phase in the affair, as the European Union will surely take the matter to international level in the World Trade Organisation.

But the **most important thing is that the European Union has now been clearly designated as an enemy by the Islamists, just as the US is.** Until now, the main enemy has been America and some other countries either in Europe or out (the UK, Australia, France) stood at high positions on the "black list" of the Islamist movement. **Now things are somewhat clearer: the whole of the "Western World" is now the enemy to beat.**

9. The terrorist threat

In conclusion, we would argue that the **terrorist threat is a real one.** It could show itself in two ways.

Firstly, a "**low intensity**" threat: the risk of Western travellers or other interests being attacked in the Arab world or in Europe, in "isolated" actions such as the murder of Theo Van Gogh in the Netherlands in November 2004. **The targets will be journalists and cartoonists, or those politicians and commentators classified as "enemies of Islam".** A threat like this is practically impossible to combat, as the danger could come from very small groups who do not appear on the radar of security services – or indeed from individuals who feel themselves called to some kind of purifying mission.

The second threat is one of global terrorism. The worry is that the international jihadist movement (the Al Qaeda tendency) take the affair in hand, using it to strengthen their desire to hit Europe with the kind of mass attacks seen in Madrid and London.

²⁴ Alain Chouet, in an interview with *Famille Chrétienne*, 6 February 2006.

It is our estimation, then, that the risk of violence or of attacks should be considered a major one in the months to come, indeed for the rest of 2006.