

FRAMING OF CONTROVERSIAL CARICATURES OF PROPHET MUHAMMAD: A STUDY OF TWO MALAYSIAN MAINSTREAM NEWSPAPERS

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Abstract

In early 2006, the world was once again shaken by a global controversy. This time it was the act of a Danish newspaper, *Jyllands-Posten* which had boldly published twelve controversial caricatures of Prophet Muhammad. There was a big outcry worldwide especially from the Muslim countries protesting on this act. Issues and debates were raised in the mass media and by many Muslim countries and their leaders, and without exception, Malaysia had joined in this worldwide protest. However, Malaysia had gone a step further in reprimanding the media which had joined in the league to publish the caricatures. Several newspapers were ordered to stop publishing and the editors were summoned to defend their actions. This study aims to see how the Malaysian mainstream media frame the controversial issue of the caricature of Prophet Muhammad.

Keywords: *Controversial; caricature; Prophet Muhammad; framing; mainstream newspapers*

PEMBINGKAIAN KARIKATUR KONTROVERSI NABI MUHAMMAD S.A.W: KAJIAN KE ATAS DUA AKHBAR ALIRAN PERDANA DI MALAYSIA

Abstrak

Di awal tahun 2006, dunia sekali lagi digegarkan oleh isu kontroversi. Kali ini adalah berkaitan dengan tindakan sebuah akhbar Denmark, *Jyllands-Posten* yang telah dengan berani menerbitkan dua belas karikatur Nabi Muhammad S.A.W yang dikatakan bersifat kontroversial. Ekoran dari peristiwa itu, seluruh dunia terutama dari Negara-negara Muslim bangkit menyampaikan bantahan mereka. Isu dan debat dilaungkan dalam media massa dan oleh para pemimpin serta rakyat Negara Islam, dan ini termasuklah Malaysia. Bagaimana pun, Negara Malaysia maju selangkah lagi dengan mengambil tindakan terhadap media tempatan yang turut menyiarkan atau menerbitkan karikatur tersebut. Beberapa akhbar diarah untuk berhenti penerbitan dan beberapa editor diminta oleh kerajaan untuk memberi penjelasan mengenai tindakan mereka menerbitkan karikatur tersebut. Kajian ini bertujuan meninjau bagaimana dua akhbar aliran perdana di Malaysia membingkai isu kontroversial mengenai karikatur Nabi Muhammad S.A.W ini.

Kata Kunci: *Karikatur, kontroversi, Nabi Muhammad S.A.W, Pembingkaiian, akhbar aliran perdana*

Introduction

On 30 September 2005, the world was shaken by a controversial action when Danish newspaper *Jyllands-Posten* revealed twelve caricature sketches of Prophet Muhammad. This issue involving the publishing of the controversial caricature of Prophet Muhammad provides an illustrative evidence of how crises travel across geographical boundaries (Lindholm & Olsson 2011). The controversial caricature is seen as a global issue that triggered crises in countries throughout the world, especially in Denmark where there is a contradictory view between 'freedom of expression' and 'intolerance' (Shehata 2007). This issue again exploded in early February 2006, when the Western media aired the issue. To be specific, France and Germany reprinted the issue on February 1, 2006 (Miera and Pala 2009). Malaysian newspapers reported that there were 143 newspapers reprinted and published the caricatures of Prophet Muhammad.

Most of the newspapers were from the Western countries, including 70 newspapers from Europe, 14 from the United States, 3 from Canada and New Zealand, 2 from Australia and 1 from Japan. The caricatures were also published in Muslim countries like Egypt, Indonesia, Malaysia, Morocco and Saudi Arabia (Utusan Malaysia, March 2, 2006). Malaysian newspapers that were involved in publishing the controversial caricature include among others, Utusan Malaysia, New Straits Times, Sarawak Tribune, Guang Ming Daily.

It is pertinent to realize to what extent the media is able to frame issues that can cause communication phenomenon across the globe, especially the propagation of controversial issues. Matters of this nature may invite researchers to explore phenomena reported by the mass media that is of concern at both national and international level. A few experts were involved in studying the controversial issue of caricature of Prophet Muhammad namely Douai (2007), Hussain (2007), Shehata (2007), Powers (2008), and Lindholm and Olsson (2011). The focus of their study varies in issues and aspects. For example, Douai (2007) studied on 'meta-narrative frame' examined the thesis of 'clash of civilization' and 'rising anti-Americanism' in the case of the controversial Danish cartoon on the Middle East's satellite television stations *Al-Arabia* and *Al-Jazeera*. In his research, he found that 'transgression' seemed to be the overarching frame as compared to the framing of "Clash of Civilizations" which is less dominant. In a related matter, he found that media portrayal reflects the 'legitimize' Muslim reaction to the publication of caricatures of the Prophet Muhammad. The study of Powers (2008) which employed the approach of 'mediatized public crisis' and 'strategic framing' to scrutinize several ways in which the mainstream Western media constructed, performed, narrativized, and framed the Danish cartoon affair to specifically appeal to culturally problematic assumptions about Muslim society and culture. He found that Western mainstream media outlets drew heavily on Samuel Huntington's 'clash of civilizations' narrative, increasing public fear of Islamic culture, obscuring public understandings of the geopolitical and cultural realities underlying the affair, and further entrenching assumptions that have become barriers to productive cross-cultural dialogue.

Shehata (2007) examines the dynamics of official dominance and event-driven news from a comparative perspective, focusing on the Muhammad cartoons controversy in the Swedish and the American elite press. In his study, he uses a model of official dominance and event-driven news. One of the important results shows that "intolerance frame" is more dominant than "freedom-of-speech frame" in both the Swedish and the American elite press. Also, this research indicates that more active journalistic framing exists in the newspapers in Sweden. Hussain (2007) examines the role of centuries of European media self-censorship on the subject of Muhammad. From the historical perspective, this study shows that the editorial cartoonists in Western societies generally tend to reflect the views of the entire community. The international media from both East and West region frames the issue in the context of "free speech" and

“religious sensitivity”.

On a similar note, Lindholm and Olsson (2011) maps out and examines how the Danish Government’s communication efforts made the Muhammad cartoon incident escalated into a full-blown crisis. His study showed that the Prophet Muhammad cartoon crisis travel across national and international geographical boundaries. The Danish government framed the voters in Denmark as stakeholders in the issue by taking a stance as an issue of free speech. From the perspective of communication strategies, the study revealed that the government turned the issue to be a matter of freedom of speech to create a dichotomy between ‘good’ for the accepting countries, and otherwise oppressing freedom of speech labeled as ‘bad countries’.

The above researches showed that the trend of the dominant issues in the media debate following the case of caricatures of the Prophet Muhammad is categorised to be clash of civilization, freedom of speech, religious sensitivity and intolerance. However, the differences in media systems, geographical boundaries conditions in which the media operated and the demography of the population majority, in terms of the traditional religious beliefs influence the frame of media coverage. For instance, Douai’s study (2007) found that the Arab media accentuate more on the frame of “transgression”, and give less attention to the frame of “clash of civilization”. The trend of Western media frame frequently tend to choose the frame of “clash of civilization”, “freedom of speech and debate about the” good vs. bad state “(Powers 2008; Shehata 2007; Lindholm and Olsson 2011).

Discussions on media framing related to the controversial caricature issues of Prophet Muhammad are rarely discussed within the scope of Islamic countries, particularly in Malaysia. Therefore, this study aims to see the extent Malaysian mainstream media frame the controversial caricatures issue of Prophet Muhammad.

Malaysian Press policy

In essence, mass media in Malaysia reflects the government policy and the voice of the society where they operate (Faridah Ibrahim 2003:57). This is because Malaysian media normally stands in line with the government leaders for the sake of continuation of political interest of the government, and to support the leader’s power (Mohd Azizuddin Mohd Sani 2004). Newspapers and media practitioners are controlled by laws and regulations (Mohd Safar 2004) such as the Official Secret Act 1972, Sedition Act 1948, Printing Presses and Publications Act 1984 (an amendment of The Printing Presses Ordinance of 1948), Defamation Act 1957, and Internal Security Act 1960 (Mohd Safar 2005; Mohd Azizuddin Mohd Sani 2004). In other words, Malaysian media policy is generally under the control of the government policy. Thus, the Malaysian mainstream newspapers are the voice of the government to preserve the government’s political power.

Framing theory

Up to this day, framing theory is still popular among researchers or experts of media and communication. Gregory Bateson in 1950s was the first scholar to introduce framing theory. In his book, first edition in 1972 and the second edition in 1987, entitled “*Steps to an ecology of mind*”, Bateson looks at a frame as meta-communicative (Bateson 1987). In the mean time, sociologist Goffman (1974) in his book entitled ‘*Frame analysis: An essay on the organization of experience*’ sees a frame as “strip of activity”, and as an approach to explain whatever the social life situation of humankind. Two years later, a sociologist, Tuchman (1978) sees the news frame as windows to the world, mainly in the context of social construction of reality paradigm. In his mind, the reality of an event depends on the extent of the event can be seen and understood by journalists which are later translated into news.

At the end of the 1980’s, the ideas of media framing in media studies became more popular among leading scholars like Gamson and Modigliani (1989), Pan and Kosicki (1993), Iyengar (1990), Edelman (1993), Entman (1993), Cappella and Jamieson (1997), Reese (2003) Tankard (2003) and McCombs (2004). However, each and everyone of them bring different point of views. For instance, frame is seen as ‘a central organizing idea’ to Gamson and Modigliani (1989), as a ‘categorization’ to Edelman (1993), as an effort in classifying, organizing and interpreting a social life experiences, and placing information into a unique context to Pan and Kosicki (1993), and as a way in defining situation and issue and in determining the object of discussion to Tankard (2003). Reese (2003) sees frames as organizing principles that are socially shared and persistent over time, that work symbolically to meaningfully structure the social world. What more is that there are experts who focus to the aspect of selection and salience of a particular informations, at the same time ignoring other crucial information (Cappella and Jamieson 1997; Etman 1993; Iyengar 1990; Mc Combs 2004).

In any case, the concept of framing by Entman (1993) is more popular among scholars particularly in carrying on media and communication research (Matthes 2010). Entman (1993) argues that framing essentially involves selection and salience issues. To frame is to select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communication text, in such a way to promote a particular problem identification, causal interpretation, moral evaluation and/or treatment recommendation for the item describe. Thereby, in this study, framing is a way of selecting some aspects of perceived reality and making them more salient in a communication text to provide useful meaning.

Methodology and research materials

This study used a qualitative content analysis method based on framing analysis technique by Entman (1993:52) which contains four operational concepts of framing analysis. They are *defining the problem* – determine what a causal agent is doing with what costs and benefit, usually measured in terms of common

cultural values; *diagnose causes* – identify the forces creating the problem; *make moral judgments* – evaluate causal agents and their effects; *suggest remedies* – offer and justify treatments for the problem and predict their likely effect. The reason this study is conducted in Malaysia is because Malaysia has a majority Muslim population where multiculturalism and media practices are in line with the government policy. Furthermore, most international news that are published are gathered from foreign news agencies namely Reuters, AP, AFP and UPI which are known as ‘the big four’ (Faridah Ibrahim and Safar Hasim 2005).

This study scrutinizes the trend of media framing on the coverage of controversial issues of caricature of Prophet Muhammad in two Malaysian mainstream newspapers, *Utusan Malaysia (UM)* and *New Straits Times (NST)*. These researchers chose UM and NST as key material to this study based on several important rationales. Both UM and NST have different news policy. These tabloid represent Malay and English newspapers that have significant influence in shaping public opinion. These two newspapers also have a large distribution in all parts of Malaysia. They were creatively involved in publishing the controversial caricature issues of Prophet Muhammad, especially during the whole month of February 2006. Given the research materials in large and homogeneous quantity, the materials were selected on a weekly basis. A total number 109 news were selected two days every week during February 2006. Then, as much as 35 selected news were selected to be the research material, namely the news that was published on the 6th, 7th, 12th, 14th, 15th, 21st, 23rd and 25th February 2006. Finally, the whole data was analysed qualitatively using Entman’s framing analysis.

Findings: The problem of “religious sensitivity”

This study employed Entman’s framing analysis containing four operational concepts on media framing. The finding of this study revealed that *Utusan Malaysia (UM)* defines the publication controversial caricature of Prophet Muhammad into problem of ‘religious sensitivity’ frame. The summary finding of media framing in the case of *UM*’s framing of the publication of the controversial caricature of Prophet Muhammad is available in the Figure 1 below:

Framing Category	Explanation	Trends in media framing
Defining the problem	Causal agent; measured in common cultural values	As a problem of ‘religious sensitivity’
Diagnose causes	Forces creating the problem	The reprinting of controversial caricatures of Prophet Muhammad

Moral judgments	Causal agents and effects	As an irresponsible act, detrimental religious sensitivities, and violate the Printing Presses and Publications Act 1984.
Suggest remedies	Justify treatments	Hold the protest and dialogue, temporary suspension and revocation of permit issuance of the press, and detailed investigation on the newspapers involved.

Figure 1: The summary findings of media framing in the case of *UM*'s framing of publishing the controversial caricature of Prophet Muhammad (February 2006)

In line with this, the discussion of *UM* about the publication of the controversial caricature raised a number of sensitive issues that has humiliated and angered the Islamic world provoking religious sensitivities, angering Muslims, violating Printing Presses and Publications and demonstrating against publication of caricatures. These issues proved that *UM*'s framing of the published controversial caricature of Prophet Muhammad accurately described the situation as a "religious sensitivity" frame. The following excerpts from the newspapers demonstrated media framing in "defining the problem" category.

"... Ketua Pengarang Sarawak Tribune memberi penjelasan berikutan penyiaran karikatur Nabi Muhammad s.a.w. yang menimbulkan kemarahan umat Islam seluruh dunia dalam akhbar itu semalam (*Utusan Malaysia*, 6 Februari 2006).

Translation: "...Chief editor of the Sarawak Tribune explain the publication of caricatures of Prophet Muhammad that raised Muslims anger around the world in that newspaper yesterday"... (*Utusan Malaysia*, 6 Februari 2006).

"...Dua pengarang tabloid Jordan dihadapkan di makamah atas tuduhan "memudaratkan perasaan agama" dengan menerbitkan karikatur Nabi Muhammad".....(*Utusan Malaysia*, 6 Februari 2006).

Translation: "... Two Jordanian tabloid editor charged in Court on charges of "detrimental to the religious feelings" by publishing caricatures of the Prophet Muhammad" (*Utusan Malaysia*, 6 Februari 2006).

"...Datuk Seri Abdullah Badawi memutuskan Guang Ming Ribao

Sdn.Bhd. yang menerbitkan *Guang Ming Daily* digantung selama dua Minggu, kerana memuatkan karikatur Nabi Muhammad s.a.w”... (*Utusan Malaysia*,15 Februari 2006).

Translation: “... Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi suspends the *Guang Ming Ribao Sdn* for two weeks that publishes *Guang Ming Daily*, because of airing the caricatures of Muhammad”... (*Utusan Malaysia*,15 Februari 2006).

“..Ratusan pelajar menggempur kawasan diplomat di ibu Negara Pakistan sebagai protes karikatur Nabi Muhammad s.a.w”..... (*Utusan Malaysia*, 15 Februari 2006).

Translation:“..Hundreds of students stormed the diplomats in the capital of Pakistan for the protest of caricatures of the Prophet Muhammad”... (*Utusan Malaysia*, 15 Februari 2006).

In terms of diagnosing causes of the problem, this study revealed that *UM* sees the causes of the problem of controversial caricature of Prophet Muhammad is caused by irresponsible attitudes in “reprinting the controversial caricatures of Prophet Muhammad” massively. It means that this event has become the main factor that yields controversial public debate throughout the world. The following examples of news illustrated the above observations:

“...Dua pengarang tabloid Jordan dihadapkan di makamah atas tuduhan “memudaratkan perasaan agama” dengan menerbitkan karikatur Nabi Muhammad s.a.w”... (*Utusan Malaysia*, 6 Februari 2006).

Translation: ”.... Two Jordanian tabloid editor charged in Court on charges of”detrimental to the religious feelings” by publishing caricatures of the Prophet Muhammad” (*Utusan Malaysia*, 6 Februari 2006).

“...Kerajaan Denmark meminta bantuan Malaysia mengurangkan ketegangan di Nagara-negara Islam berikutan penyiaran karikatur Nabi Muhammad s.a.w”.... (*Utusan Malaysia*, 12 Februari 2006).

Translation: ”...Danish Government sought Malaysia’s help to reduce tensions in the Muslim countries following the publication of caricatures of Prophet Muhammad”... (*Utusan Malaysia*, 12 Februari 2006).

In addition, from the perspective of moral judgement frame, it was found that *UM* revealed that the controversial caricature publication of Prophet Muhammad through mass media is deemed as an irresponsible action and is a detrimental

to religious sensitivities. *UM* also sees the problem of controversial caricature as an act of violation to the Printing Presses and Publications Act 1984. The following examples demonstrate the above observations.

“...Datuk Noh Omar berkata tindakan akhbar itu amat tidak bertanggungjawab serta tidak peka dengan sensitiviti umat Islam negara ini...” (Utusan Malaysia, 6 Februari 2006).

Translation:”... Datuk Noh Omar said the newspaper is not responsible and is not sensitive to the sensitivities of the Muslims of this country” ... (Utusan Malaysia, 6 Februari 2006).

“...Ekoran penyiaran artikel ini, Guang Ming Ribao Sdn. Bhd. Melakukan kesalahan dan melanggar perenggan syarat-syarat permit yang dikeluarkan di bawah Subseksyen 6(1) akta berkenaan (Akta Mesin Cetak dan Penerbitan 1984 iaitu Akta 301)”... (Utusan Malaysia, 15 Februari 2006).

Translation:”...Following the publication of this article, Guang Ming Ribao Sdn. Ltd. commits an offense and a violation of the terms of paragraph permit issued under subsection 6 (1) of the Act (Printing Presses and Publications Act 1984, Act 301)”... (Utusan Malaysia, 15 Februari 2006).

Finally, in terms of the treatment of the recommendation frame, it was found that *UM* highlights several important recommendations in relation to solve the phenomena of the controversial caricature namely like putting up protests, calling for a dialogue forum, temporary suspension and revocation of permit issuance of the press. Besides, it was also seen that *UM* suggest to do the detailed investigation on the newspapers involved as seen from the examples of news citation as follows:

“...Ribuan orang berarak di beberapa bandar di Afghanistan termasuk ibu negara, Kabul untuk mengecam kartun tersebut yang dianggap oleh orang Islam sebagai menghina Islam”... (Utusan Malaysia, 7 Februari 2006).

Translation:“...Thousands of people marched in several cities in Afghanistan including the capital, Kabul, to condemn the cartoons that are considered by Muslims as insulting Islam”... (Utusan Malaysia, 7 Februari 2006).

“...Menteri Luar Iran, Manoucher Mottaki menelefon beliau semalam agar diadakan segera mesyuarat tergempar Menteri-Menteri Luar Pertubuhan Persidangan Islam (OIC) bertujuan membincangkan kesan penyiaran karikatur yang menghina Nabi Muhammad s.a.w”... (Utusan Malaysia, 12 Februari 2006).

Translation: “...Iranian Foreign Minister, Manouchehr Mottaki yesterday called him (Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi) immediately held an emergency meeting for foreign ministers of the Islamic Conference Organization (OIC) to discuss the impact of publication of insulting caricatures of Prophet Muhammad”... (*Utusan Malaysia*, 12 Februari 2006).

“...Kementerian Dalam Negeri perlu menggantung penerbitan akhbar berkenaan serta melakukan siasatan menyeluruh dan sekiranya penyiaran karikatur itu dibuat secara sengaja maka permit Sarawak Tribune perlu dibatalkan”... (*Utusan Malaysia*, 7 Februari 2006).

Translation: “...Minister of Home Affair need to suspend the publication of the newspaper and did a thorough investigation and if the publication of caricature was intentionally made, the permit of Sarawak Tribune must be revoked”... (*Utusan Malaysia*, 7 Februari 2006).

The problem of 'press control'

Different from *Utusan Malaysia (UM)*, the findings of the study showed *New Straits Times (NST)* defines the case of the publication of the controversial caricature of Prophet Muhammad in the frame of the 'press control' problem. The findings of the media framing in the case of *NST's* framing on the issues of reprinting the controversial caricature of Prophet Muhammad is illustrated in Figure 2 below:

Framing Category	Explanation	Trends in media framing
Defining the problem	Causal agent; measured in common cultural values	As a problem of "press control"
Diagnose causes	Forces creating the problem	The reprinting of controversial caricatures of Prophet Muhammad
Moral judgments	Causal agents and effects	Violating Printing Presses and Publications Act 1984, humiliating the sensitive issues of religion, race and culture, and making people aware on meaning the freedom of expression and social responsibility.

Suggest remedies	Justify treatments	Recommend apology, tolerant, and dialog, doing the protests, detailed investigation, and temporary suspension and revocation of permit issuance of the press
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Figure 2: The summary findings of the media framing, in case of the *NST*'s framing of the issue of reprinting controversial caricature of Prophet Muhammad (February 2006)

The summary findings above revealed that the issue of press control is the main news frame in the discussion controversial caricature issue. Not only that, *NST* also revealed some other crucial issues to support their news discourse. These are issues of protest demonstration against the publication of the caricature, show-cause letter, suspension of permit, and freedom of speech with moral and social responsibility. The following are examples of news citation:

“...The swirling storm over the caricatures of the prophet Muhammad in some newspapers in the West blew closer to home yesterday. An editor of the Sarawak Tribune resigned after reprinting the controversial caricatures in yesterday’s issue of the English-Language daily” ...(*New Straits Times*, 6 February 2006).

“...A show-cause letter will be issued against the Sarawak Tribune for publishing caricatures of Prophet Muhammad, Deputy Internal Security Minister, Chia Kwang Chye said today. He said the newspaper would be asked to explain why action should not be taken against its permit holders”... (*New Straits Times*, 6 February 2006).

“... The Internal Security Ministry has summoned the group editor and senior management of the Sarawak Tribune to explain the reprinting caricatures depicting of prophet Muhammad”... (*New Straits Times*, 7 February 2006).

This study found that *NST* sees the cause of the problem of the controversial caricature of Prophet Muhammad is due to irresponsible attitudes in “reprinting the controversial caricature of Prophet Muhammad” massively. In other words, this matter has brought higher escalation of public debate regarding the issue of controversial caricatures throughout the world. The following examples of news illustrated the above observations:

“...An editor of the Sarawak Tribune resigned after reprinting the controversial caricatures in yesterday’s issue of the English-

Language daily”...(*New Straits Times*, 6 February 2006).

“...By reprinting the offensive cartoons, Noh said, the newspaper “had clearly violated the guidelines on pictures and advertisement”... (*New Straits Times*, 7 February 2006).

From the perspective of moral evaluation, *NST* sees that the reprinting controversial caricature of Prophet Muhammad as a form of the violation against the Printing Presses and Publications Act 1984, humiliating the sensitive issues of religion, race and culture. The following examples demonstrate the above observations.

“...By reprinting the offensive cartoons, Noh said, the newspaper “had clearly violated the guidelines on pictures and advertisement, these guidelines are under the Printing Presses and Publication Act 1984”... (*New Straits Times*, 7 February 2006).

“... Hishammuddin said: “It doesn’t matter that RTM is government owned. In fact, that is more the reasons they should observe sensitivities, especially that of race and religion”... (*New Straits Times*, 25 February 2006).

“...The government will not stop the people from voicing their feelings,”....“But, hopefully, They would do so in constructive manner and not go overboard and cause havoc,”... Najib added (*New Straits Times*, 12 February 2006).

Lastly, from the point of view of the the treatment recommendation frame, it was found that *NST* raises several meaningful solution to the problem related to the controversial caricature issue such as recommending an apology, advising to be tolerant, putting up dialog and giving the protests detailed investigation. Besides, it was also seen that *NST* has suggested giving punishment such as temporary suspension and revocation of permit issuance of the press. The following examples of news citation illustrated the above points:

“...The cartoons have touched a raw nerve in part because Islam forbids any depiction of The Prophet.... “The editor concerned has admitted and regretted his oversight and officially written an apology and at the same time taken full and sole responsibility for the same”.... (*New Straits Times*, 6 February 2006).

“...Hishammudin also directed UMNO Youth members to express their anger and their dissatisfaction over the publication of the caricatures to the Danish Embassy through letters, emails and phone calls in the hope that the message would get through to the newspapers that published the caricatures”....(*New Straits Times*,

7 February 2006).

“...Thus Najib suggested that Intellectuals and scholars of both Islam and the west meet and share ideas and have those ideas disseminated and explained to wider public.... He said it was the responsibility of scholars and intellectuals on both sides to educate the public and show the seeds for greater tolerance and understanding between the Muslim and western”... (*New Straits Times*, 12 February 2006).

“...The publication of the article was a breach of paragraph six of the conditions of the permit under sub-section 6(1) of the Act. Abdullah also issued an order under sub-section 7(1) of the Act, entitled the Printing Presses and Publication Order (Control of Undesirable Publication) (No. 2) 2006 effective tomorrow. The order prohibits the printing, importation, production, publication, sale, circulation, distribution or possession of any publication concerning the issue of caricature, or any issue which may jeopardize public order or national security”... (*New Straits Times*, 15 February 2006).

Discussion

From the point of view of media framing, this study found that Malaysian mainstream newspapers define the problem of the controversial caricature of Prophet Muhammad as a problem of ‘religious sensitivity’. Indeed, ‘religious sensitivity’ issue related to media framing on the controversial caricature of Prophet Muhammad is also seen as the major issue of Arabic media news coverage. Douai (2007) in his study on the ‘Danish cartoon controversy’ and Arab media, two leading Arabic satellite TV stations, *al-Arabiya* and *al-Jazeera*, showed that the “transgression” as an overarching frame but less support for a dominant “clash of civilizations” frame. The media coverage appears to “legitimize” Muslim’s reaction to the reprinting of Prophet Muhammad’s caricatures. But the question is why are there similarities in the media frames between the Arab and the Malaysian media? The answer to this could be to the media of both countries that represent the majority of Muslims who highly respect the sacred symbol of Islam.

Malaysian mainstream newspapers define the problem of controversial caricature of Prophet Muhammad as a problem of ‘press control’. It is consistent with the principle of media practice in Malaysia which is controlled by the government and is reflected by the government policy. The trend of Malaysia’s mainstream media framing is contrary to the trend of Western media. In general, the portrayal trend of Western media in relation to the controversial caricatures of Prophet Muhammad is initiated from the point of view of the frame of

“clash of civilization”, “freedom of speech” and the Debate of the “good vs. bad” state (Powers 2008; Shehata 2007; Miera and Pala 2009; Lindholm and Olsson 2011). These facts showed that the view of the majority western society belief in the liberal way of life and in free media practices. In line with this, the study of Hussain (2007) indicated that the trend of Western cartoonist attitudes in the making of the caricature sketch of Prophet Muhammad is a reflection of Western society’s view as whole. Thereby, the comparison of media frame between the results of previous researches and this study in portraying the controversial caricature of Prophet Muhammad is illustrated in Figure 3.

Researchers	Year	Research material	Trend of media framing
Douai	2007	Media Arab; TV Satellite, <i>al-Arabia</i> and <i>al-Jazeera</i>	“transgression” and “lash of civilization”
Shehata	2007	American Media; New York Times and the Washington Post Sweden Media; Dagens Nyheter and Svenska Dagbladet	“intolerance frame” and “freedom-of-speech frame”
This Study	2011	Malaysian Media; <i>Utusan Malaysia</i> dan <i>New Straits Times</i>	“Religious sensitivity” and “Press control”

Figure 3: The summary of the comparison of media frame between the results of previous researches and this study in portraying the controversial caricature of Prophet Muhammad

Conclusion

From the point of view of media framing in relation to the controversial caricature of Prophet Muhammad, this study found that Malaysian mainstream newspapers generally defined the problem of the controversial caricature from the frame of ‘religious sensitivity’ and ‘press control’. The reprinting of the controversial caricature is deemed morally as an irresponsible attitude, tarnishing religious sensitivity, race and culture, and a violation to the press regulation; the Printing Presses and Publications Act 1984. This led people to be more aware of the meaning of freedom of speech and social responsibility. Thus, as stated in the treatment recommendation frame, this study proposes several important treatment recommendations such as putting up protests to the parties who hold the authoritative power. It is also pertinent to hold dialog and to be tolerant with each other, especially between the West and Islam, suggest temporary suspension of the permit issuance newspapers and draw out detailed investigation of the newspapers involved in the publication of the caricatures of Prophet Muhammad.

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