Shifting Standards of Ethnic Tolerance?
The Case of the Netherlands and the Evolution of Ethnic Intolerance

by

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A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF

MASTER OF ARTS

in

The Faculty of Graduate Studies

(European Studies)

THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

(Vancouver)

OCTOBER 2010

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Abstract

As a result of rising right-wing populism and widespread Islamophobic discourse, many of the most ‘tolerant’ societies of Western Europe appear to be regressing after decades of post-WWII progress. This thesis questions whether or not there has been a shift in the standard of ethnic tolerance in Western Europe.

This thesis asserts that post-War ‘progress’ was not universal and certainly never extended to the tolerance of ethnic diversity. The reality is that ethnic intolerance lingered after the Second World War, in spite of the attempts by post-War leaders to forget the past as quickly as possible. A post-War failure to adequately acknowledge the impact of racism on Western European societies has allowed the current anti-Islamic sentiment visible in policies, politics and public discourse in many nations to flourish.

This thesis traces the evolution of ethnic intolerance in the Netherlands since the end of WWII. In the twenty-first century, the Dutch have abandoned the ‘multicultural’ policies of the previous century in favour of some of Western Europe’s strictest immigration and integration requirements. Due mainly to the success of key figures that pushed forward a lingering ethnic intolerance, the reputation for ‘tolerance’ that has previously been ascribed to the Dutch is now being called into question. Based on these developments, this thesis concludes that in the Netherlands ‘progressive’ social values have, until recently, overshadowed the more stagnant and, at times regressive, attitudes and policies directed at ethnic minorities.

Finally, this thesis assesses the impact of Dutch developments on the rest of Western Europe, concluding that the ‘new’ right politics that emerged out of the Netherlands have legitimized ethnic intolerance, thereby enabling other Western European nations to adopt similar approaches to the immigration and integration of ethnic minorities while maintaining ‘liberal’ values.
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Acknowledgements

I wish to acknowledge the support I received from the staff at the IES in writing this paper. Many thanks to my supervisor Dr. Kurt Huebner, as well as Dr. Sima Godfrey, for all the guidance and assistance they have provided. I would also like to acknowledge my former Professor from the IES, Dr. Dietmar Schirmer whose feedback initially inspired this paper.

Last but not least, I’d like to acknowledge the contribution of my parents. Thank you simply does not suffice to express my gratitude for all the love and support you’ve given me. I could not have done any of it without you.
To my parents
I. Introduction: Shifting Standards of Ethnic Tolerance in Western Europe and the Case of the Netherlands

Since the end of the Second World War, the Netherlands has become known as one of the most progressive and tolerant nations in the world. This reputation certainly seems fitting for the first country to legalize gay marriage, regulate prostitution, approve and control euthanasia and tolerate marijuana. Through the implementation of a ‘multicultural’ policy in the 1980’s, Dutch society had appeared to be relatively accepting of the increased ethnic diversity that accompanied post-War immigration. Post-War idealism, along with a history of tolerance, appeared to have produced one of the most progressive nations in the world.

Against this backdrop of progress and tolerance, the tense atmosphere of the twenty-first century is startling. Over the course of the last two decades, the nation once renowned for its multicultural policies has now become increasingly suspicious of its immigrants. Not only has ethnic intolerance guided public discourse and restructured politics, the Netherlands have become a pioneer among western European nations in implementing harsh immigration and integration policies.

The reaction to the rise of immigration and the development of an ethnically diverse society will therefore be presented by unraveling the case of the Netherlands, which has become emblematic of Western European ethnic tolerance. Post-Cold War changes along with the rise of Islamic terrorism proved how unstable the foundations of Dutch ethnic tolerance really were. In light of public discourse and the accompanying political changes
that have recently emerged, the Dutch have revealed a well-hidden intolerance. The
dramatic turn of events in the Netherlands suggest that post-WWII leaders across
Western Europe failed to break any significant ground in ethnic tolerance. Instead, they
buried a problem that has now been uncovered.

Although the rise of ethnic intolerance in the Dutch public sphere has been particularly
rapid, this phenomenon is not necessarily specific to the Netherlands. In the post-WWII
era, most of Western Europe underwent an astounding transformation. The nations west
of the Soviet bloc had risen from the ashes, not only by rebuilding the rubble, but also
vowing that the recent horrors unleashed by fascism would never be repeated. Standards
that were set in the post-WWII era revitalized the tarnished image of the war-torn
Western European nations. What emerged out of this post-War determination was
therefore nothing short of a miracle.

The development of peace and prosperity in Western European societies is due to an
array of post-WWII developments. The European Community had built a strong
economic foundation that not only united former enemies, but also allowed Western
Europe to regain prominence on the world stage. In addition to strong economies, nations
across the continent had earned a reputation for their socially progressive societies,
stemming from the strong social welfare systems and acceptance of ‘liberal’ values.

While Western Europe did progress in areas of social-welfare, other areas remained
stagnant. This lack of progress is reflected in the integration of immigrants. As a result of
immigration, the nation-states traditionally envisioned as culturally homogenous have been transformed into multicultural and multiethnic societies. Nevertheless, integration policies have, more or less, failed to adequately provide for this monumental shift.

At first, rising ethnic diversity was met with a silence that had been imposed by post-War developments. Although Western Europe was obliged by higher authorities to extend basic rights to immigrants, their arrival was never met with much enthusiasm. This unenthusiastic response was, however, suppressed by the legacy of WWII.

Beginning in the late 1980’s, the stifling silence that had been imposed on Western Europe would begin to lose its grip. As former satellite states of the Soviet Union began to reclaim their independence, Western European nations were given the opportunity to restore the national identities that had been absent for about forty years. It is around this time ideological warfare was declared on Islam, resulting in suspicions formerly reserved for Communists now being cast upon Muslims.

A decade later, these developments have culminated in an ‘integration crisis’ that is no longer confined to one nation. Thus, some sixty years after the epic post-War progress made by many Western European nations had been initiated, it appears to be in critical danger. The cause of this ‘crisis’ that has encompassed Western European nations, such as the Netherlands, France and Germany, stems from the approximately 15-16 million Muslim families of immigrant origin who live in the EU (Mishra: 2). This demographic change been accompanied by increasingly visible ethnic intolerance.
The so-called crisis became heightened in the atmosphere of fear that defines the post-9/11 era. Tensions over the presence of Islam in Western Europe boiled over in the aftermath of the twenty-first century terror attacks on the Twin Towers and subsequent attacks on European soil. As Europeans increasingly focus on the radicalized versions of Islam, the continent has become another front in the ‘war on terror’. The building of mosques, the use of religious symbols such as the headscarf, the call to prayer, gender inequality, anti-integration pronouncements by ultra-orthodox imams and political extremism inspired by Islam have all become sensitive and provocative issues, frequently reported on in the media (Dyvendak, Trees, Rijkschroeff: 3).

This shift in European priorities from rebuilding the economy and incorporating liberal social-welfare policies, to the securitization of immigration and imposing one-way integration policies does appear to reflect a drastic shift in Western European societies. However, it is not a shift in the standard of ethnic tolerance. The reality of what developed in Western Europe in the second half of the twentieth century suggests that the tightening of immigration and integration policies that have re-characterized many Western European societies in the twenty-first century are not sudden developments in otherwise progressive societies. Instead, the rising ethnic intolerance now attributed to nations such as the Netherlands, France and Germany seems an almost inevitable outcome of post-War policies and attitudes surrounding immigration, integration and ethnic diversity.
1.1 The Taboo of Racism: The Post-War Standard of Ethnic Tolerance

The shift towards a progressive national identity in most Western European nations in the immediate aftermath of WWII stems from an acknowledgement that change was imperative. The meaning and significance of race was greatly heightened after the racial dimensions of World War II left a legacy of revulsion at racism and genocide (Winant: 170). Furthermore, the social movements and revolutionary upsurges that succeeded the war and brought the colonial era to an end also raised the problematic of race to a new level of prominence (Winant: 170).

In the post-war era, leaders had faced the related challenges of not only reconstructing the states over which they presided, but also redefining the idea of Europe in ways that would avoid the mistakes of the past (Pauly: 136-7). Haunted by the past, it seems that idealism shaped European plans for the future. The answer was apparently to obliterate the primary causes of both fascism and colonialism. Racism, viewed as the ultimate “sin”, therefore became taboo (Essed: 204).

Although ethnic intolerance was declared to be a thing of the past, in reality it was only swept under the rug. What resulted were politically correct societies that exerted moral pressure on citizens ‘not to speak negatively about an aspect related to migration’ (Van Kersberger, Krouwel: 404). By imposing restrictions on national identity and deeming discussions about race politically incorrect, post-War leaders failed to adequately confront the problem. The standard of ethnic intolerance imposed at the end of the War
therefore never stood on high moral ground. Instead, it rested on a fragile surface that glossed over a much darker reality.

1.2 Post-War Changes in Citizenship and Ethnic Diversity

Not long after being implemented, the fragile post-War standard of ethnic tolerance would be tested. As a result of decolonisation and Reconstruction, former colonial subjects and so-called guest workers, many of Muslim origin, began to arrive in nations such as France, Germany and the Netherlands.

These immigrants were expected to work hard in their mostly menial jobs and then return to their respective countries (Mishra: 2). However, the latter expectation never took place. Although the oil crisis of 1973 prompted many nations to tighten restrictions on immigration, millions of Muslims had already decided to settle in Europe by that time (Mishra: 2). Since then, they have been joined by a second generation of Muslims born in Europe (Mishra: 2). Thus, by the end of the century immigration had transformed nation-states traditionally envisioned as culturally homogenous into multicultural and multiethnic societies.

Appearances can, however, be quite deceiving. Although the arrival of immigrants was met without much vocal opposition, this did not reflect an acceptance of ethnic diversity in Western European societies. The weakness of the post-War standard of ethnic tolerance, which was no more than a taboo on ‘race’, began to show as these immigrants
and their offspring were, at best, ignored by their societies and, for the most part, neglected by their national governments. The policies of post-war leaders did not translate into coherent integration policies. Integration policies, for the most part, fulfilled minimum requirements but only extended further privileges in cases where it benefited the state.

Nevertheless, although not embraced by societies, immigrants were privy to basic rights. In the latter half of the twentieth century, basic human rights became not only enforced by national constitutions but also by higher authorities such as the UN, the EU, and the European Court of Human Rights. The increasing authority of supra- and trans-national institutions, which had been imposed on Western European nations in the aftermath of the Second World War, had been an important element in reconstructing the shattered continent. At that same time, certain responsibilities formerly ascribed to national governments were redefined by this development. At first the UN and then the EU would impose on a member states a basic standard of rights that was extended to all inhabitants, regardless of their citizenship status.

1.3 Post-Cold War Identity Politics

As the twentieth century entered its final decade, the weight of post-War changes had begun to crack the delicate illusion of ethnic tolerance. In the turbulent post-Cold War era, it seems ethnic diversity had resulted in an identity crisis as many Western European nations have awakened to the reality of post-national citizenship. Many Western
European societies responded by focusing on the most significant internal change of the post-War era: immigration.

The guilt associated with the Second World War had silenced most Europeans for nearly forty years on the subject of integrating immigrant. The post-Cold War era produced a change across the continent that first became visible in the discourse amongst dominant groups, which began to suggest a longing for community or social cohesion (Vasta, 2009: 16-7). Some forty years after national identity and ‘race’ had been minimized, the concepts became relevant again.

The rising concerns about national identity in Western European nations were a reflection of global developments. Identity politics played a major role in reshaping the world in the post-Cold War era. This movement resulted in the implementation of the ‘principle of self-determination’ where “…particularistic identities (i.e. culture, language, and standard ethnic traits), cultural distinctiveness and self-determination are legitimated by reference to the essential, indisputable rights of persons.” (Soysal, 1996: 26). As influential trans- and supra-national authorities codified self-determination, identity politics became legitimized in Western Europe. This resulted in a restoration of traditional identities, based on culture and ethnicity.

The national identities that began to emerge set exclusive terms of membership that were hardly representative of the multi-ethnic and multi-cultural populations that now inhabit nations such as the Netherlands, France, and Germany. When European societies found
themselves redefining their national identities they turned to the trusted staples of religion, ethnicity and traditional culture as criteria for identification (Juergensmeyer: 5). Being European has therefore remained a cultural claim articulated with shared values, shared history and memory that work as a basis for economic, political and security agreements and alliances (Wallace: 78). For the generations of post-War migrant families this new definition of national identities would essentially continue the pattern of neglect they had experienced since their arrival.

The re-emergence of mono-cultural national identities has had a detrimental impact on the ability of ethnic minorities to integrate into European societies. As the idealistic belief of societies free of ‘race’ withered away, the ability of ethnic minorities to become citizens was increasingly called into question. Furthermore, it began to shed light on the attitudes that had silently been developing as European societies transformed into nations of immigration.

1.4 The New ‘Enemy’: Islam

The reconstruction of national identities was not the only change that revealed the lack of social cohesion in the many Western European societies transformed by immigration. The post-War standard of ethnic tolerance would undergo another monumental test as the cultural values of Muslim immigrants were directly opposed to those of Europeans. In the absence of a Communist rival, Islam became viewed as a cultural system that, if politicized, develops to a source of an inter-civilizational conflict (Tibi: 64). Islam was
seen in a new light, partly as, “...an energizer of forces which were bent on challenging western hegemony and the rules of the new, uni-polar world.”(Allwai: 109)

The Islamic ‘enemy’ received further endorsement from Samuel Huntington in “The Clash of Civilizations”. His work set forth the hypothesis that, “The fault lines between civilizations will be the battle lines of the future.” (Huntington: 22) This assertion was based on the notion that, “…the people of different civilizations have different views on the relations between God and man, the individual and the group, the citizen and the state, parents and children, husband and wife, as well as differing views of the relative importance of rights and responsibilities, liberty and authority, equality and hierarchy.”(Huntington: 25)

Although it may not have been clear immediately, in effect, Huntington once again divided that world. Similar claims would follow, ’Like communism and fascism, Islam offers a vanguard ideology; a complete programme to improve man and create a new society; complete control over that society; and cadres ready, even eager, to spill blood and all that thanks to the doctrine of Jihad.’” (Synon: 14) By becoming the successor to Communism as the ideological ‘other’, Europeans were given the excuse needed to distrust the cultural practices of Muslim minorities.

Across Western European nations, it did not go unnoticed that the new, culturally incompatible, ‘enemy’ was already in their midst. It appears that one reason Europeans have developed such unease regarding their Muslim populations, is the increasing
visibility of this particular ethnicity. Within individual nations, the presence of migrants and the visible evidence of globalization and the rapid social change they represent, has become a focus of tension (Spencer: 2). As these tensions rose, the juxtaposition of Islam and Western Civilization would eventually shatter the image of ethnic tolerance in Western Europe.

1.5 The Twenty-First Century: Changes in Politics and Public Discourse

Post-Cold War developments that began to reveal the suppressed ethnic intolerance of Western European societies continued into the twenty-first century. As a result of the September 11th terror attacks and attacks in London and Madrid, Islam was reframed as a threat to the culture and security of Western Europe. The subsequent tightening and implementation of anti-terror and security legislation has cast a long shadow of suspicion over Muslims (Allen: 154).

In the post-9/11 era, a more radical anti-immigrant sentiment has now singled out the Muslim presence in Europe as a challenge to domestic social unity (Savage: 43). In every European country, public debate is focused on the dangers of Islamic dogma, the urgency of breaking the religious collective, and the necessity of taming and institutionalizing Islam within a much more securitized and secularized process (Boukhars: 297). A specific form of xenophobia, Islamophobia, in European societies such as France, Germany and the Netherlands, stems from the tendency to lump together all kinds of
violence linked with Muslim populations, such as ethno-cultural tensions affecting migrants (crimes of honour), petty delinquency and terrorism (Roy: 12).

There have been observations that racism has shifted from ‘biological racism’ towards ‘differentialist racism, a form of racism in which exclusion is based on cultural differences (Zuquete 335). This ‘new racism’ is a ‘racism without race’ where racism no longer speaks of superiority, but rather of immutable differences, that make co-existence between varying cultural groups in one society difficult, if not impossible (Vasta, 2007: 728).

Thus, half a century after it was supposed to have been eliminated from public discourse racism appears to have re-emerged in Western Europe. Although each nation presents a unique case that exemplifies this apparent ‘shift’ to differing degrees, there is a generalized trend across Western Europe. In a considerable number of societies, it is now possible to make anti-Muslim, anti-Islamic and anti-immigrant statements and put forward associated ideas which a decade ago would have been entirely inappropriate and unacceptable (Allen: 160).

1.6 Shifting Standards of Ethnic Tolerance?

After decades of being silenced by the legacy of WWII, ethnic intolerance has taken over the discourse, politics, and policies in a number of Western Europe nations. The recent anti-immigrant crackdown across Western Europe seems to reflect a shift, as nations
across the continent appear to be taking a radical new direction in public discourse and political matters. This turn around does not, however, indicate a dramatic turnaround in the standard of ethnic tolerance; the rising anti-immigrant sentiment in Western Europe has slowly evolved over the course of the twentieth century. The radicalized nature of many societies in the twenty-first century is therefore a culmination of this evolution.

I would argue that the current climate has not only revealed the true nature of ethnic tolerance in much of Western Europe; it is the result of a post-War failure. In an attempt to remedy the past, post-War leaders quickly glossed over the issue of racism. This created a standard of ethnic tolerance that sought to silence intolerance by deeming racism and nationalism politically incorrect. As the subsequent influx of ethnically diverse migrants was met with very few instances of public opposition, ethnic intolerance did not appear to be a major cause for concern.

Although EU member states developed into some of the most progressive nations in the world, by the end of the century it became evident that this progress had limits. The façade of ethnic tolerance began to crack as immigration forced Western European societies to confront ‘race’. Post-Cold War era changes had chipped away at the delicate surface of Western European societies. Consequently, in the twenty-first century any illusions that Europeans had adequately confronted their demons have been shattered.

Ethnic intolerance has indeed become visible in a considerable number of Western European nations. Nevertheless, although the external influences in an increasingly
united Europe have had a remarkably similar impact on individual nations, differences still remain. More specifically, each country has a unique history of attitudes and policies towards immigrants. The rise of ethnic diversity has therefore not been met with the same degree of intolerance across Western Europe. The evolution of a specific nation-state highlights not only the inconsistency of European standards of tolerance, but also reveals what or, in some cases, who is responsible for this change being made visible.

By tracing post-War developments, this thesis will attempt to show how subtle indicators of ethnic intolerance have always been visible in the Netherlands. Prior to the twentieth century, intolerance was overshadowed by the progressive accomplishments of Dutch society. In spite of a colonial legacy, the Dutch became known as tolerant and progressive by achieving institutionalized diversity through the pillarization policy. As pillarization increasingly became irrelevant, the ethnic intolerance evident in post-War integration policy was once again eclipsed by the progressive values that shaped mainstream Dutch society in the second half of the twentieth century. Therefore, by becoming one of the most progressive nations in Europe the Netherlands effectively veiled the reality of ethnic intolerance for a long time. Furthermore, post-War taboos on ‘racist’ discussions, as well as a more subtle approach to nationalism, kept ethnic intolerance from being overtly expressed for nearly half a century.

In the twenty-first century, however, ethnic intolerance has become predominant in public discourse, politics and policy-making in the Netherlands. As a result, this phenomenon no longer plays secondary role in shaping the national identity of Dutch
society. It seems that the tradition of using more progressive accomplishments to gloss over the existence of ethnic intolerance was extended to the Dutch national identity until this intolerance could no longer be repressed. The Dutch simultaneously adopted some of the most progressive ‘liberal’ policies and some of the most regressive integration and immigration policies, making the Dutch one of the most pronounced cases of the Western European trend of radicalized public discourse and politics that confuses the definition of ‘tolerance’.
II. The Historical Roots of Dutch Tolerance

2.1 Pillarization

The legacy of tolerance ascribed to the Netherlands extends past the post-WWII developments that produced the progressive values now adopted by the majority of Dutch society. It is the pluralistic tradition of socio-political ‘pillarization’ (verzuiling) that made the multicultural integration policies of the 1980’s seem like a natural progression in Dutch society (Vink: 341).

Pillarization specifically refers to the ‘pillars’ of different faiths that were developed when the Catholics and the Protestants stopped fighting in the seventeenth century and decided to live “separately” together (Kramer: 60). However idealistic this development may seem, in reality pillarization had been developed as a pragmatic solution. The Dutch were aware that in cities with aspirations of becoming global commercial centres, such as Amsterdam and Rotterdam, it made good business sense for Protestants, Catholics and Jews to co-exist and trade together; in other words, live and let live (“New Dutch Model”: 24). Pillarization itself was therefore not born out of tolerance; instead, it bred indifference among the people that was then eventually perceived as tolerance.

The unifying element of this type of segregation was found at the top. The elites of all pillars met regularly to discuss issues of common concern and to build coalitions needed for majority decision-making. This paternalistic means of running society shaped the
metaphor of pillarization: the elites constitute the common roof that the pillars support. (Entzinger, 2006: 3)

By the early twentieth century, pillar society was for all practical purposes institutionalized (Kramer: 60). In order for the state to remain neutral, each community or ‘pillar’ (e.g. Catholics, Protestants, Jews, but also socialists, liberals, humanists) set up its own institutions (Entzinger, 2006: 3). These institutions were largely paid for by the State, thereby obliging the State to treat all communities in exactly the same way (Entzinger, 2006: 3). Due to the institutionalized diversity that defined Dutch society in the pre-war years, the nation had already earned a ‘tolerant’ reputation.

2.2 Colonization

The tradition of pillarization has remained a well-known part of the myth that defined the Netherlands as a ‘tolerant’ nation. The reverence of this historical tradition remains in stark contrast to the legacy of colonization. The attitudes and policies that characterize the long and complicated history of relations between Dutch colonizers and their colonial subjects, specifically Muslims, paint a much different picture of Dutch ‘tolerance’.

As far as ethnic tolerance is concerned, the fact that the Dutch have reigned over Muslim populations since the 17th century seems anything but irrelevant. Relations between the Dutch and Muslims were no less precarious during the colonial era than they are today.
Indonesia, formerly known as the Dutch East Indies, and Surinam, remained under Dutch control until the decline of European imperialism following WWII ("Dutch Empire").

Indonesia provides a particularly interesting case because in some ways it can be seen as one of the earliest examples of a clash of civilizations. Although Indonesia has no clear dominating group, Islam cut across regions and ethnicities, uniting people on Sumatra, Java, and Sulawesi (Bowen: 12). Dutch attitudes towards their colonial subjects attitudes have been described as being shaped by, “a contradictory combination of exaggerated fears and hopes – both born of a lack of adequate knowledge, if not almost total ignorance, of matters Islamic.”(Benda: 338)

From the time of their arrival in Indonesia, the Dutch would encounter Muslim hostility time and again as the consolidation of their expanding power was threatened by local outbreaks of Islamic-inspired resistance, led either by converted Indonesian rulers or, at the village level, by fanatical independent teachers and scribes of Islam. The increasing militancy of Indonesian Islam, including the easily suppressed “Java War”, ongoing incidents of village unrest, fanned by Muslim scribes, and eventually even a full-scale Islamic “Holy War” in Northern Sumatra, caused concern among administrators ill prepared to cope with it. (Benda: 338)

Policies were shaped to suppress Islam, including sending Christian missionaries to Indonesia and placing restrictions on Indonesian Muslims (Benda: 339). Eventually it was believed that an assimilationist approach, to be achieved by the association of Indonesians
with Dutch culture, would lead to the defeat of Indonesian Islam (Benda: 344). Western education and cultural association were considered the surest means of reducing and ultimately defeating the influence of Islam in Indonesia (Benda: 338).

As Dutch colonial history suggests, ethnic tolerance is not a part of Dutch history. Dutch attitudes towards Islam in the colonial era are eerily reminiscent of some of the contemporary policies that have targeted Muslims. For hundreds of years, civic culture has not only unified Dutch society, it has tested the limits of tolerance. Even in a pillarized society, accommodation has always required a basic loyalty towards the Netherlands, its representations of the whole nation - especially the crown, and its national imagining as a small nation which has sought to survive and prosper in a constant contest with the sea (a third of the country is below sea level) and with its larger neighbours (Bryant: 165). Thus, although the Dutch may have been conditioned to accommodate religious and ideological differences, cultural diversity has never been actively embraced by Dutch society.
III. The Post-WWII Era: Immigration and the Liberalization of Dutch Society

The selective reverence of pillarization and ignorance of colonization continued into the twenty-first century. Out of the two monumental changes that reshaped Dutch society in the second half of the twentieth century, immigration and liberalization, for the most part, only one would be acknowledged. For some time, therefore, the Dutch were able to construct their reputation of tolerance.

3.1 Immigration

One of the monumental changes that reshaped Dutch society in the post-War era stemmed from the combined forces of decolonization, labour migration and forced migration (Vink: 338). Beginning in 1945 a long period of net migration resulted in the relatively rapid development of a multiethnic and multicultural society.

Initially, large inflows of people came from the former Dutch colonies of Indonesia, Surinam and the Antilles (Vasta, 2007: 715). After the Dutch government made agreements with countries in Southern Europe to import workers in order to equip its booming economy with an adequate labour force, former colonial subjects were joined by the first group of around 100,000 so-called ‘guest-workers’ came from Italy, Spain, Portugal and Greece in the 1950’s (“The Multicultural Netherlands”).
This trend continued into the sixties, when new agreements were made with Morocco and Turkey in which some 250,000 Moroccans and 300,000 Turks (and Kurds) immigrated to the Netherlands. Although guest workers were expected to be temporary, this became more unlikely as time went on. By 1965, one third of the guest workers had indeed returned to their country of origin. By 1975, however, only 5% more had returned. (“The Multicultural Netherlands”)

3.2 The Liberalization of Dutch Society

Just over a decade after the arrival of the first immigrants, the Netherlands would experience another historic change. Pillarization lost much of its significance in Dutch society as a result of the secularization and individualization that began to develop in the 1960’s (Entzinger, 2003: 64). The youth rebellion of this decade had a huge impact on Dutch society, as students rebelled against their professors, the state, and religious authority and valorized drug use (van der: Veer 119). The popular narrative is that this is the decade when the Dutch finally liberated themselves from religion (van der Veer: 117-8).

Since then, the Dutch have also felt liberated from the strictures of social conformity and have prided themselves on having built an “oasis of tolerance where people were free to do their own thing” (Buruma: 26). Pillarization would continue to have much less salience for most Dutch men and women through the course of the twentieth century than it had before the mid-1960’s (Bryant: 165). The nation once separated into ‘pillars’ was
heading into the opposite direction. After a period of intense cultural polarization during the ‘long sixties,’ mainstream society has developed remarkably uniform, progressive ideals according to the Euro-barometer, European Social Survey, European Values Study, International Social Survey Program, and the Continuous Tracking Survey, as recapitulated in various studies (Duyvendak, Hurenkamp, Tonkens: 4).

Nevertheless, the “depillarization” that began in 1968 was an uneven process. While the face of Dutch society and its values had changed, the ethos, and the legal structures of separateness persisted (Kramer: 60). Over the course of the twentieth century the myth of Dutch identity, although rooted in institutionalized diversity, increasingly focused on the progress and ‘tolerance’ that stemmed from mid-century liberalization.
IV. The Evolution of Integration Policies

Dutch society may have been quick to adapt to the ‘liberal’ values produced by the youth rebellion in the 1960’s, but the opposite can be said for ethnic diversity. Although post-War taboos restricted any overt forms of opposition to their arrival, immigrants were, at best, ignored by mainstream society. Moreover, this attitude was not only found on the streets. For most the post-WWII period of net immigration, no explicit government policy existed in the Netherlands to deal comprehensively with the legal status and social integration of newcomers. Eventually, this approach evolved into three poorly conceived integration policies: the ‘categorical’ policy of the 1970’s; the ‘minorities’ policy of the 1980’s; and the ‘integration’ policy of the 1990’s.

4.1: ‘Categorical’ Integration policy

The approach to integration, or lack thereof, taken by the post-War Dutch government was grounded in two main assumptions. On one hand, it was assumed that repatriates from former colonies would have no difficulty integrating into Dutch society (Vink: 339). This had resulted in a limited number of well-chosen social policy measures in the 1950’s meant to encourage large numbers of so-called ‘repatriates’ from Indonesia to assimilate to Dutch society, with which they already had a certain familiarity (Entzinger, 2006: 3).

The second approach, on the other hand, was guided by the belief that ‘guest workers’ were would return to their countries of origin after a few years working in the Netherlands (Vink: 339). The closest thing to integration policy at the time appeared in a
1970 report, where the government stressed that migrants be given the chance to ‘preserve their own identities’ to prepare them for the return to their countries of origin (Vink: 343-4). The ‘integration’ policy in this decade therefore focused on managing labour migration, encouraging a return to the country of origin, and on regulating family and marriage migration (Joppke: 5). Although pillarization had become obsolete, a new, albeit poorly constructed, pillar was being ‘temporarily’ erected to accommodate ‘guest workers’. For example, in 1974 mother tongue teaching for migrant children was introduced in Dutch primary schools (Entzinger, 2006:3). In addition to this, the authorities also facilitated migrants in setting up their own associations and consultative bodies (Entzinger, 2006: 3).

It was only a matter of time before this hastily patched together policy would have to be aligned with the reality that there was nothing temporary about migrants in the Netherlands by the end of the 1970’s. As a result of the 1973 oil crisis, the recruitment of foreign workers stopped (Vink: 338). However, the immigration of non-workers continued on a fairly large scale in the seventies and eighties (Vink: 338). These migrants were made up mostly of colonial immigrants and Turkish and Moroccan immigrants arriving under family reunification regulations (Vink: 338). In addition to this, migrants from Surinam arrived when this former Dutch colony acquired political Independence in the 1970s (Entzinger, 2006: 3). Still, by the end of the decade the Dutch government had not yet acknowledged the changing character of the nation, let alone developed adequate integration policies.
4.2 The 1980’s: ‘Minorities’ Policy and the Illusion of Tolerance

It is the development of what appeared to be a multicultural society that allowed the Netherlands to continue to hide behind a mask of ‘tolerance’. The shift in integration policy stemmed from a 1979 report by the Scientific Council for Government Policy (WRR) on ‘Ethnic Minorities’, which criticized the notion of the so-called ‘temporality’ underlying government policy regarding minorities (Vink: 339). It was, rightfully so, believed that this approach would lead to a socially disadvantaged position and cultural isolation (Vink: 339).

The government responded by officially recognizing one of the most important post-War developments in Dutch society. In the 1983 Minorities Memorandum, the leaders acknowledged that, ‘in many ways our country has been given a different face after the Second World War…Therefore conditions must be created by minorities policy to realize the equivalence and equal opportunities of all residents’ (Dutch Government, 1983, p.3 in Vink: 339). Following this declaration, Dutch society began to acquire the multicultural label it was once famous for. Noting that different ethnicities had become a permanent part of Dutch society, the nation set out to, “assume a permanent multicultural character” (Dutch Government, 1983, p. 12 in Vink: 340).

The main objective of the so-called Ethnic Minorities’ Policy was to eliminate deprivation in education and on the labour market (Joppke 6). The ethnic groups specified in the new policy included Turks, Moroccans, Southern Europeans, Moluccans,
Surinamese, Antillians, refugees, Roma and Sintis, and ‘caravan dwellers’ (Vasta, 2007: 716). These groups of migrants, who combined ‘being different’ with a low social position, were deemed to be the target groups of the new minorities policy (Joppke: 5).

In addition to this, the 1983 Memorandum paved the way for further integration policy changes such as the new Dutch naturalization policy, the 1986 Nationality Act, which replaced the outdated Act from 1892 (Vink: 339). However, it was the introduction in 1985 of local voting rights for non-national immigrants after five years of residence, a direct result of the 1983 Memorandum, which put the Netherlands on the map as one of the most ‘immigrant-friendly’ countries of Europe (Vink: 339).

The Ethnic Minorities’ Policy was based on the assumption that, as a result of immigration, the Netherlands had become a multi-ethnic society in which the majority culture and minorities should live together in harmony and mutual respect for each other (Entzinger, 2003: 63). However, this goal would never materialize. In spite of some well-intentioned policy changes that occurred, the Ethnic Minorities’ Policy mostly constructed the illusion of multiculturalism and ethnic tolerance. The true intention of this smoke and mirrors policy was promoting economic productivity among ethnic minorities, not constructing an ethnically diverse society. In fact, later this policy would come to be seen for what it was: a type of institutional separatism (Vasta 2007: 717).

Ironically, the visible element of separateness is often mistaken for tolerance. The integration policies in the eighties were, in fact, rooted in a similar pragmatism that
produced Pillarization. Economic motivations, not ‘tolerance’, explain the origins of Ethnic Minorities’ Policy. The Christian Democratic Prime Minister and steel industrialist Ruud Lubbers, who implemented the policy, wanted to modernize the Dutch economy not, “…make Dutchmen out of Muslim immigrants.” (Kramer: 60).

Thus, the government wanted to keep the country’s new workers working, without “disrupting their lives or exhausting their patience with official encouragement to mingle with their new neighbours” (Kramer: 60). It seems that the idea was to deal with Muslims much as previous Dutch governments had dealt with Protestants and Catholics; that is to say, by creating another pillar (Buruma: 26). Oddly enough, it was generally believed that what did not work any more for the population as a whole, might be good for the migrants who, after all, were perceived as fundamentally different from the Dutch and as people in need of emancipation (Entzinger, 2006:4). ‘Emancipation’ for designated ‘ethnic minorities’ was to take place in their own state-supported ethnic infrastructures, including ethnic schools, ethnic hospitals and ethnic media (Joppke: 5). Although this version of institutionalized diversity is reminiscent of the historical pillars, one stark contrast existed: this new pillar would remain separate but unequal.

Another troubling, though quite telling, aspect of this ‘multicultural’ policy is that it resembled not only Pillarization, but also the ‘Categorical Policy’ of the previous decade. Elements of the latter policy, which was intended to keep immigrants separate from mainstream society, were re-introduced in the Ethnic Minorities’ Policy. Even though it had been acknowledged that migrants were a permanent feature of Dutch society, it was
still argued that minorities needed to be provided with the opportunity to maintain and
develop their own cultural identities (Shadid: 12). ‘Emancipation’ in one’s own circle
was considered to be conducive to strengthening the position of minorities in society and
to improving interethnic relations (Joppke: 6). Thus, what had earlier been seen as a
precondition for successful return under the new policy became an instrument in
promoting multiculturalism within the Netherlands (Entzinger, 2003: 64).

The evolution of integration policies suggests that the standard of tolerance towards
ethnic diversity has not shifted in Dutch society. It is most likely the institutional
separation, constructed out of the remnants of the pillarization model that is so often
mistaken for the acceptance of ethnic diversity. The tolerance of the progressive values
that developed in the liberalization era was not extended to the ethnic diversity that post-
War immigration had brought to the nation. Ethnic tolerance therefore never really
existed; simply put, ignoring something is not the same as accepting it.

In the late 1980’s, immigration to the Netherlands began to increase (Entzinger, 2006: 2).
The end of the Cold War not only increased but also diversified immigration: the growing
numbers of Turks, Surinamese and Moroccans were joined by East European migrants as
well as asylum seekers (Entzinger, 2006: 2). At the same time that immigration was on
the rise, the flaws of the Ethnic Minorities’ policy were becoming evident. Migrants had
not integrated into the labour market; in addition to this, educational achievement of
immigrant children was low and housing segregation had also emerged as a problem
(Vasta, 2007: 717).
Upon realizing the ethnic minorities policy was failing, the government once again turned to the Scientific Council for Government Policy (WRR) for advice. The Council responded with a report entitled *Allochtonenbeleid* ("Immigrant Policy") where it stated that in the implementation of its first report the government had put too much weight on facilitating multiculturalism, and too little on promoting immigrant participation in society at large. In the Council’s view, a further continuation of the ethnic minorities’ policy would make the immigrants even more dependent on public support and therefore vulnerable and subject to further marginalization. (Entziner, 2003: 70).

Political elites in the 1990’s responded to the apparent failure of integration by scaling back official multiculturalism and turning towards civic integration (Joppke: 6). However, integration policy changes were only the tip of the iceberg. In the post-Cold War era, immigration was accompanied by a number of other contributing factors that ultimately revealed the true nature of ‘tolerance’ in Dutch society.
V. Citizenship in the Post-Cold War Era

5.1 Citizenship and National Identity

Throughout the second half of the twentieth century, many Western European nations have been forced to come to terms not only with ethnic diversity, but also a decline in national sovereignty due to the increasing powers of supra- and transnational organizations. These substantial changes that have reshaped the Netherlands in the post-war era became reflected in the definitions of citizenship that emerged in the late twentieth century.

In an attempt to prevent the devastation of the two world wars from being repeated a number a new measures were introduced at the end of World War II. One such change occurred when supra- and transnational organizations superimposed their authority over the nation-state. In what Yasemin Soysal refers to as “post-national citizenship,” rights, participation and representation in a polity increasingly became matters beyond the vocabulary of nation citizenship (Soysal, 1996:21). It was therefore no longer entirely up to the state to ensure that basic human rights were distributed to all members of society. In Western Europe, the increasing authority of the European Union has undoubtedly heightened the reality of decreasing national sovereignty that accompanies post-national citizenship.

This post-War change would have an impact on how migrants were incorporated into Western European citizenship regimes. Post-national citizenship undermines the very
basis of national citizenship by extending rights that used to belong solely to nations to foreign populations (Soysal, 1996: 137). As a result, national citizenship became increasingly irrelevant as a source of rights to migrants (Koopman, Ruud, Statham: 197). In the Netherlands, for instance, elements of post-national citizenship became visible in the 1980’s when local voting rights were extended even to those immigrants without citizenship and their cultural rights were guaranteed by the minorities’ policy. In effect, even when excluding ethnic minorities from full membership in society, the Dutch government could maintain the stance that the basic rights of the migrant were not being violated.

It was the realm in which migrants were excluded that perhaps signaled that the Dutch had not embraced ethnic diversity. Transnational developments in establishing basic human rights had resulted in two major components of citizenship, identity and rights, becoming “decoupled.” (Soysal, 1996:18) Although the Dutch had extended basic human rights to immigrants, they would not be as generous when it came to national identity.

At the end of WWII, a new generation of leaders had effectively silenced discourse on race and nationalism. Accordingly, prior to the 1990s, national identity was not featured in public discussions. As a result, few studies on the subject appeared; major crises caused little national soul-searching; and national symbols and sentiments were part of a secondary, merely expressive culture, to be celebrated on the queen’s birthday or cheered at games of the national soccer team. In the post-WWII era, national pride was derived from not being nationalist. (Lechner: 360).
In the late twentieth century, Dutch society began to shift away from a non-nationalist identity. In many Western European nations, insecurities over how trans-national developments, especially the EU, and post-War immigration impacted the traditional nation-state began to emerge. National pride resurfaced as many Western European nations became caught up in a new wave of post-Cold War identity politics. The identity politics that emerged at the end of the Cold War were rooted in what has been described as, “… a legitimization of cultural distinctiveness and self-determination that resulted from the principle of self-determination becoming internationally codified after the dissolution of the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia” (Soysal, 1996: 26). The legitimization of cultural distinctiveness in the global arena appears to have become a key element in the re-emergence of the national identities that took place in already established Western European nations, such as the Netherlands.

In the Netherlands, the cultural frame of reference appears to have primarily come from the ‘progressive’ values adopted by mainstream society since the 1960’s. Since this period, ‘values’ among the majority population increasingly appear to be remarkably homogenous. Whereas in many other countries there is serious division of the majority population in public and political opinion on matters of gender and sexuality, almost the entire political spectrum of the majority population in the Netherlands supports progressive approaches to these issues (Duyvendak, Pels, Rijks Schroeff: 9).
As the implementation of progressive values in Dutch society became increasingly important, the Muslim presence would start to become viewed as a challenge to domestic social unity (Savage: 43). It is therefore not a coincidence that a re-emerging Dutch national identity has juxtaposed the Muslim ‘other’. Over the course of the last two decades, Muslims have become understood in terms that both acknowledge and perpetuate an ongoing ‘otherness’; one that is inherently foreign, alien, enemy and regularly interchanged with populist notions of Muslims as ‘terrorists’ and ‘fifth columnists’, amongst others (Allen: 155). Consequently, as the new national identity evolved, it was becoming defined by what the majority population believed could not be part of Dutch identity: Islam.

5.2 The Role Of Public Discourse in Integration Policy

The façade of ethnic tolerance that had been created by the policies of the 1980’s began to crumble as a new definition of Dutch national identity emerged. The undeniable truth, that ‘tolerance’ reached its limit when it came to ethnic and cultural diversity, is illustrated by a the wave of public discourse that began to emerge late in the twentieth century.

The earliest public debates were triggered by the second Scientific Council (WRR) report on immigrant integration issued in 1989. After the report was released, it generated a series of lively public debates on matters related to immigration and integration (Entzinger, 2003: 70). In these debates two themes stood out, both related to
multiculturalism and its limits (Entzinger, 2003: 70). The first debate, which took place largely in educational and academic circles, was about mother-tongue teaching; the second debate, on the other hand, was less restricted to experts and much more political (Entzinger, 2003: 70-1). In spite of different approaches, both of these debates signified how important the cultural element had become in the contemporary Netherlands.

The focus of the first debate was on the mother tongue teaching that had been implemented through the Minorities’ Policy. As a result of this debate, in the early 1990’s, mother-tongue teaching was gradually stripped of its ‘controversial’ characteristics: in addition to being put outside the core curriculum and having its voluntary nature accentuated, its cultural elements and many references to the country of origin were dropped (Entzinger, 2003: 71).

A prominent figure in the earliest public debates was the politician Frits Bolkestein. Bolkestein was the first politician to try and take advantage of anti-immigrant sentiments that lurked below the surface of Dutch society. His party, the Liberal Party (VVD), a conservative liberal party, was the first party to put the issue of immigration on the political agenda in the early 1990s (Van Kersbergen, Krouwel: 401). The VVD was aware of a widespread dissatisfaction among the electorate with policies dealing with immigration (Van Kersbergen, Krouwel: 401).

In the aftermath of the Rushdie affair in Britain and the headscarf affairs in France he was able to spin the failures of the ethnic minorities’ policy that had been cited by the WRR
report into a threat to Dutch society (Entzinger, 2006: 5). In 1991 Bolkestein, the then parliamentary leader of the opposition triggered a public debate on the presumed incompatibility of Islam and ‘western values’ (Entzinger, 2006: 5). Bolkestein claimed that ‘Islam was a threat to liberal democracy and a hindrance for integration of immigrants . . .’ (Entzinger, 2006: 5) As a result of such rhetoric, public and policy discourse began to revolve around the ‘non-integrating migrant’ (Vasta, 2007: 717). The debate calmed down after a while, but some uneasiness with the strong cultural relativism of the Minorities Policy remained (Entzinger, 2006: 5).

In the end Bolkestein was constrained in how far he could move the VVD in an anti-immigration direction by both intra and inter-party considerations (Van Kersbergen, Krouwel: 402). But, Bolkestein was not ignored by a society that had not only been shaken by a series of recent changes in the global arena, but also by claims that the very immigrants living within their borders were possibly part of an ‘incompatible civilization’. In effect, Bolkestein had cracked the surface of an already fragile Dutch society.

Bolkestein would later acknowledge that he had consciously politicized the issue of immigration for electoral gain, “Blinded by ideology, people could not see what was going on, but I was enough of a politician to sense what ordinary people in ‘church and bar’ were feeling, and I decided to tap into that.” (Buruma: 26) However, in the early 1990’s Dutch society was not yet ripe for the kind of change that would shatter the illusion of ethnic tolerance. At this time, the Dutch were perhaps not ready to completely
abandon post-WWII ideals. It seems that changes would first be implemented in a much less radical fashion.

It would be difficult to assess the extent of ethnic intolerance that ‘ordinary people’ were quietly expressing in the ‘church and bar’. However, the political change in mid-1990’s proved that there was some truth to Bolkestein’s claim of a widespread dissatisfaction among the electorate. Voters would make their discontent with the way the government was dealing with immigration known in the 1994 parliamentary elections. Consequently, the Christian Democrats (CDA), who had traditionally been the champions of pillarization, were defeated and remained outside the government for the first time in almost a century (Entzinger, 2006: 5).

The 1994 election results produced a dramatic change in both leadership and integration policies. The incumbent ‘purple’ coalition of Labour (PvdA), Liberals (VVD) and Democrats (D66), headed by Labour Party leader Wim Kok, was able to shift the focus of its policies from respecting cultural diversity to promoting the immigrants’ social participation (Entzinger, 2006: 5). Integration became defined primarily in terms of institutional participation, and culture came to be considered a private affair (Entzinger, 2006: 14). The focus of immigrant incorporation policies was shifted from the group to the individual, from ethnic minorities to individual migrants, from culture to citizenship or, in terms of political philosophy, from a predominantly Christian Democratic communitarian approach to a liberal individualistic approach (Entzinger, 2006: 14).
The Integration Policy introduced in 1994 was therefore based on the idea of ‘mainstreaming’: i.e. improving the inclusion of immigrants in mainstream services in order to move away from the ethno-specific provision popularly associated with a policy of multiculturalism. More specifically, this new policy outlined integration as ‘a process leading to the full and equal participation of individuals and groups in society, for which mutual respect for identity is seen as a necessary condition’. (Vasta, 2007: 717)

The Netherlands now shifted from a multicultural to civic integration policy. The mainstreaming of services represented a definite ideological shift from support for group needs and identity to promoting individual identity (Vasta, 2007: 733). The goal of what is known as civic integration was not only migrants’ participation in mainstream institutions (which later came to be labelled ‘shared citizenship’) but also an ‘autonomy’, which was to be achieved not only through labour market integration, but also through Dutch language acquisition (Joppke: 6). The new policy approach was based on the 1998 Newcomer Integration Law (Wet Inburgering Nieuwkomers, or WIN), which obliges most non-EU newcomers to participate in a 12-month integration course that consists of 600 hours of Dutch language instruction, civic education, and preparation for the labour market (Joppke: 6).

The demand that immigrants familiarize themselves with Dutch language, culture and society would have been ‘almost unthinkable under the minorities’ policy’ (Entzinger, 2003: 77). Still, as much as Integration policy had shifted in the 1990’s, the changes were relatively moderate compared to the policies that would be introduced in the following
decade. The mandatory nature of civic integration was simply meant to maximize WIN’s reach and to guarantee that the state would in turn be obliged to ensure that availability of enough good quality courses (Joppke: 6). Thus, while the Dutch had switched their approach to immigrant integration, policies, as well as public discourse, had not yet become radicalized.

Nevertheless, citizenship now became an issue in Dutch integration policies for the first time (Entzinger, 2006: 14), suggesting that the new public discourse was being incorporated in the development of integration policy. The new ‘integration policy’ reflected the earlier public debates by recognizing that the migrants’ lack of integration was also due to their insufficient familiarity with the Dutch language and society (Entzinger, 2006: 5). This development reflected a new trend: as public discourse in Dutch society shifts further away from the confines of post-WWII taboos, integration requirements became more demanding.

5.3 Public Opinion Heading into the New Millennium

The ousting of the government responsible for ‘multiculturalism’ in 1994 was an indicator of the electorate’s dissatisfaction with the way ethnic and cultural diversity was being incorporated into Dutch society. The Integration Policy introduced by the 1994 government was not enough to satisfy the public. In spite of the fact that migrants’ integration at the institutional level had progressed substantially in the 1990’s, a clear shift in their cultural and civic orientation did not occur (Entzinger, 2006: 14). As a result
of the perceived failure of integration policy, the general public became impatient and annoyed by the growing numbers, both of ‘regular’ migrants and of asylum seekers, by their increased appeal on welfare state provisions and by certain ‘strange’ habits (Entzinger, 2006: 14).

The increasing anti-immigrant sentiments were substantiated by the media portrayal of the government approach towards rejected asylum seekers and illegal immigrants as unsuccessful and the fact that a decline in manufacture forced many immigrant families to live on welfare (van der Veer: 116). Earlier tensions stemming from debates on Dutch culture and identity began to increase as migration into the Netherlands, as into many other countries of continental Europe, became considered “a direct march into welfare state dependency” (Joppke: 6).

As a result of an increasing awareness of these issues, the Dutch were beginning to fear that their social welfare system was being taken advantage of, while also making the connection between Islam and increased violence and crime in their country (Tom: 460-1). The media had also highlighted another result of the economic downturn: living on welfare had prompted some Moroccan and Turkish youth to turn to petty crime (van der Veer: 116). The alarming delinquency rates among certain immigrant communities therefore become a cause for concern in Dutch society (Entzinger, 2006: 6).

Furthermore, various terrorist attacks by Islamists – including those in France (attacks by the Algerian Groupe Islamique Armé), Israel (suicide attacks on buses in Jerusalem) and
the United States (the 1993 attack on the World Trade Center) – were among the factors leading to such negative stereotypes. In its 1995 annual report, Dutch General Intelligence and Security Services had already noted that although there was no real threat from Islamic society to the Netherlands, serious prejudices toward Islam had a negative impact on the integration of Muslims into mainstream society.

(Bakker, Veldhuis: 89)
VI. The Twenty-First Century: Ethnic Intolerance in the Netherlands

6.1 Public Discourse

At the start of the twenty-first, there was a visible shift in the nature of public discourse. This change was triggered in January 2000 when the liberal journalist Paul Scheffer published the article *The Multicultural Tragedy*. In a very public forum, the leading Dutch newspaper the *NRC Handelsblad*, Scheffer summarized the increasing wariness towards immigrants and ethnic diversity by bluntly asserting that Dutch multiculturalism had failed (Entzinger, 2006: 7).

In this provocative article, Scheffer argued that respect for cultural difference had prevailed over defending the principles of liberal democracy (Entzinger, 2006: 7). Therefore, ‘the poor integration of ethnic minorities is the result of a detached and permissive Dutch policy that in respect of minorities does not confront ethnic minorities sufficiently with the Dutch language, culture and history’ (Vasta, 2007: 725). To solve this problem Scheffer proposed a very controversial solution: the only possible answer, in Scheffer’s view, was a ‘civilization offensive’, which would include more coercive policy efforts to overcome deprivation as well as stronger appeals on the immigrants to adapt to the principles of liberal democracy (Entzinger, 2006: 7).

Scheffer’s outcry generally became seen as the beginning of a dramatic turnaround in the Dutch public debate and in Dutch policymaking regarding immigration and integration (Entzinger, 2006: 8). His observations, which ten years earlier would have been
dismissed as Conservative or possibly even as racist now generated considerable support, in spite of strong criticisms (Entzinger, 2006: 7). In a country where public discussion of national identity had dwindled, intense debate erupted about what it means to be a nation and whether the national identity should be revived (Lechner: 356).

The debate became highly illustrative of the shift in Dutch immigration discourse because it generated a respectable non-racist assimilationist view that could be opposed to the long existing multiculturist option (Entzinger, 2003: 80). Those involved in the debates would increasingly adopt Scheffer’s line of thinking, that the Dutch had ignored basic liberal democratic values in favour of the acceptance of diverse cultural identities, which would ultimately destroy social cohesion (Vasta, 2007: 714). One of the most significant parts of Scheffer’s indictment was his insistence that immigrants familiarize themselves with Dutch history (Entzinger, 2003: 80).

As radical as these debates seemed, they were only the beginning. As debates progressed, the discourse became increasingly inflammatory (Vasta, 2007: 725). Moreover, these debates were not confined to public discourse. What was an acceptable topic for discussion among the public and the desire to revive a (imagined) national identity paved the way for political changes that further contributed to ethnic intolerance becoming part of the Dutch national character.
6.2 Dutch Politics in the Twenty-First Century

The September 11th, 2001 terror attacks, which took place more than a decade after the end of the Cold War, created the perfect storm for ethnic intolerance to hold on an already shaken Dutch public. The attacks ushered in a new era in global politics, where the ‘war on terror’ was often portrayed as a ‘cultural war’ between the forces of modern civilization (Enlightenment and democracy) and those of a ‘barbarous and very unenlightened and undemocratic culture’, personified by Muslim fundamentalism and the so-called ‘rogue states’ (Iraq, Iran, Syria, North Korea) (Boomkens: 307).

In the wake of the 9/11 attacks, the anti-Islam ideology that had begun to emerge late in the twentieth century had now entered every Dutch home. Previous claims made by the likes of Scheffer and Huntington were, in essence, amplified. In the Netherlands, where Islam had planted firm roots since the end of WWII, the fear of a Trojan horse finally shattered any illusions of ethnic tolerance. Words and notions such as ‘discomfort’, ‘fear’, ‘loss of identity’, ‘crisis’, and ‘loss of a sense of community’ dominated the opinion pages of newspapers and magazines and the titles of non-fiction books on politics and culture (Boomkens: 308). Growing numbers of Dutch began to fear that non-western values imported by certain immigrants would undermine the foundations of western liberal democracy (Entzinger, 2006: 13). These fears were rooted in a belief that orthodox, fundamentalist Muslims wished to curtail freedom of speech and religion or to undermine equality, individualism and secularism by imposing their values on the host society (Entzinger, 2006: 13). The notion of ‘Eurabia’ has become symbolic of the more
radical anti-Islam sentiment that emerged, not just in the Netherlands. What had been the preoccupation of extreme-right writers and politicians in the previous decade has moved firmly into the mainstream, with highly respected figures such as historian Niall Ferguson raising alarm bells about Europe’s demographic ‘bust’ and about the process of reverse colonization led by Muslims (Allawi: 182).

The fears that had overtaken a majority of the mainstream population opened the door for significant changes. Although several politicians and publicists, such as Bolkestein and Scheffer, could rightly claim to have disturbed the seemingly peaceful climate of a ‘politically correct’ multicultural consensus in an earlier stage, it was the rise of the new populist political movements after 9/11 that confirmed a new political and cultural climate in the Netherlands (Boomkens: 307). The ‘new’ right ensured that Islamophobia became a fundamental characteristic of Dutch society. Consequently, the Netherlands was stripped of their ‘tolerant’ and ‘multicultural’ reputation as the fear of Muslims became visible in not only a radicalized public discourse, but also in the political realm.

Nonetheless, the visible ethnic intolerance that subsequently arose would not, arguably, have appeared to be so sudden had the populist Pim Fortuyn not stormed onto the Dutch political scene. With the words ‘I say what I think and I do what I say’, Fortuyn opened up a whole new, previously suppressed, political space in Dutch public debate (Van Kersbergen, Krouwel: 404).
Pim Fortuyn became a pioneer in the new wave of politics that would take over Western Europe in the twenty-first century. His party, the List Pim Fortuyn, positioned itself as an outsider party that, in contrast to the vested parties, dared to address issues like immigration without mincing words (Akkerman: 340). Fortuyn spoke out against the politicians of the established parties saying that they had abandoned their voters, did not care about the people, and were indecisive, uninspiring technocrats (Van der Veer: 114). The evidence he used to back these claims was the way in which politicians were dealing with Muslim immigration into the country: the common people were not protected against the ‘influx of criminal foreigners who threatened the hard-won freedoms of the Dutch.’ (Van der Veer: 114)

Fortuyn presented an unprecedented challenge to multiculturalism, political correctness and the so-called ‘Islamification of Dutch identity’ (Vink: 337). He preached that asylum seekers, foreign immigrants, and especially Muslims represented threats to the Dutch way of life (Van der Veer: 115). He went so far as to label Islam as a ‘backward’ culture, implying that Islam is a unified, static and essentially fundamentalist religion (Akkerman: 346). His powerful rhetoric invoked the fear that the ‘Islamification’ of Dutch culture would leave little room for freedom of expression, individual autonomy, and the emancipation of women and homosexuals (Akkerman: 340).

With his bold words, Fortuyn ushered in a new era, where policy and discourse where no longer held back by any post-WWII taboos of discrimination. There is no doubt that the way in which integration policy in the Netherlands was being discussed and practiced
would have been stigmatized as ‘politically incorrect’ even just a few years earlier (Van der Veer: 115). The most fundamental change that Fortuyn, arguably, brought to Dutch society is that he finally admitted, out loud, that ethnic tolerance was not among the many values accepted in the Netherlands.

Fortuyn changed the nature of mainstream discourse by infusing it with the kind of rhetoric usually reserved for right-wing extremists. The latent xenophobia in Dutch society surfaced in the form of a full frontal assault on political correctness (Van Kersberger, Krouwel: 404). The degree to which Dutch society had accepted ethnic diversity was reflected in the adoption of the term ‘foreigners issue’. This concept did more than alienate ethnic minorities. Fortuyn had managed to roll together migration, asylum-seekers, the multicultural society and criminality, into a single issue (Van Kersbergen, Krouwel: 404). In his political campaign this single ‘foreigners issue’ was subsequently coupled with issues of law and order, the threat of Islam to Dutch culture, the erosion of social cohesion and the malfunctioning of political parties (Van Kersbergen, Krouwel: 404-5).

Fortuyn was only one man; what made him such a powerful force is the response he received from the electorate. His radical views and his charisma quickly made him into a media star (Entzinger, 2006: 3). Nonetheless, the most essential element of the ‘new politics’, as it is commonly called in the Netherlands, appears to be a well-conveyed message, not the messengers (Entzinger, 2006: 13). Fortuyn is therefore, not, responsible for ethnic intolerance sweeping across the Netherlands. He merely took advantage of a
vacuum in the political sphere left by politicians who had only tepidly approached the
topic of ethnic diversity. Fortuyn, arguably, proved that the Dutch electorate wanted more
than the labour market integration of ethnic minorities, which had been the focus of the
previous integration policies. Instead, what the Dutch want is to ‘protect’ their culture.
Not surprisingly, when Fortuyn was shot on May 6th 2002, the movement did not die with
him: there were other ‘messengers’ waiting in the wings to take advantage of such a
golden political opportunity.

The radical nature of ethnic intolerance that Fotuyn introduced to Dutch politics and
public discourse showed no signs of stopping after he was murdered. The desire to
protect Dutch ‘culture’ continues to lead the Dutch down the path of radicalization.
Right-wing populism has been incorporated into the Dutch political sphere, most notably
under the helm of another extremist, Geert Wilders. His party, the Dutch Liberal Party,
has developed a profile as an anti-immigration party that defends freedom of choice in
ethical questions like abortion, euthanasia, or sexual relations (Akkerman: 343).

Wilders followed in the footsteps of Fortuyn by blurring the distinction between
traditionally ‘left’ and ‘right’ politics. He has produced an extremism reflected in his
speeches where he has called Islam “dangerous” and referred to mosques as “houses of
terror and recruitment” for jihad (Carter: A01). When he left his party, the VVD in 2004,
Wilders’ was free to create a radical new platform. His platform includes a five-year
moratorium on all non-Western immigration, the deportation of illegal immigrants and
failed asylum seekers and the demand that all immigrants have a working knowledge of
Dutch (Carter: A01). He has also been able to use demographic claims that instigate fears of ‘Eurabia’ to further his cause. His arguments, which have become gospel for Dutch immigration reformers, include the claim that in the last thirty years Dutch population has grown from 13 million to 16 million, by 25 percent, but the immigrant population has grown from 160 000 to 1.6 million, about 1000 percent (Carter: A01). The 1.6 million figure can only be reached by including second- and third-generation children of immigrants, who were born in Holland and are citizens (Carter: A01). Like Fortuyn, Wilders’ radical views were well received by mainstream society.

Wilders is not the only one to have embraced this new ideology. In fact, Ayaan Hirsi Ali is perhaps the personification of the twisted logic that has taken over Dutch politics. Born in Somalia, she escaped to Holland in 1992 where she learned to speak perfect Dutch, studied political science, worked with abused Muslim women and became a politician, first in the social-democratic Labor Party and then in the more conservative Liberal Party (Buruma: 26).

As a member of an ethnic minority who is an anti-immigrant social democrat, Hirsi Ali has obscured Dutch politics in the same paradoxical manner that Fortuyn did. She had nothing but contempt for the Dutch model of tolerance, which she viewed as a western weakness (Kramer: 60). Her success and popularity in the Netherlands arose when she made it known that she is definitely not a supporter of multiculturalism. She warned the Dutch that their liberal policies of helping immigrants create separate cultural and religious institutions were counterproductive (Grimes: 1).
Hirsi Ali appears to be an example of the new ‘cultural racism’, where ethnic origin appears to be acceptable as long as it does not reinforce cultural diversity. Hirsi Ali certainly has zero tolerance when it comes to accommodating the cultural practices of Muslims. In 2003, she accused authorities in the Netherlands of turning a blind eye towards the crimes of violence against Muslim women in the name of cultural understanding (Grimes: 1). Hirsi Ali’s views would prove to have a devastating impact on social cohesion after she wrote the script for a movie about the abuse of women in Islam titled “Submission”.

The radical anti-immigrant discourse introduced by the ‘new’ right is not confined to the fringes of the Dutch political realm. Instead, parties across the political spectrum have adopted this ideology. In the weeks following his death many mourners indicated how "Pim" had "said what we were not allowed to say", a reference to the native Dutch population’s fear of foreigners "invading" the country and their anger at the ruling elite for not taking their concerns seriously (Baukje: 363). However, post-Fortuyn this would no longer be the case: the political realm would become one of the most visible indicators that ethnic intolerance had emerged from below the surface of Dutch society.

The right-wing coalition that took power shortly after Fortuyn made his mark on Dutch society was eager to show that it was tough on immigration and immigrants (Vasta, 2007: 718). The leader of the coalition government formed in 2003, made up of Christian Democrats, Liberals and Liberal Democrats, Jan Peter Balkenende, repudiated the
country’s multicultural approach to immigration and said newcomers should assimilate with Dutch culture (“Wild Thing”). This approach was revealed in a speech made by Balkenende June 11th 2003, where he explained the direction that his party would take with respect to the integration of migrants. He emphasized that society could not thrive unless migrants accepted the basic values of Dutch culture, demanding increased civic integration:

“We will appeal more often to people's sense of responsibility and citizenship....Participation also applies expressly to immigrants to the Netherlands. People who want and have permission to settle in our country cannot live on the sidelines of our society… The government is therefore imposing more stringent requirements on newcomers to follow integration programmes. The assumption by immigrants of their own responsibility is essential…Living in the Netherlands means accepting certain obligations.” (Balkenende II)

The government of Jan Peter Balkenende learned from its predecessors’ mistakes. Upon taking power, the coalition government stated, “This cabinet…distances itself from multiculturalism as a normative ideal, from the open-endedness of the past and from a government that takes ethnic minorities by the hand as if they were subjects in need of care” (Vink: 345) In this new approach, attempts to find socio-economic roots to explain the integration crisis and discomfort were immediately discredited as worn-out phrases of an ‘old leftwing’ attitude of naive multiculturalism and political correctness (Boomkens: 308). The cultural relativism of leftwing politicians and academics was now criticized as
suggesting that all cultures were equal, thus undermining the force and self-confidence of national culture (Boomkens: 308). Indeed, in the twenty-first century as openness towards dual nationality has waned, policies have once again become more restrictionist (Maas: 5). It seems, that in order to ‘protect’ Dutch culture, cultural conformity is becoming a prerequisite for full citizenship.

The changes in the political priorities of parties across the spectrum stem, in part, from the ability of the ‘new’ right to legitimize Islamophobia as a means of defending European culture and security. This has been done through the adoption of issues that have a relatively large consensus in the West (women’s emancipation, for example) (Zuquete: 339). When the situation of women in Islam is discussed, the new right puts forward arguments that, in a not-so-distant past, were considered to be positions exclusive to progressive and feminist groups in the West (Zuquete: 333).

In the Netherlands, where progressive values have been so readily embraced, such arguments apparently serve to justify ethnic intolerance. Not only is there a widespread sentiment that immigrant cultures need not be tolerated, this type of intolerance is actually justified as a means of protecting the ‘progressive’ Dutch culture. Race and national identity can therefore be comfortably re-introduced to society because, according to this logic, these concepts are now defending society from the dangers that they were once meant to suppress. Essentially, Islamophobia has fuelled a new consensus that confuses not only traditionally ‘left’ and ‘right’ politics but also the values of a progressive and emancipated society.
In the development of citizenship, it seems, standards of tolerance are used to legitimize a very specific form of intolerance. Dutch society appears to have used elements of post-national citizenship to infuse exclusion of the ‘other’ into society. Basic human rights are, quite significantly, now matters that extend beyond the Dutch polity. However, so is the principle of self-determination that awarded cultural distinctiveness such prominence in the post-Cold War era. As a result, the Dutch have been given an excuse to re-define citizenship and national identity in these exclusive terms.

The rising tensions surrounding the issues of immigration and integration in the Netherlands culminated in the shot fired by Mohammed Bouyeri on November 2\textsuperscript{nd}, 2004. The sensational murder of filmmaker Theo van Gogh fanned the flames of the anti-immigrant fire when it was revealed that the assailant was a Muslim. Bouyeri had been motivated to fire half a dozen bullets into Van Gogh, slit his throat and, with a knife, pin a note to his chest proclaiming jihad against Holland, Europe and the United States, because he considered the film “Submission”, written by Ayaan Hirsi Ali, and directed by Van Gogh blasphemy (McGuire: 36).

The ensuing chaos surrounding the murder of Gogh, committed by a man of Moroccan descent, declared the end of traditional standards of tolerance. The radical nature of the crime horrified the Dutch public, galvanizing most of the population against Moroccan and Turkish immigrants (Saunders: A2). Even mainstream politicians expressed a radical degree of ethnic intolerance: three days after the Van Gogh killing, Dutch Deputy Prime
Minister Gerrit Zalm said, "We are declaring war" to "make radical Islamic movements disappear from the Netherlands." (McGuire: 36) In the aftermath of Van Gogh’s murder, ethnic intolerance boiled over, as the nation headed further down the slope of ethnic intolerance. Racism and hate crimes engulfed the nation, thus revealing the damaging effects that the long-simmering ethnic intolerance could have on Dutch social cohesion.

Essentially, Dutch society unleashed an unprecedented degree of intolerance. The reactions of ordinary Dutch people represents anything but the ‘progressive’, ‘liberal’, or ‘tolerant’ culture they were trying to ‘protect’. Within days of the killing, the nation once renowned for ‘tolerance’ became engulfed in an escalating spiral of violence. Attacks on mosques and Muslim schools brought retaliatory attacks on Protestant churches (McGuire: 36). Alongside violent racist incidents and arson attacks, the murder stimulated more ‘moderate’ racist sentiments (“Muslims in the EU”: 78). According to NGOs and media reports, migrants were confronted with name-calling in the streets, on public transport and during sports events (“Muslims in the EU”: 78). In the most extreme incident, a Moroccan immigrant was killed in the town of Breda (McGuire: 36).

The rise of Geert Wilders in the aftermath of the Van Gogh murder appears to have cemented this bold attitude towards the standard of ethnic tolerance. Wilders had been expelled by his party for his extreme views, and was at first easily dismissed by mainstream pundits as a political sideshow and a racist (Carter: A01). However, his one-man mission would no longer be laughed off after the murder of Van Gogh: within days,
at least 19 other members of parliament were supporting Wilders on immigration issues (Carter: A01).

In this way, ethnic intolerance and Dutch politics became intrinsically linked. The electorate continues to express discontent with ethnic and cultural diversity at the polls. This became clear in the most recent elections on June 9th 2010 when Geert Wilder’s Party saw an increase in seats, from 9 to 24 in the 150-seat second chamber in The Hague, seven fewer than the winning rightwing liberals of the VVD and six seats behind the Dutch Labour party (Traynor).

The new emphasis on integration in mainstream cultural practices is exemplified by the so-called citizenship test. In 1998, the government had already issued the Law on Civic Integration of Newcomers, to be applied to immigrants and to those wishing to immigrate to the Netherlands in the context of family reunion of marriage, with “integration” courses consisting of learning the Dutch language and the acquisition of general knowledge of Dutch culture and of how to function in Dutch society (Shahid: 17).

However, in the twenty-first century the cultural consensus among the Dutch produced a more radical version of the citizenship test. In 2006 a new Civic Integration Abroad Act entered into force, aimed mainly at restricting immigration through family reunion and obliging persons who apply for a residence permit to take the exam from abroad (Vink: 345-6). Through this policy, cultural citizenship and immigrant integration have become fundamentally linked. This exam is meant to provide an introduction to the ‘progressive’
Dutch culture before immigrants can even enter the Netherlands, let alone apply for citizenship. It makes obtaining the level of knowledge required to enter fully the ‘personal responsibility’ of the newcomer, to be achieved through the purchase of a controversial authorized immigration package, which includes a film that depicts undressed women sunbathing and explicit expressions of homosexuality (Vink: 345-6). It is therefore not only an attempt to introduce immigrants to Dutch ‘culture’; it specifically targets more conservative Muslims. Thus, with the introduction of this exam, the Dutch went from having an immigrant friendly, multicultural reputation to being the first country in the world to demand that permanent residents complete pre-arrival integration courses (Tom: 461).

6.3 Conclusion: The Case of the Netherlands

In the second half of the twentieth century, the Netherlands surpassed most Western European nations in becoming a unified, ‘progressive’ society. Building on the legacy of Pillarization, the Dutch became renowned for ‘tolerant’ ideals such as equal rights for women and homosexuals, in addition to liberal attitudes towards drugs and prostitution. In this atmosphere of tolerance, the rising anti-immigrant sentiment that has swept the nation in the post-911 era therefore appears to be indicative of a sudden shift in the standard of ethnic tolerance. However, taking into account the historical circumstance and complex realities of Dutch society we see that the shift has been anything but sudden.
Even though “ethnicity” was noticeably absent as a term in the political discourse in Western European societies after the Second World War, subtle indicators of the standard of ethnic intolerance were apparent in the Netherlands. The best indication is perhaps found in the integration policies of the post-WWII era that resulted in the systematic exclusion of “guest workers”. Even the “multicultural” policy of the 1980’s was meant to “keep the country’s new workers working” and not to make “Dutchmen out of Muslim immigrants.”(Kramer: 60) Still, this policy was presented as multiculturalism that meant to ‘emancipate’ ethnic minorities’. However, in spite of the inequalities that this policy produced, it seems to have been accepted at face value. Consequently, the reality of these rather intolerant policies was long denied.

The subtlety of ethnic intolerance in the post-War era appears to have masked this dark reality. The Dutch did not embrace being an ethnically diverse society; they were forced to ignore it. When the concept of ethnicity re-emerged in the post-Cold War era of “self-determination”, the majority of the population proved that, race, culture and nationalism cannot be ignored. Ethnicity and national identity have taken over the discourse of every sector, from media, to public discourse, politics and policy-making. Just as the progressive ideals of the 1960’s had once done, ethnic intolerance has established itself as a fundamental characteristic of Dutch society.

The reality of Dutch society appears to be that ‘tolerance’ and ‘intolerance’ co-exist. In other words, the Dutch ‘standard of tolerance’ is not black and white. It would be incorrect to classify the emergence of ethnic intolerance as a sudden shift in the standard
of ‘tolerance’. What has been revealed is that the Dutch ‘standard of tolerance’ is a grey matter. As once hidden characteristics of Dutch society have risen to the surface, the traditional perception of the ‘tolerant’ Netherlands is being reconsidered. However, it is not only Dutch identity that needs to be rethought: as a once politically incorrect rhetoric spreads, democratic society appears to be entering a new phase. The underlying anti-immigrant sentiment of twenty-first century public discourse, politics and policies has muddled not only the definitions of ‘left’ and ‘right’ wing and ‘liberal’ and ‘progressive’ values; but also the very meaning of the word ‘tolerance.’
VII. Conclusion: Is the Netherlands Emblematic of a European Trend?

In nations once built on the idea of eliminating racist discrimination, recent changes in public discourse, politics and policy-making seem to indicate that the standard of ethnic tolerance has dramatically shifted. On the surface, the rise of Islamophobia over the course of the last two decades does indeed appear to be a sudden shift. However, behind the façade of progress and tolerance that is attributed to nations such as France, Germany, and the Netherlands there is a much darker reality.

Within the context of shifting standards of ethnic tolerance, the Netherlands has stood out for the particularly radical developments that have taken over Dutch society. The shift from a multicultural ‘Ethnic Minorities Policy’, focused on maintaining the cultural identity of immigrants, to an ‘Integration Policy’, which threatens immigrants who fail to adapt to Dutch culture with fines, does appear to be a 180 degree shift in tolerance. However, the evolution of integration policies in the post-WWII era, as well as the complex history of colonialism, indicate that the Dutch have struggled to come to terms with the influx of ethnically diverse immigrants as much as any other Western European nation.

Ethnic diversity became a fact in Dutch society at the same time that the discussion of ‘race’ was repressed. In the rush to forget the horrors that had ravaged the continent in the Second World War, post-war leaders deemed racist discussions politically incorrect. It seems that, instead of confronting the open wounds of WWII, Europeans tried to absolve their sins by forgetting.
The truth about ethnic tolerance is therefore that it was a ‘forced’ tolerance; forced upon societies by the recent memories of the Holocaust. As nations across Western Europe experienced an influx of immigration that spanned the second half of the twentieth century, race and ethnicity became the elephant in the room. Race was an undeniable reality, yet it could not be addressed. Thus, the only standard of ethnic tolerance that existed only was that public displays of ethnic intolerance were no longer tolerated.

At the end of the Cold War it became evident that the complexities of race and ethnicity had been suppressed, but not eliminated. Although these feelings had remained hidden for some time, they began to climb back to the surface of societies across Western Europe. Race has been described as a set of conditions that not only shift overtime, but also refuse to remain silent (Goldberg: 337). Accordingly, it seems that as many nations in Western Europe could no longer turn a blind eye to the changes that had occurred to the ethnic make-up of their nations, their carefully constructed exteriors began to show some cracks.

The Dutch case is emblematic of this phenomenon that has been moving through European society since the end of WWII. In the wake of Islam being declared the new ideological ‘other’ this backlash has specifically targeted Muslims. What perhaps makes the Netherlands a particularly striking case is the success of public figures such as Pim Fortuyn, Geert Wilders, Paul Scheffer, and even Frits Bolkestein to capitalize on these sentiments.
In this sense, Pim Fortuyn is a revolutionary figure. Fortuyn’s views were different from those advocated by politicians such as Le Pen in France, Haider in Austria or De Winter in Flanders (Entzinger, 2006: 3). His claim was that he was not really against immigrants as such; his primary concern was the assault on democratic liberties that might result from the presence of so many people unfamiliar with western values, particularly Muslims (Entzinger, 2006: 3). Further immigration, he argued, would only exacerbate these problems (Entzinger, 2006: 3). These views broke post-War taboos and finally allowed the Dutch to vocalize their discontent. Once the Dutch were able to do so, it was only a matter of time before neighbouring societies followed suit.

Pim Fortuyn therefore legitimized anti-immigrant rhetoric. Although Fortuyn is an exceptional character, there are opportunists like Geert Wilders willing to send the same message in every Western European nation. The development of the ‘new’ right is no longer specific to the Dutch context. Over the last few years, Wilders has become the central figure in bringing the Dutch brand of extremism to other nations (“Continent of Fear”). As a result, Fortuyn’s trend of blurring the distinction of left and right is already visible in the rhetoric of many of Western Europe’s extreme right movements. Across the continent, the extreme right has been visibly active in its rejection of several cultural practices associated with Islam—ranging from the use of the headscarf and forced marriages, to honour-killings and female genital mutilation—by using arguments similar to those employed by mainstream groups that denounce inequalities and discrimination against women (Zuquete: 333).
Many Western European nations have been subject to changes similar to the ones that have provoked the radicalization of Dutch society. The volatile nature of ethnic tolerance that has emerged in most Western European nations suggests that no country is immune to a similar re-characterization. Immigrant integration is now a hotly debated topic across Europe, although the history and nature of these discussions differ from country to country (Penninx: 32). In many countries, the public has responded to the leaders of the ‘new’ right, who portray their groups as the ‘last defenders’ of their beleaguered communities, whose cultural identity, authenticity, and independence are threatened by national and global forces (Zuquete: 327). Right-Wing populists now hold seats in a number of the parliaments across Western Europe, such as Denmark, Norway, Finland, Austria, Belgium and Sweden.

Nations that had re-constructed promising societies have revealed that the failure to evolve in their standard of ethnic tolerance may well be Europe’s Achilles heel. In the era of post-national citizenship, the anti-immigrant sentiment encompassing Western Europe extends beyond the national level, threatening one of the greatest symbols of post-War progress. Islamophobia has not only influenced national discourse, politics, and policies; the fear of Muslims has infiltrated the EU.

The possible accession of Turkey has raised alarm bells mostly because it is a predominately Muslim country (Spencer: 2). A cultural tension over Turkey’s prospective membership seems to exist between the experts and technicians of the
process, who know from inside the recent evaluation of Turkey as a liberal democracy, and the European citizens who still continue to consider the opening of the EU towards the Southeast region as a sign of cultural betrayal, and future source of weakening of European democracy (Amiraux: 205). Public opinion seems to be overwhelmed by the basic suspicion, expressed in most debates on the admission of Turkey to the EU, that the Judeo-Christian value system is incompatible with the Islamic system (Schiffauer: 78).

Anti-Muslim ideology has not only influenced EU policy-making; it is also visible in the political realm. As a result of recent elections, EU politics have been infiltrated by the hostile developments taking over the Netherlands: the Dutch brought the politics of the ‘new’ right to the European level by handing Geert Wilders the second highest number of seats in the EU Parliamentary elections.

The European Union, which has had a major role in maintaining peace in Europe after two devastating world wars, now has a black cloud hanging over it. The progress made in the second half of the twentieth century, as well as the reputation the EU has garnered for itself on the world stage would be greatly undermined if EU level politics and discourse become a reflection of the anti-immigrant sentiment consuming many Western European nations. Unfortunately, if other nations follow a similar path to the one taken by the Netherlands since the end of the Cold War, member state actions could very well result in the tolerance of intolerance re-characterizing the European Union.
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