

# The framing of Islam in the post-9/11 world: the terminology used in Dutch politics

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## MASTER THESIS

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## Abbreviations

<b>Abbreviation</b>	<b>Meaning</b>	<b>Page</b>
9/11	The terrorist attacks against the United States on 11 September 2001.	6
BRIC	An acronym for the economic bloc of countries consisting of Brazil, Russia, India, and China.	11
CDA	Christian Democratic Appeal (Dutch: Christen-Democratisch Appèl)	6
CU	Christian Union (Dutch: ChristenUnie)	6
D66	Democrats 66 (Dutch: Democraten 66)	26
DNPP	Documentation Center Dutch Political Parties (Dutch: Documentatiecentrum Nederlandse Politieke Partijen)	45
FVD	Forum for Democracy (Dutch: Forum voor Democratie)	27
EU	European Union (Dutch: Europese Unie)	48
GL	GreenLeft (Dutch: Groenlinks)	45
IS	Islamic State (Dutch: Islamitische Staat)	19
ISIS	Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (Dutch: Islamitische Staat in Irak en Syrië)	63
LN	Livable Netherlands (Dutch: Leefbaar Nederland)	17
LPF	Pim Fortuyn List (Dutch: Lijst Pim Fortuyn)	6
MP	Member of Parliament (Dutch: Kamerlid, Parlements lid)	53
PvdA	Labour Party (Dutch: Partij van de Arbeid)	36
PVV	Party for Freedom (Dutch: Partij voor de Vrijheid)	6
SGP	Reformed Political Party (Dutch: Staatkundig Gereformeerde Partij)	6
VVD	People's Party for Freedom and Democracy (Dutch: Volkspartij voor Vrijheid en Democratie)	34

# Chapter 1 Introduction

## 1.1 Subject

The Netherlands has a long history with Islam. For many centuries, it controlled the largest Muslim nation in the world, Indonesia. However, the number of Muslims in the European territory was very low until the 1960s, accounting for less than 0.4% of the population.<sup>1</sup> In 2021, the Netherlands has just over 17.4 million inhabitants, of which roughly five per cent are Muslims.<sup>2</sup> The majority of Dutch Muslims has their roots in Turkey and Morocco, but the Muslim community includes members of various origins, from former colonies Surinam and Indonesia, to Afghanistan, Iraq and the Balkans. Other noteworthy facts are that most Dutch Muslims are Sunni Muslims, the largest movement of Islam worldwide, and that many reside in the four largest cities (Amsterdam, Rotterdam, The Hague and Utrecht).<sup>3</sup> However, especially after the turn of the century, the (alleged) increasing influence of Islam caused a heated political and public debate.<sup>4</sup> On the one hand, those who accept Islam as a religion similar to Christianity and Judaism, but on the other hand those who label it as intolerant, medieval or misogynistic, or even compare it to ideologies like Nazism and communism.<sup>5</sup>

This thesis analyses the framing of Islam in Dutch politics between 2002 and 2015. It predominantly covers the framing by the Christian parties in the aftermath of five moments that are (negatively) associated with Islam. These moments are (I) an interview with politician Pim Fortuyn in the newspaper *De Volkskrant*, (II) the murder of film director Theo van Gogh, (III) the broadcasting of Geert Wilders' short film *Fitna*, (IV) the Charlie Hebdo shooting, and (V) the presence of Dutch jihadis in the Syrian and Iraqi Civil Wars.

I have deliberately chosen Christian parties because comparable parties increase the representativeness of my research. For example, if my research shows that they framed Islam similarly, it could lead to conclusions on how political representatives of Christianity characterised Islam. In modern-day Dutch politics, there are three Christian parties: the CDA, the CU, and the SGP. They have in common that

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<sup>1</sup> "Bevolking; Islamiëten en hindoes in Nederland, 1 januari," Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek, last modified August 27, 2004, <https://opendata.cbs.nl/statline/#/CBS/nl/dataset/70086ned/table?fromstatweb>.

<sup>2</sup> Hans Schmeets, *De religieuze kaart van Nederland, 2010–2015* (Den Haag: Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek, 2016), 5.

<sup>3</sup> "Aantal moslims in Nederland blijft al jaren constant," NOS, December 22, 2016, <https://nos.nl/artikel/2149734-aantal-moslims-in-nederland-blijft-al-jaren-constant>.

<sup>4</sup> Thijs van Dooremalen, "The Framing of 9/11 in the American, French, and Dutch Public Spheres (2001-2015): A Contribution to the Sociology of Events" (PhD diss., University of Amsterdam, 2019), 199–200.

<sup>5</sup> "Wilders wil koran gaan 'gedogen'," NRC, February 12, 2017, <https://www.nrc.nl/nieuws/2017/02/12/wilders-nuanceert-koranverbod-a1545637>.

their ideology is based on Christianity and that they believe in social conservatism. The latter entails that these parties focus on the preservation of traditional values and beliefs. This conservative ideology might or might not have restrained them from accepting Islam. Of course, there are differences between the parties. The most noticeable is the religious input in their party programmes. The SGP is a Protestant fundamentalist party and strives towards a government fully based on the Bible. The CDA and the CU are Christian-Democratic parties. The former sees Christian values as a source of inspiration, while the latter bases its politics directly on the Bible.

It could have been interesting to analyse other parties, but the Christian parties stood out for various reasons. Firstly, the many similarities between Christianity and Islam. For example, they have many corresponding prophets and believe in an omnipotent and omnipresent God. Secondly, the implementation of the Biblical value of love of one's neighbour. This altruistic value implies that Christians should also use it against practitioners of other religions. Thirdly, throughout history, both Christians and Muslims committed dubious acts in the name of their God, acts that nowadays classify as crimes against humanity. Therefore, if the Christian parties state that exclusively Islam encourages violence, it is arguably hypocritical.

The research period takes place in the post-9/11 period because 9/11 made the Islam debate more prominent and fierce.<sup>6</sup> For example, in this dissertation, sociologist Thijs van Dooremalen researched the impact of 9/11 on the perception of Islam in different countries. In the case of the Netherlands, he concluded that the Dutch government saw it as an attack against the West.<sup>7</sup> This perception was different in France and the United States because they only saw it as an attack on the United States. Therefore, because the Netherlands felt personally involved, Islam became a point of discussion in the public sphere.

## **1.2 Scientific importance**

This thesis has an original angle of approach for two reasons. Firstly, it gathers new information. Other relevant studies mainly used the anti-Islam parties LPF or the PVV as a starting point. Of course, a lot is and could be researched there. But based on their ideologies, it was clear from the outset that they framed negatively. This study only looks at the Christian parties, whose framing methods are not common knowledge. Thus, based on the data available to me, this is a unique study in Islam framing.

Secondly, this thesis connects existing theories to new topics. For example, it looks at the influence of Samuel P. Huntington's clash of civilizations thesis on the Islam framing by the Christian parties. Furthermore, it applies Deepak Kumar's research on Islam framing, especially the notion of five dominant

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<sup>6</sup> Van Dooremalen, "The Framing of 9/11 in the American, French, and Dutch Public Spheres," 200.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid, 199-200.

frames, in a Dutch context. And last but not least, this thesis sheds light on the citizenship concept - a key concept for democracy - concerning Dutch jihadis in the Syrian and Iraqi Civil Wars. These theories or concepts are explained in more detail in the theoretical framework, section 1.4.

There are three reasons why this thesis could be useful. Firstly, it provides new insight into frameshifts in the political debate on matters associated with Islam. As a result, we might get a better understanding of the complicated and nonlinear route to the acceptance of it within Dutch society.

Secondly, this thesis offers new information on how Christian parties dealt with Islam. Representatives of these parties (and schools of thought) can use it to adjust their framing method (or not).

Thirdly, this thesis confirms how indispensable framing is in politics. Framing is the use of specific language to evoke certain emotions or images, making the message more convincing. By constantly invoking a certain frame, the framing party may effectively control discussion and perception of an issue. Therefore, every politician should be familiar with framing and should know how to apply it.

### **1.3 Research question**

This thesis analyses the framing of Islam in Dutch politics between 2002 and 2015. More specifically, it analyses the framing of Islam by the CDA, the CU and the SGP in the aftermath of five Islam-related events. These events were briefly mentioned in section 1.1. Usually, the aftermath covers two weeks. However, because the fifth event is more abstract, the corresponding case study has been extended to ten months. Ultimately, this thesis centres on the following research question: How is Islam framed by the CDA, the CU and the SGP in the aftermath of five Islam-related events in the period 2002-2015? The sub-questions are explained in the outline thesis structure, section 1.5.

### **1.4 Concepts**

This section presents an overview of the main concepts and theories that are applied in this thesis. In the following chapters, these concepts and theories are discussed in more detail.

#### *Framing*

The framing concept is the main concept of this thesis. Therefore, it receives its own chapter. I first came across the importance of framing in George Lakoff's handbook *Don't Think of an Elephant* (2004). Lakoff writes that in one of his classes, he told his students *not* to think of an elephant.<sup>8</sup> Not surprisingly, they all

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<sup>8</sup> George Lakoff, *Don't Think of an Elephant: Know Your Values and Frame the Debate* (Vermont: Chelsea Green Publishing, 2004).

failed to do so. That is because their brains automatically converted the word *elephant* into the image of an elephant. This example shows that eye-catching content words are relevant in messaging.

The framing concept was first described in the field of sociology. Today, it is one of the main theories in communication, linguistics, psychology, and sociology.<sup>9</sup> The Canadian-born sociologist Erwin Goffman is considered to be a pioneer in this field. In his book *Frame Analysis* (1974), he sees it as a method that explains how human behaviour and interaction are structured.<sup>10</sup> Goffman believes that frames are imaginary boxes with relevant content. He argues that every individual possesses multiple boxes which can be opened at any time. Therefore, if social interaction changes, the individual adapts to the new situation.

Although Goffman's definition of framing is interesting for sociological purposes, it is less useful for the main subject of this thesis. Therefore, it is better to look at Lakoff's definition. He argues that frames are mental structures that shape the way we see the world.<sup>11</sup> They sit deep in our mind but are activated by catch-phrases, references and simple words. Therefore, when you hear a specific word, a corresponding frame in your brain is activated. Furthermore, Lakoff sees framing as a specific bundle of linguistic and visual elements in which the messenger emphasises or hides certain aspects to lead the receiver to the desired interpretation. By his definition, political messaging resembles marketing. The resemblance is that political parties and companies *sell* their ideas or products in the most attractive way possible. In doing so, they emphasise the pros and mitigate or ignore the cons.

Another noteworthy researcher of the framing concept is Robert Entman, professor of political communication at George Washington University. In his article in the *Journal of Communication*, he points out that the strength of a message lies in its regular repetition.<sup>12</sup> Entman argues that through repetition, placement, and reinforcing associations, some words and images are more memorable than others. He also states that frames are constructed from and embodied in concepts, keywords, metaphors, symbols, and visual images.<sup>13</sup> Thus, effective frames must contain noticeable words or images and must be repeated on numerous occasions.

The last researchers I want to mention are Gail Fairhurst and Robert Sarr. In *The Art of Framing* (1996), they describe seven framing techniques: metaphor, stories, traditions, jargon/catchphrases, artefacts,

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<sup>9</sup> Silke Schmidt, "(Re-)Framing the Arab/Muslim: Mediating Orientalism in Contemporary Arab American Life Writing," (PhD diss., Philipps-Universität Marburg, 2012), 97.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid, 97-98.

<sup>11</sup> Lakoff, *Don't Think of an Elephant*, 15.

<sup>12</sup> Robert M. Entman, "Framing U.S. Coverage of International News: Contrasts in Narratives of the KAL and Iran Air Incidents," *Journal of Communication* 41, 4 (Autumn 1991): 7, <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/j.1460-2466.1991.tb02328.x>.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.



contrast, and spin.<sup>14</sup> These techniques will be further explained in the second chapter of this thesis. However, their main point is that these techniques increase the effectiveness of political messaging because they present a message in a striking or context-specific way.

In short, frames are mental structures that can be activated by catch-phrases, references and simple words. Moreover, a politician or a political party should know that five framing techniques increase the effectiveness of political messaging. Furthermore, through repetition, placement, and reinforcing associations, some words and images are more memorable than others.

### *Collective identity*

Collective identity encompasses an individual's affiliation with specific groups. Therefore, an individual recognises himself in a group and behaves accordingly. These groups can be based, for example, on age, leisure activity, music taste, nationality or religion. In this thesis, I analyse how the Christian parties framed Islam, and by extension the Dutch Muslim community. The collective identity concept helps understand why people stereotype themselves and others, and why generalisation is hard to prevent.

In their article 'Politicalized Collective Identity' (2001), researchers Bernd Simon and Bert Klandermans argue that collective identity serves important psychological functions. They point out that five seem particularly important: belongingness, distinctiveness, respect, understanding (or meaning), and agency.<sup>15</sup> Not surprisingly, these functions correspond to the basic psychological needs. Thus, one can argue that experiencing a collective identity contributes to a meaningful social life. In addition, Simon and Klandermans argue that several social-psychological processes (e.g., stereotyping, conformity, prejudice, and discrimination) serve the five functions. In other words, these social-psychological processes contribute to a sense of belonging to a group. For example, discriminating against out-groups in favour of in-groups, and accepting influence from in-group members but rejecting influence from out-group members.<sup>16</sup> Thus, a key aspect of collective identity is the us-versus-them mentality.

The Muslim identity is the main collective identity in this thesis. In 2014, two studies were published on Muslim identity, one on British Muslims and one on French Muslims. In their article in *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, researchers Chris Allen and Arshad Isakjee argued that the Rushdie affair in 1989 was a key moment

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<sup>14</sup> Gail T. Fairhurst and Robert A. Sarr, *The Art of Framing: Managing the Language of Leadership* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1996), 125, <https://www.proquest.com/docview/216291792?accountid=13598>.

<sup>15</sup> Bernd Simon and Bert Klandermans, "Politicalized Collective Identity: A Social Psychological Analysis," *American Psychologist*, vol. 56, no. 4 (April 2001): 321, <https://oce-ovid-com.eur.idm.oclc.org/article/00000487-200104000-00002/HTML>.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid*, 320.

in the shaping and construction of Britain's Muslims as an indeterminable *other* in popular discourses.<sup>17</sup> As a result, it catalysed the need for many British Muslims to get together and lobby for greater recognition and rights. Therefore, the stereotyping and labelling of Muslims resulted in a stronger Muslim community. The causes and consequences of the Rushdie affair are further discussed in the third chapter of this thesis.

On the other side of the Channel, Jennifer Fredette analysed the identity and citizenship of French Muslims. She argued that there is not one French Muslim identity because the group is too diverse.<sup>18</sup> For example when it comes to ethnic background, religious intensity, and place of residence. However, in the French public discourse, the Muslim community is frequently depicted as an existing community.<sup>19</sup> Thus, Fredette's research shows that the notion of a collective identity goes both ways. Muslims can belong to a Muslim community, but others can also force such an identity upon them.

For many Muslims, Islam is not merely a religion, but a central part of their identity. For example, in June 2018, Geert Wilders announced a cartoon drawing contest of the Prophet Mohammed. Thereby, he ridiculed one of the most fundamental aspects of Islam, the Shahada. His announcement led to minor protests in the Netherlands and even some in Pakistan, so apparently, Wilders' provocation triggered emotions.<sup>20</sup> A psychological explanation for this reaction is that the protesters felt that some part of their identity was under attack. Therefore, they felt obliged to respond.

### *Clash of civilisations*

This thesis analyses, among other things, if the Christian parties copied ideas from Huntington's clash of civilizations thesis. His thesis is a direct response to Francis Fukuyama's thesis about the end of the ideology struggle. In 1992, political scientist Fukuyama argued that Western liberal democracy is the final form of government because the two main competitors, fascism and communism, had been defeated.<sup>21</sup> Therefore, there was no real competition left for liberal democracy and the market economy. Thus, Fukuyama believed that the progression of history as a struggle between ideologies had ended. In the following year, Samuel P. Huntington presented his counter-thesis of a clash of civilizations in an article in *Foreign Affairs*. He

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<sup>17</sup> Chris Allen and Arshad Isakjee, "Controversy, Islam and politics: an exploration of the 'Innocence of Muslims' affair through the eyes of British Muslim elites," *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, vol. 38 (11) (2015): 1852-1853, <https://www-tandfonline-com.eur.idm.oclc.org/doi/pdf/10.1080/01419870.2014.941893?needAccess=true>.

<sup>18</sup> Jennifer Fredette, *Constructing Muslims in France: Discourse, Public Identity, and the Politics of Citizenship* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2014), 5, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt14bt3kx>.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> "De cartoonwedstrijd van Wilders, wat houdt die precies in?," NOS, August 29, 2018, <https://nos.nl/artikel/2248092-de-cartoonwedstrijd-van-wilders-wat-houdt-die-precies-in>.

<sup>21</sup> Francis Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man* (New York: Free Press, 1992).

believed that Fukuyama was partially right: ideological and economic struggles are things of the past in the post-Cold War world. However, Huntington claimed that cultural and religious struggles between civilisations will be the new main source of conflict.<sup>22</sup> He argued that the future struggle will be between Islam and the West since he believed that the former is a monolithic force that is hostile to the West, expansionist, and prone to violence.<sup>23</sup> Therefore, Huntington demanded that the West accepts that the Islamic civilisation has other traditions and values which are deeply rooted in their religious-cultural history.

I like to mention three researchers who wrote about the popularity of the clash of civilizations thesis. Firstly, the German political scientist Egbert Jahn. In his book *World Political Challenges* (2013), he argued that multiple developments in the late 1990s and early 2000s contributed to the popularisation of Huntington's thesis.<sup>24</sup> For example, the economic rise of the BRIC countries and the nuclear armament of India and Pakistan. Secondly, the Indian political scientist Deepshikha Shahi. In her book *Understanding Post-9/11 Afghanistan* (2017), she argued that Huntington's thesis gained momentum after 9/11 because the terrorist attacks 'reinforced the demonic image of Islam.'<sup>25</sup> Thirdly, the Maltese political scientist Roderick Pace. In his article 'Clash of Civilisations or Intercultural Dialogue?' (2007), Pace states that Huntington's thesis had a measure of appeal because it is 'simple, compressing a very complex reality into a simplified and comprehensible framework of world politics.'<sup>26</sup> In other words, he sees the thesis as an easy answer to a (very) complex issue

Jahn, Shahi and Pace also discussed the criticism of Huntington's thesis. Jahn argued that Huntington's depiction of international relations as a clash of civilisations was 'met with opposition by adherents of a certain type of cultural globalisation.'<sup>27</sup> Furthermore, he stated that critics accused Huntington of making serious methodological errors.<sup>28</sup> For example, Huntington did not take into account whether a

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<sup>22</sup> Samuel P. Huntington, "The Clash of Civilizations?," *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 72, no. 3 (Summer 1993): 22-23, <https://www.proquest.com/docview/214280190?accountid=13598>.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid, 46.

<sup>24</sup> Egbert Jahn, *World Political Challenges: Political Issues Under Debate - Vol. 3* (New York: Springer-Verlag Berlin and Heidelberg GmbH & Co. KG, 2013), 143.

<sup>25</sup> Deepshikha Shahi, *Understanding post-9/11 Afghanistan: a critical insight into Huntington's civilizational approach* (Bristol: E-International Relations Publishing, 2017), 94.

<sup>26</sup> Roderick Pace, "Clash of Civilisations or Intercultural Dialogue? Challenges for EU Mediterranean Policies," in *EU Development Policy in a Changing World: Challenges for the 21st Century*, ed. Andrew Mold (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2007), 85, [https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Roderick-Pace/publication/266307428\\_Clash\\_of\\_Civilisations\\_or\\_Intercultural\\_Dialogue\\_Challenges\\_for\\_EU\\_Mediterranean\\_Policies/links/542c06170cf277d58e8a951a/Clash-of-Civilisations-or-Intercultural-Dialogue-Challenges-for-EU-Mediterranean-Policies.pdf](https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Roderick-Pace/publication/266307428_Clash_of_Civilisations_or_Intercultural_Dialogue_Challenges_for_EU_Mediterranean_Policies/links/542c06170cf277d58e8a951a/Clash-of-Civilisations-or-Intercultural-Dialogue-Challenges-for-EU-Mediterranean-Policies.pdf).

<sup>27</sup> Jahn, *World Political Challenges*, 145.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid, 144.

civilisation is split into many different and non-cooperating states. This methodological argument also emerges in Shahi's research. In her book, she categorised the criticism into three groups: epistemological, methodological and ethical.<sup>29</sup> She wrote:

‘The epistemological critique condemns the clash of civilizations thesis on grounds of its realist, orientalist and elitist outlook. The methodological critique attacks its monolithic, inconsistent and reductionist/essentialist attitude while the ethical critique denounces it for being a purposeful thesis that fuels enemy discourse and, in the process, becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy.’<sup>30</sup>

Pace’s main criticism is that Huntington failed to take into account the (very) complex reality in the Mediterranean region. In his view, the world cannot be divided into eight main civilizations, in which religion, in particular, is the distinguishing feature. Instead, Pace argues that the major intrinsic obstacles in Muslim culture are linked to the political and economic aims of political elites and their opponents.<sup>31</sup> Therefore, among other things, Pace sees no confirmation of the clash of civilisations thesis in 9/11.<sup>32</sup> In his article, he supports his case by quoting the late Edward W. Said: ‘The carefully planned and horrendous, pathologically motivated suicide attack and mass slaughter by a small group of deranged militants has been turned into proof of Huntington’s theory.’<sup>33</sup> However, Pace does acknowledge that ‘anti-Western’ escalated in the wake of the Iraq War.

One of the criticisms is that the clash of civilisations thesis is a self-fulfilling prophecy. This point of criticism also emerged in the collective identity studies, as mentioned previously. Because the us-versus-them mentality is a key aspect of collective identity, others force a predefined identity upon Muslims. However, as explained by Fredette, the stereotyping of Muslims results in a stronger Muslim community.<sup>34</sup> Thus, searching for ‘enemies’ could be a self-fulfilling prophecy.

Furthermore, I like to mention Deepa Kumar's research on Islam framing because it referred extensively to Huntington’s thesis. For example, he argues that the clash of civilisation thesis was eschewed by the Clinton administration, but was adopted and promoted by the Bush Jr. administration.<sup>35</sup> During Bush's

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<sup>29</sup> Shahi, *Understanding Post-9/11 Afghanistan*, 15-22.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid*, 15.

<sup>31</sup> Pace, “Clash of Civilisations or Intercultural Dialogue?,” 102.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid*, 86.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>34</sup> Fredette, *Constructing Muslims in France*, 46.

<sup>35</sup> Deepa Kumar, “Framing Islam: the resurgence of orientalism during the Bush II era,” *Journal of Communication Inquiry*, vol. 34 (3) (2010): 255, <https://journals-sagepub-com.eur.idm.oclc.org/doi/pdf/10.1177/0196859910363174>.

presidency, which lasted from 20 January 2001 to 20 January 2009, there was long-lasting military cooperation between the United States and the Netherlands. Because this thesis analyses Islam-related events between 2002 and 2015, it is interesting to analyse whether the Dutch cabinets, led by CDA party leader Jan Peter Balkenende from 22 July 2002 to 14 October 2010, also adopted and promoted the clash of civilization thesis.

Last but not least, Kumar argues that five dominant frames are used in the political discourse to discuss the Islam problem in the post-9/11 world.<sup>36</sup> These frames are: (I) Islam is a monolithic religion, (II) Islam is a uniquely sexist religion, (III) the ‘Muslim mind’ is incapable of rationality and science, (IV) Islam is inherently violent, and (V) the West spreads democracy, while Islam spawns terrorism. My thesis analyses whether these frames are applied by the Christian parties.

### *Islamophobia*

A phobia is an extreme aversion or fear to something. Thus, simply put, Islamophobia is the extreme aversion or fear to Islam. However, sometimes this phobia is also aimed at Muslims and cultural customs from Islamic countries. However, the stigma of Islamophobia could be used too soon. An individual must be fearful or have a deep-seated disinclination. Not believing in the Quran or rejecting cultural practices is not being Islamophobic.

In 2012, Ineke van der Valk of Leiden University defined Islamophobia as ‘a historical-social ideology that uses images, symbols, texts, facts and interpretations to give a negative meaning to Islam and Muslims.’<sup>37</sup> Therefore, according to her, it is more than just aversion or fear. It is an ideology that uses multiple resources to put Islam in a bad light of thought. Furthermore, in her research, she argues that there is an increasing anti-Muslim sentiment since the 1990s.<sup>38</sup> This sentiment can be traced back to the Rushdie affair of 1989, which will be discussed in chapter three. Also, Van der Valk pointed out that expressions of Islamophobia are found in statements of the PVV and the steadily growing anti-Islam set up within extreme right-wing movements.<sup>39</sup>

In 2013, Christine Ogan of Indiana University and three co-authors analysed the rise of anti-Muslim prejudice in Europe and the United States. They argued that negative attitudes toward Islam are ‘most

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<sup>36</sup> Ibid, 256-257.

<sup>37</sup> Ineke van der Valk, *Islamofobie en discriminatie* (Amsterdam: Pallas Publications, 2012), 33.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid, 77.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid, 118.

strongly and consistently associated with political conservatism on both sides of the Atlantic.’<sup>40</sup> In other words, anti-Muslim attitudes correspond to specific political views. Thus, for example, a proponent of political conservatism is more likely to have Islamophobic characteristics. However, in France, but not in the other countries of their study, the importance of the respondents' religion was also relevant for anti-Muslim attitudes. Ogan and her co-authors also concluded that frequent media exposure to Islam-related issues strengthens negative attitudes.<sup>41</sup>

### *Citizenship*

In this thesis, I analyse, among other things, how the Christian parties framed the Dutch Muslim citizens who joined jihadist movements in the Syrian and Iraqi Civil Wars. For example, if the parties thought these jihadists should be allowed to keep their Dutch citizenship, despite their (suspected) terrorist acts.

Usually, citizenship is about the position or status of being a citizen of a particular country. For example, an individual born and raised in the Netherlands normally has Dutch citizenship, and an individual with family ties in two countries is eligible for dual citizenship. However, in 2018, the American historian Frederick Cooper argues that citizenship is also a framework for political action, for claim-making.<sup>42</sup> Therefore when you gain citizenship, you (usually) gain access to political, social and economic rights. For example, the right to vote and the right to social security. However, as Cooper points out, citizenship and equality are not always linked. Citizens could still be excluded from power and be treated differently.

In the same fashion, the previously mentioned Jennifer Fredette applies the notion of citizenship as both a legal reality and a nationally defined normative ideal.<sup>43</sup> Therefore, individuals who do not fit that ideal will experience difficulties, albeit the protections of their formal rights. In the Netherlands, the PVV is known for making normative distinctions between groups, the us-versus-them mentality. For example, on 19 March 2014, party leader Wilders publicly stated that he preferred fewer Moroccans in the Netherlands. A comment he later corrected to ‘fewer criminal Moroccans’. Nevertheless, his point is that criminals with double passports are not welcome in the Netherlands. Thus, Wilders suggested that these people should not be citizens according to his normative ideal, regardless of their legal status. In regards to my thesis, I will

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<sup>40</sup> Christine Ogan et al., “The rise of anti-Muslim prejudice: Media and Islamophobia in Europe and the United States,” *International Communication Gazette*, vol. 76 (1) (2014): 40, <https://journals-sagepub-com.eur.idm.oclc.org/doi/pdf/10.1177/1748048513504048>.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid, 41.

<sup>42</sup> Frederick Cooper, *Citizenship, Inequality and Difference* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2018), 144.

<sup>43</sup> Fredette, *Constructing Muslims in France*, 12.

analyse whether the CDA, the CU and the SGP had similar views on the Dutch Muslim citizens who joined jihadist movements in the Syrian and Iraqi Civil Wars.

### **1.5 Outline thesis structure**

Besides the introductory chapter, this thesis contains three research chapters and a concluding chapter. The second chapter discusses the framing concept and analyses its application in politics. Furthermore, it delves into the connection between framing and public perception. This chapter's research question is: What is framing and how is it used in politics? It contains a great deal of literature on framing and other relevant concepts.

The third chapter, historiography, provides an overview of the political debate on Islam between 1989 and 2001. In the first-mentioned year, the attention towards Islam grew rapidly after Ayatollah Khomeini issued a fatwa to kill the British novelist Salman Rushdie. His act caused controversy in the Western world because their cherished freedom of speech was attacked by the highest political and religious authority of the Islamic Republic of Iran. The historiography ends when the terrorist organisation Al-Qaeda attacks the United States. The research question in this chapter is: What were the main arguments towards Islam in the political discourse between 1989 and 2001? Since the major events between 1989 and 2001 have already been analysed by historians and political scientists, I will mainly summarise their research.

The fourth chapter analyses how the Christian parties responded to the five Islam-related events and searches for frameshifts over time. Understandably, this chapter will be the most comprehensive since it contains a significant amount of self-examined information. For example, it uses data from government websites, newspapers and social media. The research question in this chapter is: Are there any frameshifts in the period 2002-2015 when it comes to Islam framing by the CDA, CU and SGP?

The concluding chapter summarises the main arguments from the previous chapters. It also gives the best possible answer to the main research question, and it recommends further research.

### **1.6 Methods and sources**

A thesis must have good sources and methods. In this section, I will explain which sources I used and how I obtained information.

#### *Methods*

This thesis applies a qualitative research method, which has two main characteristics. Firstly, it collects textual information instead of numerical information. Secondly, it gathers multiple forms of information

rather than rely on a single information source. For example, all relevant information will be gathered from websites, documents, interviews and videos.

Furthermore, instead of statistical analysis, I looked for opinions and motivations. Therefore, this approach enabled me to explain not only *which* frames had been used but also *why* they had been used.

Moreover, I used case studies to narrow down my thesis. These case studies tested to what extent the Christian parties contribute to the increasingly negative perception that people have of Islam. Although this approach doesn't answer a research question completely, it gave some indications and allows further elaboration on the subject.

Finally, I used frame analysis - a type of discourse analysis - to contextualise publications and statements. This analysing method emphasises reading entire texts to fully understand the meaning of sentences. Frame analysis can be achieved by applying four steps. First of all, look for broad forms of emphasis such as headlines and placement of specific sentences. It can be expected that traces of the frame can be found in the headlines or at the beginning of a text. Next, look for master narratives. For example, what is the main source of conflict and is there an evident existence of heroes and villains. Then, look for stylistic clues such as word choices, reference modes and use of quotations. For example, the description of *radical Islam* suggests that there are gradations in Islam, the non-radical one and the radical one. Furthermore, the word *radical* - or *extreme* or *fundamental* - implies that Islam has a dangerous side. As a final point, after gathering data in the previous steps, there is usually enough information to explain the underlying assumptions of the frames.

However, not all the sources and methods are infallible due to several reasons. Firstly, subjectivity is intertwined with frame analysis. It was challenging to recognise frames because framing is open to interpretation. Therefore, I could have recognised frames that others don't recognise and vice versa. Thus, personal errors are a downside of this research method. Secondly, the validity of the case studies. I selected the cases based on publicity and effect, but there were, of course, other cases available. For example, the Manchester Arena bombing on 22 May 2017 or the (supposed) presence of Salafism on the Cornelius Haga Lyceum, a Dutch high school, in the spring of 2019. Different cases may produce different outcomes.

### *Sources*

In this thesis, I used both primary and secondary sources. The primary sources were mainly used in chapter 4, while the secondary sources were used in chapters 1 to 3.

Since I researched a new topic in chapter 4, there was almost no existing literature on it. Therefore, I had to look for primary sources myself. For example, I analysed the websites of the three parties ([www.cda.nl](http://www.cda.nl), [www.christenunie.nl](http://www.christenunie.nl) and [www.sgp.nl](http://www.sgp.nl)) and their social media ([www.facebook.com](http://www.facebook.com),



www.twitter.com and www.youtube.com). Furthermore, I visited the government website www.officielebekendmakingen.nl, which contains official government publications, such as written texts of parliamentary debates. Finally, I watched television interviews between politicians and reporters, especially those broadcasted by well-known television programmes, such as the NOS Journaal and RTL Nieuws. I also searched for interviews on www.nos.nl, www.npo.nl, www.rtlnieuws.nl, and www.youtube.com.

Chapters 1 to 3 are otherwise known as the introduction chapter, the framing chapter, and the historiographical chapter. For these chapters, I needed secondary sources. For example, academic publications, news websites and government websites. The academic publications were available in the (online) library of the Erasmus University Rotterdam (<https://eur.on.worldcat.org/advancedsearch>) and on Google Scholar ([www.scholar.google.com](http://www.scholar.google.com)).

To limit the extent of this thesis, I mainly analysed sources that were published within two weeks after a case. The reason behind this fixed research time is that most political responses occurred during the first couple of weeks after an event. A quick response is important, given that the event is still fresh in people's minds. However, because the fifth case is more abstract, the corresponding study was extended to ten months. Hereby, I looked at three parliamentary debates between the summer of 2014 and the summer of 2015.

## 1.7 Case studies

This thesis used case studies. This allowed me to delineate the subject because I did not have the time or resources to conduct large-scale research. Each case study examined how the CDA, the CU and the SGP reacted to the corresponding event. The five case studies are explained below.

### *Case 1: Fortuyn's interview in De Volkskrant (2002)*

On 9 February 2002, Dutch newspaper *De Volkskrant* published their interview with politician Pim Fortuyn. At that time, Fortuyn was the party leader of LN, a relatively new party in the centre-right of the political spectrum. The interview received a lot of publicity because Fortuyn made three controversial statements: Islam is a backward culture, Islamists should not be allowed to enter the Netherlands, and article 1<sup>44</sup> of the constitution should be abolished.<sup>45</sup> Afterwards, Fortuyn received criticism from his political opponents and

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<sup>44</sup> "The Constitution of the Kingdom of the Netherlands 2018," Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations, accessed October 31, 2021, [https://www.government.nl/binaries/government/documents/reports/2019/02/28/the-constitution-of-the-kingdom-of-the-netherlands/WEB\\_119406\\_Grondwet\\_Koninkrijk\\_ENG.pdf](https://www.government.nl/binaries/government/documents/reports/2019/02/28/the-constitution-of-the-kingdom-of-the-netherlands/WEB_119406_Grondwet_Koninkrijk_ENG.pdf).

<sup>45</sup> "Fortuyn: grens dicht voor islamiet," *De Volkskrant*, February 9, 2002, <https://www.volkskrant.nl/nieuws-achtergrond/fortuyn-grens-dicht-voor-islamiet~b1867f23>.

even from his fellow party members.<sup>46</sup> One day later, after a party emergency meeting, Fortuyn was removed as party leader.

#### *Case 2: The murder of Van Gogh (2004)*

Theo van Gogh was a Dutch film director and producer, author and newspaper columnist. He was a well-known critic of Islam, and he expressed harsh criticism of the multicultural society. On 29 Augustus 2004, the Dutch public broadcasting network aired Van Gogh's short film *Submission*, a film in which Islam is accused of misogyny and a culture of violence against women. After the broadcasting, Van Gogh received death threats and was under police protection. Nevertheless, he was assassinated in Amsterdam while cycling to his work. Because the murderer confessed his act was religiously inspired, it stirred the debate about the position of Islam in the Netherlands.<sup>47</sup>

#### *Case 3: Wilder's short film Fitna (2008)*

Geert Wilders is the founder and party leader of the PVV. This nationalist party is founded in 2006 and is known for its criticism of Islam and opposition to immigration. On 27 March 2008, Wilders put his short film *Fitna* on the internet. Not surprisingly, this film is critical about Islam. For example, it claims that Islam encourages terrorism, antisemitism, and violence against women, while simultaneously showing images of terroristic acts and quotations from the Quran. *Fitna* provoked a reaction from the mainstream media, other politicians and the Muslim community, both domestic and abroad.<sup>48,49</sup>

#### *Case 4: Charlie Hebdo shooting (2015)*

Charlie Hebdo is a French satirical weekly newspaper that features cartoons, reports, and jokes. It attracted worldwide attention for its cartoons of the Islamic prophet Muhammad. On 7 January 2015, twelve people were killed and eleven people were injured in an attack on their offices. Hatred for Charlie Hebdo's cartoons is considered to be the principal motive for the massacre. The gunmen identified themselves as belonging to

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<sup>46</sup> "Fortuyn komt met eigen lijst, opzet vermoed achter ontslag," *De Volkskrant*, February 12, 2002,

<https://www.volkskrant.nl/nieuws-achtergrond/fortuyn-komt-met-eigen-lijst-opzet-vermoed-achter-ontslag~bb9160b3>.

<sup>47</sup> "Politiek reageert geschokt op moord Theo van Gogh," *NU.nl*, November 2, 2004, <https://www.nu.nl/algemeen/435110/politiek-reageert-geschokt-op-moord-theo-van-gogh.html>.

<sup>48</sup> Mark Tran, "Dutch government could ban anti-Islam film," *The Guardian*, accessed March 3, 2008, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2008/mar/03/netherlands.islam>.

<sup>49</sup> "Nato fears over Dutch Islam film," *BBC News*, March 3, 2018, [http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south\\_asia/7274259.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south_asia/7274259.stm).

a branch of Al-Qaeda. In the aftermath of this attack, the phrase ‘Je suis Charlie’ became a common slogan of support.

*Case 5: Jihadis in the Syrian and Iraqi Civil Wars (2015)*

In the 2010s, it was violent in the Middle East due to the Syrian civil war and the War in Iraq. Throughout 2014, with the rise of IS, the number of foreign jihadists drastically increased. At least three hundred Dutch Muslims joined jihadist movements in Iraq and Syria.<sup>50</sup> However, in the summer of 2015, it became apparent that the first group of jihadis would return home. This caused some unrest in the public and political debate.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> “Uitreizigers en terugkeerders. Hoeveel Nederlanders zijn uitgereisd en bevinden zich nog daar of in de regio?,” AIVD, accessed August 3, 2021, <https://www.aivd.nl/onderwerpen/terrorisme/dreiging/uitreizigers-en-terugkeerders>.

<sup>51</sup> “Waar zijn al die Syrische terroristen waar we in 2015 voor werden gewaarschuwd?,” De Volkskrant, August 28, 2020, <https://www.volkskrant.nl/nieuws-achtergrond/waar-zijn-al-die-syrische-terroristen-waar-we-in-2015-voor-werden-gewaarschuwd~b72b2522>.

## Chapter 2 Framing

### 2.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the framing concept and how it is implemented in the field of politics. This chapter's research question is: What is framing and how is it used in politics? As previously mentioned in chapter 1.4, framing techniques increase the effectiveness of political messaging because they present it in a striking or context-specific way. Therefore, modern-day politicians should know that a message is not only about its content, it is also about its presentation.

### 2.2 Definition

The framing concept is present in various disciplines, such as communication, linguistics, political science, psychology, and sociology. Since my thesis is about the framing of political parties, I only looked at researchers who gave a definition that relates to politics or communication.

In their article 'Framing, Agenda Setting, and Priming' (2007), Dietram Scheufele and David Tewksbury argued that framing is both a macro-level and a micro-level construct. At the macro-level, it refers to 'modes of presentation that journalists and other communicators use to present information in a way that resonates with existing underlying schemas among their audience.'<sup>52</sup> This definition has two implications. Firstly, the presentation plays an important role in the framing process. Secondly, a frame must be recognisable and relevant for the target group. Furthermore, Scheufele and Tewksbury stated that framing is a 'necessary tool to reduce the complexity of an issue.'<sup>53</sup> They give the example of stem cell research. This is a complex issue, so there is a good chance that the audience will understand little about it. For that reason, communicators reduce the complexity of it. Scheufele and Tewksbury do not call this twisting or misleading. For them, framing is a necessary action to make complex issues less complex. Thus, Scheufele and Tewksbury argued that a successful frame has at least two criteria: it is understandable and corresponds to prior knowledge.

In the same year, the media researchers Dennis Chong and James Druckman also defined framing. In their article in the *Annual Review of Political Science*, they articulated a model for understanding how frames affect public opinion. They defined framing as 'the process by which people develop a particular

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<sup>52</sup> Dietram A. Scheufele and David Tewksbury, "Framing, Agenda Setting, and Priming: The Evolution of Three Media Effects Models," *Journal of Communication* 57 (2007): 12, <https://doi-org.eur.idm.oclc.org/10.1111/j.0021-9916.2007.00326.x>.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid.

conceptualization of an issue or reorient their thinking about an issue.’<sup>54</sup> Their definition differs from Scheufele’s and Tewksbury’s definition. The main difference is their view of the essence of framing. For Scheufele and Tewksbury, framing is a mode of presentation to make difficult subjects easier, while for Chong and Druckman, framing is a process by which the audience forms an opinion or changes their mind.

In 2013, Arno Korsten, emeritus professor of public administration, wrote an online essay in which he describes framing as a communication strategy that is used to transmit and maintain a vision.<sup>55</sup> Korsten believes that framing is more than an opinion or a speech during a political debate.<sup>56</sup> Although politicians do get jealous of colleagues who can throw a firm one-liner into the world, framing is not the same as that. Korsten defined framing as ‘a perspective on reality that results in an authentic argument with a clear message.’<sup>57</sup> This perspective choice shines a certain light on reality. Korsten’s definition implies that the messenger looks at contemporary issues with a certain political colour. For example, a messenger could have a conservative or progressive attitude. Subsequently, in his communication, the politician deliberately presents a one-sided view so that the audience is presented with an oversimplified story – a clear message. Korsten’s definition of framing is different from that of the aforementioned researchers. Based on his definition, two things stand out. Firstly, a politician has a certain view of reality. Secondly, a politician proclaims his views authentically and clearly.

In her dissertation *(Re-)Framing the Arab/Muslim* (2014), Silke Schmidt analysed the framing of Muslims in contemporary writing. Other sections in this chapter take a closer look at her findings. Nevertheless, I would like to briefly explain her definition of framing. Schmidt shares the same view as Robert Entman, the researcher mentioned in section 1.4. Entman understood framing as ‘selecting aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation for the item described.’<sup>58</sup> In my opinion, there are several similarities to Korsten’s definition. Firstly, both agree that a frame contains a coloured view of reality. After all, a politician has a certain ideology that he wants to propagate. Secondly, a frame should stand out. A politician doesn’t want to be a lone voice crying out in the wilderness. For that reason, he tries to attract the attention of his supporters.

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<sup>54</sup> Dennis Chong and James N. Druckman, “Framing Theory,” *Annual Review of Political Science* 10 (2007): 104, <https://www.annualreviews.org/doi/pdf/10.1146/annurev.polisci.10.072805.103054>.

<sup>55</sup> “Framing in de politiek: Over politiek als taalstrijd,” Homepage Prof. dr. A.F.A. Korsten, accessed 30-10-2021, <https://www.arnokorsten.nl/PDF/Democratie/Framing%20in%20de%20politiek.pdf>.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid.

<sup>58</sup> Schmidt, “(Re-)Framing the Arab/Muslim,” 98.

In their article ‘Agenda-Setting, Priming, and Framing’ (2016), researchers Patricia Moy, David Tewksbury, and Eike Mark Rinke also quoted Entman’s definition.<sup>59</sup> They also stated that a frame can be a phrase, image, analogy, or metaphor.<sup>60</sup> By using these techniques, a frame naturally gets more attention. Their interpretation of the framing concept makes several things clear. Firstly, framing is a subjective act, because when constructing frames, it is pre-selected which aspects will and will not be brought forward. Secondly, the purpose of framing is to make a certain point of view stand out because if it stands out, there is more chance that the desired goal will be achieved.

Last but not least, in *The Art of Political Framing* (2019), Hans de Bruijn, Professor of Public Administration at Delft University of Technology, wrote that a frame can be defined in two ways. Either as ‘a filter through which people perceive the world’ or as ‘the structure of a message, aimed at activating a specific interpretation of the world.’<sup>61</sup> In the former, framing is a communication process in which filters or networks in the brain help individuals to interpret information. To create order out of chaos, people categorize, classify and interpret everything they experience in the world. According to De Bruijn, these processes are guided by systems of interpretation, which are referred to as primary frameworks, (communication) filters or neural circuits. For example, De Bruijn wrote that there were two ways of framing the Iraq War, namely with the Vietnam frame and with the Chamberlain frame.<sup>62</sup> In the former, the Iraq War was seen as enormously risky, while in the latter, it was seen as needed to prevent worse. Returning to De Bruijn’s second definition of framing, framing can also refer to how the message itself is structured. This interpretation, which De Bruijn names ‘message framing’, is about choosing the words, phrases and metaphors that invoke a specific interpretation of the world.<sup>63</sup> His definition ties in well with the previous definition. Indeed, skilled politicians use specific words, phrases and metaphors to change or amplify our perception of an issue. De Bruijn calls this ‘emphasis framing’ – the process of overemphasizing and underemphasizing certain aspects of reality.<sup>64</sup> Politicians frame messages to emphasize a specific interpretation of the world and play down competing interpretations. For example, emphasizing the Vietnam frame over the Chamberlain frame. De Bruijn indicates that politicians who know the dominant filters of

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<sup>59</sup> Patricia Moy, David Tewksbury, and Eike Mark Rinke, “Agenda-Setting, Priming, And Framing,” *The International Encyclopedia of Communication Theory and Philosophy* (2006): 7, <https://osf.io/preprints/socarxiv/x8f26/>.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid.

<sup>61</sup> Hans de Bruijn, *The Art of Political Framing: How Politicians Convince Us That They Are Right* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2019), 16.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid, 16.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid, 17.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid.

their audience, may adapt their message, and make it compatible with these filters.<sup>65</sup> Concerning politics, he argued that ‘framing is obviously not a new phenomenon, nor is it the preserve of right-wing politicians.’<sup>66</sup>

All in all, it is challenging to give a satisfactory definition of framing because it can be interpreted and used in multiple ways. If we combine the definitions from the previously mentioned researchers, several aspects will come up repeatedly. Firstly, framing is a prejudiced act, because when constructing frames, it is pre-selected which aspects will and will not be brought forward. Secondly, the purpose of framing is to make a certain point of view stand out because if it stands out, there is more chance that the desired goal will be achieved. Thirdly, a frame is understandable for the public and corresponds to their prior knowledge.

### 2.3 Framing techniques

The previous section established that a frame should be understandable and stand out. As previously mentioned, researchers Moy, Tewksbury and Rinke stated that a frame can be a phrase, image, analogy, or metaphor. A similar comment was made by De Bruijn. He stated that skilled politicians use specific words, phrases and metaphors to change or amplify our perception of an issue. In their book *The Art of Framing* (1996), Gail Fairhurst and Robert Sarr highlighted five framing techniques to get a message across: metaphor, catchphrases, contrast, spin, and stories.<sup>67</sup> Korsten listed a few tricks employed by successful speakers. For instance, the implementation of the metaphor, the parallelism, the contrast, the identification with the country, and the expressing looming disaster.<sup>68</sup> To avoid a long enumeration, this section will only discuss five framing techniques: specific words, metaphor, (catch)phrase, analogy, and spinning.

The first technique is the use of specific words. In his 2004 handbook *Don't think of an elephant*, George Lakoff gives an excellent example of framing. If you use the phrase ‘Don't think of an elephant! Whatever you do, do not think of an elephant,’ there is hardly anyone who does not immediately think of an elephant. Why do people think of something they are not supposed to think of? Lakoff argues that every word evokes a frame, which can be an image or a feeling.<sup>69</sup> In this case, the word elephant will most likely let you think of a large animal with floppy ears and tusks. The word is connected to a specific frame. The elephant resonates with the existing underlying schemas of people. Hearing the word immediately activates people's foreknowledge. For that reason, when you hear a word, your brain will automatically convert it to a

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<sup>65</sup> Ibid.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid, 18.

<sup>67</sup> Fairhurst and Sarr, *The Art of Framing*, 125.

<sup>68</sup> “Scoren met woorden. Over politiek als taalstrijd en framing als wapen,” Homepage Prof. dr. A.F.A. Korsten, accessed 30-10-2021, <https://www.arnokorsten.nl/PDF/Politiek%20en%20democratie/Scoren%20met%20woorden%2030313.pdf>.

<sup>69</sup> Lakoff, *Don't Think of an Elephant*.

certain mental image or feeling, even if there is a negation in front of it. For example, the phrase ‘It is raining outside’ will probably let you think of droplets coming down from the sky. The phrase ‘It is not raining outside’ has a similar effect, since you must think of rain before you can think of its absence. On the other hand, if you start with the phrase ‘It is sunny outside,’ no one will ever think of rain. Therefore, a logical conclusion could be that negations or context do not stop a frame from being set. There are two well-known speeches by presidents that tie in with this. Firstly, when the United States President Richard Nixon said, ‘I am not a crook,’ while addressing the nation on television during the Watergate scandal, he unintentionally accomplished the exact opposite. The word crook evoked a frame of a crook and as a result, many people thought about him as such. President Bill Clinton made the same mistake when he ended a televised speech with the statement ‘I did not have sexual relations with that woman, Miss Lewinsky.’

The second technique is the metaphor. A metaphor is a figure of speech that directly refers to one thing by mentioning another. A well-known user of this technique is Donald Trump, the 45th president of the United States from 2017 to 2021. For example, Trump vowed to ‘drain the swamp in Washington, D.C.’ and said many times ‘the system is rigged.’ In both cases, Trump used negative words (e.g. swamp and rigged) to compare or describe political institutions. Therefore, when his supporters thought of a swamp, they thought of American politics, and vice versa. A Dutch example of a metaphor can be found in a tweet by Wilders. On 22 September 2015, he tweeted ‘A tsunami of 4200 asylum seekers per week in NL and Rutte adds another 7000 on top of that. What an incompetent fake Prime Minister!’<sup>70</sup> The word *tsunami* is normally used for an extremely high wave from the sea. However, Wilders uses it in the context of asylum seekers. In his view, the Netherlands was flooded with asylum seekers.

The third technique is the catchphrase, also known as the slogan. Catchphrases are memorable, short series of words. A recent example is ‘Make America Great Again’ by Trump. His slogan implies that the United States used to be great, but it isn't anymore. If people vote for Trump, everything will be great again. In the Netherlands, the catchphrase of Pim Fortuyn is a well-known example. In November 2001, Fortuyn gave a speech at the LN Congress. He concluded his speech with the words ‘at your service’, including a matching hand gesture. With these words, he tried to demonstrate his service to society, but in a memorable, catchy way.

The fourth technique is the analogy. This technique is about making a comparison between things that have similar features. It is a positive or negative intended comparison, depending on the speaker and the context. For example, a negative intended analogy is used during Wilders' interview at *WNL op Zondag* on February 11, 2017. In it, Wilders said: ‘If there were Nazi temples in the Netherlands, the world would be too

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<sup>70</sup> Geert Wilders, Twitter post, September 22, 2015, <https://twitter.com/geertwilderspvv/status/646415844533256193>.



small if we allowed it. Islam does not belong in our country.’<sup>71</sup> He also said: ‘This is a book that contains a lot more anti-Semitism than Mein Kampf. It is full of calls for violence.’ With his statements, Wilders compared Islam with National Socialism and mosques with so-called Nazi temples.

The fifth and final framing technique is spinning. This technique involves alternative phrasing. In other words, the same object or group is labelled with different connotations. De Bruijn gave a good example of this in his book *The Art of Political Framing* (2019). He stated that language evokes positive or negative connotations, but might also influence our value judgments.<sup>72</sup> Hereby, De Bruijn gives the example of an illegal immigrant versus an undocumented worker. When the former does something wrong, the law should be enforced. But when the latter does something wrong, he should not be condemned because he is someone who contributes to our society and just lacks some bureaucratic papers. Although to some extent, undocumented workers and illegal immigrants are synonymous with each other, the two terms have different connotations. A politician who is against (illegal) migration or has (very) nationalistic views is more likely to use the term illegal migrants as the term is more in line with his views. Another example of different connotations is the terms *family reunification* and *chain migration*. However, spinning is not just about technical terms. For example, the following words are synonyms, but they each evoke a different connotation: *old-fashioned* (negative connotation), *conservative* (neutral connotation), and *traditional* (positive connotation). Another example of spinning can be found in the 2012 United States presidential election. When the Republican Party formulated their standpoint on abortion, it used the word *pro-life* instead of *anti-abortion*. Moreover, their use of the word *pro-life* framed their opponents, the Democrats, automatically as *anti-life*.

Of course, framing techniques can also be combined. For example, Wilders frequently criticises other politicians for caring more about ‘Mohammed and Fatima’ than for ‘Henk and Ingrid.’ The latter is a fictional Dutch couple who, according to Wilders, represent the average Dutch couple. Opposite Henk and Ingrid are two Muslim immigrants, Mohammed and Fatima. Thus, Wilders used both a metaphor and an analogy.

## 2.4 Framing effect

The framing effect is the assumption that people’s choices are influenced by the way they are framed through different wordings, settings, and situations. This section discusses under which prefaces a frame catches on and what the consequences of frames can be.

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<sup>71</sup> “Geert Wilders: ‘Islam gevaarlijker dan nazisme’,” WNL, February 11, 2017, <https://wnl.tv/2017/02/11/geert-wilders-islam-gevaarlijker-dan-nazisme/>.

<sup>72</sup> De Bruijn, *The Art of Political Framing*, 14.

Two things should be mentioned in advance. Firstly, there is nothing superior about a strong frame other than its appeal to audiences.<sup>73</sup> According to Chong and Druckman, ‘strong frames should not be confused with intellectually or morally superior arguments.’<sup>74</sup> For instance, frames can be built around exaggerations, half-truths or even lies. This is the case, for example, with conspiracy theories and fake news. A Dutch example can clarify this. On 6 February 2017, Wilders had sent a tweet about Alexander Pechtold, party leader of D66.<sup>75</sup> The tweet showed a photoshopped picture of Pechtold in the middle of a pro-sharia protest in London with the text ‘D66 wants to isolate Amsterdam if the election results are disappointing. Pechtold protests with Hamas terrorists. Is this the next step?’ Wilders intended to frame Pechtold and D66 as anti-democratic and dangerous. Although the frame itself was not taken seriously, it nevertheless fulfilled its purpose, because the frame was frequently repeated in the media. Interestingly enough, Pechtold was able to reframe Wilder’s tweet. In response to his tweet, he retweeted: ‘Creative cutting and pasting by @geertwilderspvv. Unfortunately, the neo-Nazis at his manifestation had not been photoshopped!’<sup>76</sup> Hereby, Pechtold framed part of Wilders supporters as neo-Nazis. For Chong and Druckman, it is troubling when the rationale for policies is built around frames only because they are known to resonate with the public.<sup>77</sup>

Secondly, a frame has to be meaningful. It touches upon the innermost heart of the issue and it has to be set at the right time. For instance, framing Islam as a dangerous religion became meaningful after 9/11 and the murder of Van Gogh. Framing Islam in the late 1980s and 1990s would have been less meaningful because Islam was not a topic of interest in that period. Therefore, it would receive less media attention.

Frames have the potential to exert considerable influence on public opinion. Moy, Tewksbury and Rinke state that the basic idea with frame-setting is that people have perceptions about public issues and problems.<sup>78</sup> For example, what the causes and consequences of problems are and who is responsible for correcting them. They argue that frames provide exactly that information. In their aforementioned article

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<sup>73</sup> Chong and Druckman, “Framing Theory,” 111.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid.

<sup>75</sup> Geert Wilders, Twitter post, February 6, 2017,

[https://twitter.com/geertwilderspvv/status/828502461421850624?ref\\_src=twsrc%5Etfw%7Ctwcamp%5Etweetembed%7Ctwtterm%5E828502461421850624%7Ctwgr%5E%7Ctwcon%5Es1\\_&ref\\_url=https%3A%2F%2Feenvandaag.avrotros.nl%2Fitem%2Fnieuwstrend-wilders-tweet-nep-foto-van-pechtold%2F](https://twitter.com/geertwilderspvv/status/828502461421850624?ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw%7Ctwcamp%5Etweetembed%7Ctwtterm%5E828502461421850624%7Ctwgr%5E%7Ctwcon%5Es1_&ref_url=https%3A%2F%2Feenvandaag.avrotros.nl%2Fitem%2Fnieuwstrend-wilders-tweet-nep-foto-van-pechtold%2F)

<sup>76</sup> Alexander Pechtold, Twitter post, February 6, 2017,

[https://twitter.com/APechtold/status/828513240560828416?ref\\_src=twsrc%5Etfw%7Ctwcamp%5Etweetembed%7Ctwtterm%5E828513240560828416%7Ctwgr%5E%7Ctwcon%5Es1\\_&ref\\_url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.adformatie.nl%2Finterne-communicatie%2Fwilders-tweet-fake-foto-van-pechtold-die-een-scherpe-reacti](https://twitter.com/APechtold/status/828513240560828416?ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw%7Ctwcamp%5Etweetembed%7Ctwtterm%5E828513240560828416%7Ctwgr%5E%7Ctwcon%5Es1_&ref_url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.adformatie.nl%2Finterne-communicatie%2Fwilders-tweet-fake-foto-van-pechtold-die-een-scherpe-reacti)

<sup>77</sup> Chong and Druckman, “Framing Theory,” 111.

<sup>78</sup> Moy, Tewksbury, and Rinke, “Agenda-Setting, Priming, And Framing,” 9.

‘Agenda-Setting, Priming, and Framing’, Moy, Tewksbury and Rinke illustrate how the media – but the same can also be said of politics – influence the public opinion by framing. For example, if people believe that a public problem is associated with a particular concept, they believe that the latter applies to the former. For example, the public problem of poverty can be linked to the concept of high unemployment. A news article or a politician can establish this link by explicitly stating the connection or by implying it.

In addition to linking problems with concepts, framing can also affect the way people look at the world. A first example is mentioned in De Bruijn’s book *The Art of Political Framing*. In it, he illustrated how language both describes and creates reality. For instance, after 9/11, several right-wing populist parties with a strong anti-Islamic stance emerged in North-western Europe.<sup>79</sup> These parties introduced the terms ‘Islamization’ and ‘Eurabia’ to describe Islam’s increasing influence in Europe. Because the populist parties regularly repeated these terms, they had become so accepted that even their opponents started using them. De Bruijn argues that once people look at the world through this Islamisation filter, they will start seeing it everywhere. For example, they will see more women wearing scarves and more halal butchers, even though that doesn't have to be the case statistically. A second example showing that language both describes and creates reality is Thierry Baudet's regular use of the term ‘partijkartel’ (‘party cartel’). The leader of FVD often points out that the largest Dutch parties are part of a cartel. In doing so, he repetitively frames these parties as elitist and secretive and therefore pushes them to a specific corner. Baudet’s voters, as well as his sympathizers, can look at the world through a cartel filter. As a result, almost everything that politicians of the larger parties do is suspicious and undemocratic.

Besides that a frame must be appealing and meaningful, it is more favourable if a frame has a positive approach. Research indicates that people tend to favour positive messaging, like the aforementioned *pro-life* instead of *anti-abortion*. This preference also shows up when using numbers. For example, having a 90 per cent chance of surviving surgery is better received than having a 10 per cent chance you may die. In addition, 75 per cent lean meat is usually preferred over 25 per cent fat meat, even though they are the same. In their article ‘Framing Theory’ (2007), Chong and Druckman argue that the alternative phrasings of the same issue considerably alter its meaning, even when the change in connotation is not directly detectable.<sup>80</sup> However, they believe that for a framing effect to take place, ‘a given consideration needs to be stored in memory to be available for retrieval and use.’<sup>81</sup> To support their statement, Chong and Druckman presented an example wherein respondents were asked whether a hate group should be allowed to hold a political rally.<sup>82</sup> When

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<sup>79</sup> De Bruijn, *The Art of Political Framing*, 11.

<sup>80</sup> Chong and Druckman, “Framing Theory,” 104.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid*, 110.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid*, 104.

asked whether the respondents would favour or oppose a hate group holding a political rally ‘given the importance of free speech,’ 85 per cent answered in favour. However, when the phrase ‘given the risk of violence’ was used, only 45 per cent was in favour. This example shows that a certain formulation makes a difference to people's perceptions. Yet, for the free speech frame to succeed, the concept of free speech must be an available consideration, otherwise, an individual will not be affected by it.<sup>83</sup> It is of course crucial that respondents are aware of the definition and the advantages and disadvantages of free speech. In addition to being available, the consideration must be accessible, meaning it is retrievable from long-term memory.<sup>84</sup> Increasing accessibility can be done, for example, through regular or recent communication about this concept.

It is also important that there is sufficient attention for the emotion. Affect heuristic plays an essential part in the psychology behind framing. This concept is based on our immediate emotionally driven decision system. Simply put, the way people feel influences their decisions and their emotional response. Because of this dependence on our emotional state, we make different decisions based on identical facts. For that reason, politicians use framing to trigger our immediate emotion-driven decision system. If they associate an issue with negativity (e.g. associating Islam with terrorism), they want to push you in a specific direction. For example, in 2018, the PVV launched a controversial campaign ad about Islam. Their almost three minutes long clip showed the consistent red coloured headline ‘Islam is’ with alternating subtitles underneath it. These carefully selected subtitles included ‘discrimination’ and ‘deadly,’ whereby the last subtitles were blood dripping. The image of blood dripping down the phrase ‘Islam is deadly’ trigger an emotional response, whether you agree with the message or not.

However, not everyone is equally susceptible to frame-setting. According to Schmidt, ‘the degree to which framing impacts the individual varies according to the degree of media consumption and other personal predispositions.’<sup>85</sup> Furthermore, framing commonalities with cultivation theory. This theory suggests that people who are often in contact with the media for long periods are more presumably to perceive the world as it is presented by the media they consumed, which in turn affects their attitudes and behaviours. For example, viewers who often watch crime-related media generally overestimate the real occurrence of crimes. Chong and Druckman indicate that framing effects depend on several factors.<sup>86</sup> For example, the strength and repetition of the frame, the competitive environment, and individual motivations.

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<sup>83</sup> Ibid, 110.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid.

<sup>85</sup> Schmidt, “(Re-)Framing the Arab/Muslim,” 101.

<sup>86</sup> Chong and Druckman, “Framing Theory,” 111.

They expect that framing effects diminish with active engagement with issues.<sup>87</sup> They indicate that frames may be less influential if people are exposed to a variety of alternative arguments. In their view, competition may allow people to think about which frame best fits their point of view. However, they do indicate that their conjectures still need to be properly researched - they argued for a follow-up study.

## **2.5 Sub-Conclusion**

This chapter showed that the framing concept is more complex than it appears. It is challenging to give a satisfactory definition of framing because it can be interpreted and used in multiple ways. However, three aspects come up repeatedly. Firstly, framing is a prejudiced act, because when constructing frames, it is pre-selected which aspects will and will not be brought forward. Secondly, the purpose of framing is to make a certain point of view stand out because if it stands out, there is more chance that the desired goal will be achieved. Thirdly, a frame is understandable for the public and corresponds to their prior knowledge.

There are several framing techniques available. The first technique is the use of specific words. Every word evokes a frame, so choosing specific words can provoke certain images or feelings. It also showed that negations or context do not stop a frame from being set. The second technique is the metaphor. A metaphor is a figure of speech that directly refers to one thing by mentioning another. The third technique is the catchphrase, also known as the slogan. Catchphrases are memorable, short series of words. The fourth technique is the analogy. This technique is about making a comparison between things that have similar features. It is a positive or negative intended comparison, depending on the speaker and the context. The fifth and final framing technique is spinning. This technique involves alternative phrasing. In other words, the same object or group is labelled with different connotations.

The framing effect is the assumption that people's choices are influenced by the way they are framed through different wordings, settings, and situations. It is important to mention that there is nothing superior about a strong frame other than its appeal to audiences. Moreover, a frame has to be meaningful. However, strong frames should not be confused with intellectually or morally superior arguments.

Frames have the potential to exert considerable influence on public opinion. If people believe that a public problem is associated with a particular concept, they believe that the latter applies to the former. A politician can establish this link by explicitly stating the connection or by implying it. In addition to linking problems with concepts, framing can also affect the way people look at the world. If politicians use certain words to describe reality, reality can also be created.

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<sup>87</sup> Ibid, 118-119.

It is more favourable if a frame has a positive approach. Research indicates that people tend to favour positive messaging. This preference also shows up when using numbers. It is also essential that there is sufficient attention for the emotion. Politicians use framing to trigger our immediate emotion-driven decision system to influence people's emotional state, and thereby, their political choices.

However, not everyone is equally susceptible to frame-setting. The extent to which framing impacts the individual differs according to the degree of media consumption and other personal circumstances. There are also other factors, such as the strength and repetition of the frame, the competitive environment, and individual motivations.

## Chapter 3 Islam framing from 1989 to 2001

### 3.1 Introduction

This chapter gives an overview of Islam framing between 1989 and 2001. Both dates can be identified as breaking points in Islamic history, for negative reasons.

In 1989, Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini - at that time the political and religious leader of Iran - ordered the death of the British novelist Salman Rushdie. Hence, the so-called Rushdie Affair was born. As a result, the idea that Muslim immigrants are regarded as a threat to freedom and democracy in Western countries took on because Islam seemed incompatible with Western libertarian values. Thus, the Rushdie Affair was a crucial moment in the shaping and construction of Muslims as an indeterminable other.<sup>88</sup>

In 2001, on September 11, suicide attackers seized US passenger jets and crashed them into the World Trade Center complex and the Pentagon. The September 11 attacks remain the deadliest terrorist attack in human history. The perpetrators, of whom Osama Bin Laden is the best known, claimed to have geopolitical and religious motives for the attack. Understandably, a terrorist attack in the name of Islam hurts the images of Islam and Muslims.

### 3.2 Rushdie Affair

There has always been a thin and blurred line between freedom of expression and blasphemy. What is amusing or artistic for one person may be offensive or hurtful to another. Rushdie's novel *The Satanic Verses* (1988) is a good example of a book that sparks discussion. It presents questions about the nature and limits of secularism since the author ridiculed the Prophet Muhammed and verses of the Quran. As expected, a substantial part of the Islamic world believed Rushdie went too far, but Rushdie claimed he merely used his freedom of expression.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights defines freedom of expression as ‘the right of every individual to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers.’<sup>89</sup> Hence, Rushdie applied his freedom right in writing *The Satanic Verses*. However, blasphemy is prosecutable in many countries. A 2017-report from the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom identified that 71 countries had anti-blasphemy laws

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<sup>88</sup> Allen and Isakjee, “Controversy, Islam and politics,” 1852-1853.

<sup>89</sup> “The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 1948-1998,” United Nations, accessed October 26, 2021, <https://www.un.org/en/about-us/universal-declaration-of-human-rights>.

or policies.<sup>90</sup> The legal punishments for such transgressions vary from fines to capital punishment. The report also showed that Iran – where blasphemers can face death – has the highest deviation from international and human rights law principles. Thus, it was plausible that the Iranian regime would react hostile to the novel and its author.

A few weeks after the publication of *The Satanic Verses* in September 1988, the novel was already forbidden in India, Pakistan, Saudi-Arabia, Egypt, Qatar, Malaysia, Somalia, Sudan, Indonesia, and South Africa.<sup>91</sup> The first street protests, which took place in England in December, attracted little media attention. It wasn't until January 1989 that Rushdie's novel first received extensive media coverage. In that month, copies of *The Satanic Verses* were publicly burned in Bradford, England. In his 1990-research, the British political theorist Bhikhu Parekh confirms that the displeasure against the novel was universal, but that the campaign was largely confined to India, Pakistan, and the South Asian Muslim settlers in England.<sup>92</sup> Because of the international media attention to Muslim protests in England, Khomeini, issued a fatwa – a religious order by a qualified Islamic scholar – for the assassination of Rushdie. On 14 February 1989, he said: 'I inform the proud Muslim people of the world that the author of the *Satanic Verses* book, which is against Islam, the Prophet and the Quran, and all those involved in its publication who are aware of its content are sentenced to death. I ask all the Muslims to execute them wherever they find them.'<sup>93</sup> The fatwa was mediated as a provocation of the West, but it missed the desired effect. On the contrary, it turned the main controversy from Rushdie's novel to Khomeini's fatwa.

Several studies have shown that the Rushdie affair was an important event in the relationship between the West and Islam. For example, Nicole Falkenhayner, a scholar of British literature and culture argued that the Rushdie Affair is the first event in a chronological lineage of Islamophobic controversies. Additionally, she stated that remembering the Rushdie Affair in Britain is linked to a narrative that includes 9/11, the *war*

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<sup>90</sup> Joelle Fiss and Jocelyn Kestenbaum, *Respecting Rights? Measuring the World's Blasphemy Laws* (Washington, D.C.: United States Commission On International Religious Freedom, 2017), 5-6, <https://www.uscirf.gov/sites/default/files/Blasphemy%20Laws%20Report.pdf>.

<sup>91</sup> "Rushdie-affaire in Nederland," *Andere Tijden*, accessed 12-6-2019, <https://anderetijden.nl/aflevering/445/Rushdie-affaire-in-Nederland>.

<sup>92</sup> Bhikhu Parekh, "The Rushdie affair: research agenda for political philosophy," *Political Studies*, vol. 38 (1990): 698, <https://onlinelibrary-wiley-com.eur.idm.oclc.org/doi/epdf/10.1111/j.1467-9248.1990.tb01511.x>.

<sup>93</sup> Peter Murtagh, "Rushdie in hiding after Ayatollah's death threat," *The Guardian*, February 15, 1989, <https://www.theguardian.com/books/1989/feb/15/salmanrushdie>.



on terror, and the Al-Qaeda attacks in Madrid and London.<sup>94</sup> In 2016, researchers Stefan Mertens and Hedwig de Smaele of the University of Leuven stated that the Rushdie Affair was one of the first confrontations between the modern Western world and Islam.<sup>95</sup> One year later, the Dutch political scientists Ewoud Butter and Roemer van Oordt mentioned something similar. In their book *Zuilen in de Polder?* (2017), they argued that the Rushdie Affair was the first event in which Islam was broadly discussed.<sup>96</sup>

A recent study by Stephen Morton of the University of Southampton suggests that the Muslims who criticized *The Satanic Verses* were in the mainstream British media often framed as an ‘angry, violent, illiterate, and a foreign mob of Islamic fundamentalists.’<sup>97</sup> The origin of this frame can be traced back to the book burnings. After Khomeini’s fatwa, the image of people burning *The Satanic Verses* received international publicity because it was reminiscent of the Nazi book burnings in the 1930s. However, Morton criticised the validity of that frame by arguing that the mainstream British media overlooked other legitimate forms of Muslim response to the novel. This observation is also reflected in the research of the aforementioned Mertens and De Smaele. They argued that the Muslim protests against the novel prompted a process of rethinking the position of Islam in Britain, where Rushdie was living at the time.<sup>98</sup>

There were also protests in the Netherlands, but not as fierce as in England. On 17 February 1989, three days after Khomeini’s fatwa, the Third Lubbers cabinet asked the Ministry of Justice to investigate the possibility of a publication ban.<sup>99</sup> They did so because they were requested by Islamic organizations to take action against Rushdie's novel on the grounds of the punishability of blasphemy. However, the Ministry soon concluded that the book could not be banned and that the criminal prosecution of the author was pointless.<sup>100</sup> As an argument, reference was made to the so-called donkey trial of 1966. In this trial, literary writer Gerard

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<sup>94</sup> Nicole Falkenhayner, “The other rupture of 1989: The Rushdie affair as the inaugural event of representations of post secular conflict,” *Global Society*, vol. 24 (1) (2010): 122, <https://www-tandfonline-com.eur.idm.oclc.org/doi/pdf/10.1080/13600820903432175?needAccess=true>.

<sup>95</sup> Stefan Mertens and Hedwig de Smaele, *Representations of Islam in the news. A cross-cultural analysis* (London: Lexington Books, 2016), 6.

<sup>96</sup> Ewoud Butter and Roemer van Oordt, *Zuilen in de Polder? Een verkenning van de institutionalisering van de islam in Nederland* (Den Haag: Ministerie van Sociale Zaken en Werkgelegenheid, 2017), 35.

<sup>97</sup> Stephen Morton, “Secularism and the death and return of the author: Rereading the Rushdie affair after Joseph Anton,” *The Journal of Commonwealth Literature*, 53(2) (2018): 318, <https://journals-sagepub-com.eur.idm.oclc.org/doi/pdf/10.1177/0021989416686647>.

<sup>98</sup> Mertens and De Smaele, *Representations of Islam in the news*, 6.

<sup>99</sup> Butter and Van Oordt, *Zuilen in de Polder?*, 45.

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*

Reve was acquitted after he was charged with scornful profanity - he compared God to a 1-year-old donkey.<sup>101</sup>

In late February 1989, editor-in-chief Martin van Amerongen of *De Groene Amsterdammer* noted in *De Volkskrant* that the Dutch Muslims reacted calmly. He wrote: 'The reactions from the Dutch Muslim community are much more moderate than elsewhere. There are no knives or crises here.'<sup>102</sup> However, the mood changed when a few hundred, mostly Pakistani Muslims, took part in demonstrations in The Hague and Rotterdam on 3 and 4 March, during which a doll was burned and a banner 'Death to Rushdie' was displayed.<sup>103</sup> In late March, the Minister of the Interior summoned Muslim organizations and announced that slogans such as 'Rushdie must die' and pop burnings in the Netherlands were really out of the question. After that, the demonstrations were over.<sup>104</sup>

In a recent study, the Dutch historians, and brothers, Leo Lucassen and Jan Lucassen analysed media sources in the aftermath of Khomeini's fatwa and argued that immigration criticism was voiced more by prominent representatives of the political Left. For example, they mentioned Jan Blokker of *De Volkskrant* and Gerrit Komrij of *NRC Handelsblad* as contributors to a frame of Muslims as a 'Trojan horse' - immigrants who finally showed their intolerant face.<sup>105</sup> However, after the initial outburst by left-wing journalists, the debate on integration calmed down.<sup>106</sup>

According to Butter and Van Oordt, the framing during the Rushdie affair shows a pattern that that can also be seen in later events, such as the Gulf War and 9/11. This pattern is as follows: in the aftermath of a specific event, Dutch Muslims are addressed as a group. Simultaneously, these events give Dutch Muslims an impulse to (temporarily) organize themselves. This reinforces the image of 'Dutch society versus Muslims' from both sides.<sup>107</sup>

### 3.3 Dutch political debate in the 1990s

In the 1990s, the dominant political discourse was based on the consensus of integration while maintaining your own culture. This means that newcomers could maintain their culture and traditions, while the

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<sup>101</sup> Ibid.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid, 46.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid.

<sup>104</sup> Ibid, 47.

<sup>105</sup> Leo Lucassen and Jan Lucassen, "The Strange Death of Dutch Tolerance: The Timing and Nature of the Pessimist Turn in the Dutch Migration Debate," *The Journal of Modern History*, vol. 87 (1) (2015): 90, <https://www-journals-uchicago-edu.eur.idm.oclc.org/doi/pdf/10.1086/681211>.

<sup>106</sup> Ibid, 91.

<sup>107</sup> Butter and Van Oordt, *Zuilen in de Polder?*, 48.

government should help them overcome their socioeconomic disadvantaged position.<sup>108</sup> Therefore, diversity was promoted.

Because there are almost no valid migration statistics from before 1996, I have chosen 1996 as the starting year. In 1996, 16.1 per cent of the Dutch population had a migration background. This includes people who were born abroad (the first generation), as well as those who were born in the Netherlands and of whom at least one of their parents was an immigrant (the second generation). It is also important to mention here that the percentage of Dutch people with a migration background was increasing in the 1990s. If we look at the period 1996-2021, a period of 25 years, the percentage of Dutch with a migration background has increased to 24.9.<sup>109</sup><sup>110</sup> In the same period, the percentage of Muslims has increased by about one per cent, so that today five per cent of the Dutch are followers of Islam. An important conclusion is therefore that the percentage of Muslims in the Netherlands rose considerably less rapidly than the number of people with a migration background.

In this section, it becomes clear that there was increasing criticism of migrants and Islam in the public and political debate. A leading figure in the political debate was VVD party leader Frits Bolkestein. In the public debate, the views of Paul Scheffer and Pim Fortuyn have been particularly influential.

### *Bolkestein*

The impetus for a new public debate about multicultural society and integration is Frits Bolkestein's speech in Lucerne, Switzerland on 6 September 1991.<sup>111</sup> At that time, Bolkestein was the party leader of the VVD. Because the VVD was the third-largest party after the parliamentary elections of 1989, and it did not join the Third Lubbers cabinet, Bolkestein was de facto the opposition leader. In his book *Tolerance: Experiments with Freedom in the Netherlands* (2018), emeritus professor Cees Maris argues that 'Bolkestein's major concern was that large parts of the Muslim world 'do not respect the liberal constitutional principles such as separation of church and state, freedom of speech, tolerance, non-discrimination, and equal status of

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<sup>108</sup> Fleur Sleegers, *In debat over Nederland. Veranderingen in het discours over de multiculturele samenleving en nationale identiteit* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2007), 19,

<https://library.oapen.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.12657/35299/340028.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>.

<sup>109</sup> "Prognose bevolking naar migratieachtergrond," Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek, December 18, 2018, <https://www.cbs.nl/nl-nl/achtergrond/2018/51/prognose-bevolking-naar-migratieachtergrond>.

<sup>110</sup> "Migratieachtergrond," Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek, accessed October 26, 2021, <https://www.cbs.nl/nl-nl/visualisaties/dashboard-bevolking/migratieachtergrond>.

<sup>111</sup> Sleegers, *In debat over Nederland*, 18.

women.’<sup>112</sup> Researchers Butter and Van Oordt add that Bolkestein's criticism of Islam was partly caused by the fatwa against Rushdie.<sup>113</sup> In his speech in Lucerne, Bolkestein said, among other things, that the transmission of European values, including liberalism, rationalism, humanism and Christianity, must play a key role in the Dutch minorities policy. However, according to Maris, Bolkestein did not want to limit the freedoms of minorities.<sup>114</sup> For example, Dutch Muslims were free to practice their beliefs and customs, provided they did ‘endorse the constitutional principles.’<sup>115</sup>

In addition to his speech, Bolkestein also wrote an opinion article in the newspaper *De Volkskrant*. Here too, he stated that Islam is hostile to essential liberal values. Furthermore, Bolkestein claimed ‘that the integration of minorities had failed and that this was due to the overly accommodating stance of multiculturalists.’<sup>116</sup> It was especially his opinion article (and not his speech in Lucerne) that sparked something in the public debate. Bolkestein's main point was that the government should ‘take robust measures to prevent or reduce the formidable problems arising from mass migration.’<sup>117</sup> Uitermark explains that Bolkestein could appeal to new global signifiers generated during the Rushdie Affair. This signifier is that Islam is not just a religion, but a way of life. Therefore it is at odds with the liberal division between church and state.<sup>118</sup>

Multiple studies have shown that Bolkestein's ideas caused a permanent change in public and political debate. For example, Maris argues that Bolkestein broke the taboo on the public criticism of multicultural policies. The main difference with Janmaat was that Bolkestein was a member of a larger, more influential party. However, in a sense, Bolkestein continued what Janmaat started. Additionally, Maris states that, after Bolkestein’s speech and opinion article, ‘the established political parties and the general public felt free to discuss integration problems openly and loudly.’<sup>119</sup> Korsten and Slegers came to a similar conclusion. The

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<sup>112</sup> Cees Maris, *Tolerance: Experiments with Freedom in the Netherlands* (New York: Springer International Publishing AG, 2018), 337, <https://link-springer-com.eur.idm.oclc.org/book/10.1007%2F978-3-319-89346-4>.

<sup>113</sup> Butter and Van Oordt, *Zuilen in de Polder?*, 51-52.

<sup>114</sup> Maris, *Tolerance*, 337.

<sup>115</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>116</sup> Justus Uitermark, *Dynamics of Power in Dutch Integration Politics. From Accommodation to Confrontation*. (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2012), 15, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt45kdp8>.

<sup>117</sup> *Ibid.*, 82.

<sup>118</sup> *Ibid.*, 82.

<sup>119</sup> Maris, *Tolerance*, 337.

former argued that Bolkestein set the tone in the debate for several years.<sup>120</sup> The latter states that, due to Bolkestein, integration regularly became the subject of political and public discussions.<sup>121</sup>

Slegers argues that Bolkestein did not change the political consensus of the 1990s that the interests of newcomers must be met.<sup>122</sup> A view that is shared by Uitermark.<sup>123</sup> In that period, Slegers sees any harsh criticism of the multicultural society as a minority discourse. Because of this, it can be said that Huntington's 1993-thesis of a clash of civilisations was not widely supported. Slegers lists D66, CDA, GL, PvdA, and VVD - who together held 143 of the 150 seats – as parties who acted and spoke according to this dominant discourse. Only Janmaat, as the sole representative of the Center Democrats, and Bolkestein opposed this.<sup>124</sup> However, the success of the VVD in the elections of 1994, in which they gained nine seats (corresponding to an increase of 6 per cent), showed that Bolkestein's ideas on immigration and integration appealed to a large segment of voters. Nevertheless, in the mid-1990s, the entire debate cooled down. According to Uitermark, the first Kok cabinet, consisting of PvdA, VVD and D66, 'hid their political differences under a managerial discourse that centred on economic growth, efficient government and job creation.'<sup>125</sup> As a result, the public and political debate *lost* its main critic of a multicultural society and Islam.

### *Fortuyn*

Before entering politics, Pim Fortuyn had already made a name for himself as an academic and a columnist. In 1996, Fortuyn published the book *The Islamization of our culture*, in which he criticized Islam. Like Bolkestein, he believed that the Netherlands should define and profile a strong national identity in the light of increasing cultural diversity because a strong national identity would strengthen solidarity.

Additionally, Fortuyn took a stand against cultural relativism. According to him, the Dutch are not interested in their cultural heritage, know their national history poorly and are no longer prepared to defend the achievements of Dutch culture.<sup>126</sup> However, because Islam promotes its cultural heritage more strongly, it will inevitably pose a threat to Dutch achievements such as the separation of Church and State, equal treatment between the sexes, the freedom of homosexuals and the equality of children and adults. To give Islam a place in the Netherlands, two things had to change. Firstly, newcomers must adapt to the essential

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<sup>120</sup> Korsten, "Scoren met woorden," 17.

<sup>121</sup> Slegers, *In debat over Nederland*, 20-21.

<sup>122</sup> Ibid.

<sup>123</sup> Uitermark, *Dynamics of Power in Dutch Integration Politics*, 86.

<sup>124</sup> Slegers, *In debat over Nederland*, 20-21.

<sup>125</sup> Uitermark, *Dynamics of Power in Dutch Integration Politics*, 86.

<sup>126</sup> Pim Fortuyn, *De islamisering van onze cultuur. Nederlandse identiteit als fundament* (Rotterdam: Karakter Uitgevers B.V. & Speakers Academy Uitgeverij B.V., 2001), 103-106.

values of the Netherlands. Secondly, the Muslim Dutch must be given sufficient opportunities in the socio-economic field.

In their book *Zuilen in de Polder?* (2017), Butter and Van Oordt state that Fortuyn's book led to much criticism and heated discussions.<sup>127</sup> However, Dutch Muslims and their organizations barely had a say in the discussions.<sup>128</sup> Butter and Van Oordt argue that the lowest point in the public debate occurred during a broadcast of the television programme *Het Lagerhuis* on 15 February 1997. In this programme, there was constant talk and discussion about current social issues. In the broadcast in question, presenter Marcel van Dam, former MP and minister on behalf of the PvdA, entered into a discussion with Fortuyn about his new book. During the discussion, Fortuyn repeated the main points from his book. In response, Van Dam did not elaborate on Fortuyn's arguments but accused him of stigmatizing all Muslims and depriving them of their own identity and culture. Fortuyn denied it and said he did not believe that Van Dam had read his book. After that, the discussion became uglier and more personal, with Van Dam portraying Fortuyn as someone with National Socialist views. In turn, Fortuyn said that Van Dam always sticks below the belt, after which Van Dam said that he thought Fortuyn was an inferior person. Van Dam later said that he regretted those words. In an interview in 2004, he said: 'I don't think anyone is inferior. I let myself get angry during that debate, it got out of hand.'<sup>129</sup>

### *Scheffer*

On 29 January 2000, the newspaper NRC Handelsblad published the essay *Het Multiculturele Drama* ('The Multicultural Tragedy'). This essay was written by publicist Paul Scheffer, at that time a prominent PvdA member and professor by special appointment in Urban Problems at the University of Amsterdam, and is mainly about the failures of integration. He felt that the emancipation of minorities in the Netherlands was troublesome. Scheffer believed that Dutch society and the government had held on too long to the idea of 'integration while retaining one's identity.'<sup>130</sup> As a result, according to him, an ethnic underclass was emerging. Moreover, he expected that the problems would only get worse because the number of immigrants without prospects is enormous. As an illustration of the developing underclass of immigrants, he pointed to high unemployment, poverty, school dropout and crime accumulate among the ethnic minorities.<sup>131</sup>

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<sup>127</sup> Butter and Van Oordt, *Zuilen in de Polder?*, 53.

<sup>128</sup> Ibid, 54.

<sup>129</sup> Marlise Hamaker, "Reacties | Marcel van Dam: Ik heb niet gedemoniseerd," *Trouw*, December 14, 2004, <https://www.trouw.nl/nieuws/reacties-marcel-van-dam-ik-heb-niet-gedemoniseerd~bd1aaa32/>.

<sup>130</sup> Slegers, *In debat over Nederland*, 23.

<sup>131</sup> Paul Scheffer, "Het multiculturele drama," January 29, 2000, <https://docplayer.nl/13085685-Het-multiculturele-drama.html>.

In his essay, he also warns about the consequences of too much Islam in the Netherlands. For example, he states that the separation of state and church is not accepted in Islamic circles.<sup>132</sup> Furthermore, Scheffer argues that Islam contributes to the poor integration of Turkish and Moroccan youth. He pointed to hateful messages from some imams and the legal consequences that Islamic law attaches to apostasy.<sup>133</sup>

The public debate about multicultural society changed after Scheffer's essay. Uitermark analysed the number of times that the multicultural society – or a similar concept – was mentioned in the LexisNexis database. This database contains articles from *NRC Handelsblad* since 1989, *Trouw* since 1991 and *De Volkskrant* since 1994.<sup>134</sup> He noted that the number of articles in the database exploded from eight in 1999 to 43 in 2000, while the number of hits increased from 86 to 222. This confirms that Scheffer sparked a public debate. Slegers' analysis went one step further. In her research into the public and political discussions about the multicultural society, she analysed how frequently certain opinion-makers and scientists were quoted in articles about multiculturalism. On the one side, she noted that opinion-makers who have negatively judged multiculturalism – such as Scheffer, Schnabel, Ellian, Ephimenco, Cliteur - published or were quoted together hundreds of times in articles in newspapers *Trouw*, *NRC Handelsblad*, *De Volkskrant* and *Algemeen Dagblad* between 2000 and 2006.<sup>135</sup> But on the other side, opinion makers and scientists who were positive about the multicultural society and multiculturalism, only published a few dozen times in these newspapers in the same period.<sup>136</sup> So, Slegers concludes that the views of the opponents of the multicultural society were much more often mentioned in the largest Dutch newspapers.

In the end, Fortuyn and Scheffer helped each other to get the public debate going. Although they were political-ideological opponents, they had similar views on national identity and Islam. This is an important political-social change of the late 1990s because the taboo surrounding multicultural society was finally broken. Both Slegers and Uitermark argue that the political debate on integration intensified after Scheffer's input.<sup>137</sup> Since then, Islam criticism was also accepted in left-wing and more progressive circles.

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<sup>132</sup> Ibid.

<sup>133</sup> Ibid.

<sup>134</sup> Uitermark, *Dynamics of Power in Dutch Integration Politics*, 49.

<sup>135</sup> Slegers, *In debat over Nederland*, 28.

<sup>136</sup> Ibid.

<sup>137</sup> Justus Uitermark, Vincent Traag and Jeroen Bruggeman, "De strijd om discursieve macht Een relationele discoursanalyse van het Nederlandse integratiedebat, 1990-2005," *Sociologie*, vol. 8 (2012): 232, [https://pure.uva.nl/ws/files/1819402/134675\\_De\\_strijd\\_om\\_discursieve\\_macht.pdf](https://pure.uva.nl/ws/files/1819402/134675_De_strijd_om_discursieve_macht.pdf).

### 3.4 Dutch political debate in the aftermath of 9/11

Several studies have shown that 9/11 hurt the image of Islam and Muslims. Below, I will cite multiple studies to support this conclusion.

In their research on the institutionalization of Islam in the Netherlands, Butter and Van Oordt argued that 9/11 was often framed in the context of Huntington's clash of civilizations thesis.<sup>138</sup> The attacks were seen as something fundamental, namely a struggle between two different civilizations. For example, the British Prime Minister Tony Blair said it was 'an attack on all our societies' and that 'it struck at the very values which underpin our way of life.'<sup>139</sup> By these values, he understood, among other things, tolerance, compassion and freedom. The American President George Bush Jr. came up with a similar phrase: 'Every nation, in every region, now has a decision to make. Either you are with us, or you are with the terrorists.'<sup>140</sup> This idea of taking sides in the coming conflict is reminiscent of Huntington's thesis.

Butter and Van Oordt also wrote that, in the Netherlands, the public discussion about Islam and Muslims was immediately edged. For example, on 26 September, newspaper *De Volkskrant* presented the results of a poll by survey agency TNS NIPO which showed that 63 per cent of the Dutch believed that Muslims who supported the terrorist attacks against the United States should be expelled from the country.<sup>141</sup> The poll also showed that serious action was more often suggested among the less educated. Moreover, on 29 September, Dutch Prime Minister Wim Kok gave a speech in the Moroccan Al Kabir Mosque in Amsterdam. In his words: 'There are quite a few people from ethnic minorities who feel anxious. The government should build bridges wherever it can.'<sup>142</sup> Furthermore, he said generalization should be avoided. 'If a window is thrown at a Muslim school, the entire Dutch society is not to blame. And that also applies the other way around.'<sup>143</sup> This last example shows that the Prime Minister, the main representative of the government, seeks dialogue and avoids generalization. Regarding framing, he is also precise with the words he uses. For example, he deliberately does not pronounce words such as fundamentalism and terrorism, so that no grammatical link is made between Islam and terrorism.

Nevertheless, after 9/11, there has been an increasing trend in the number of violent crimes against mosques. Ineke van der Valk noted in her book *Islamophobia and discrimination* (2012) that in the 1970s

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<sup>138</sup> Butter and Van Oordt, *Zuilen in de Polder?*, 58.

<sup>139</sup> Ibid.

<sup>140</sup> Ibid.

<sup>141</sup> Ibid, 60.

<sup>142</sup> Ibid, 61.

<sup>143</sup> Ibid.



and 1980s, there was very incidental violence against mosques.<sup>144</sup> However, from the 1990s, acts of violence against mosques became more frequent. Van der Valk mentioned three events in the 1990s and early 2000s that have led to an increase in the number and intensity of incidents: the outbreak of the Gulf crisis, the September 11 attacks, and the assassination on Theo van Gogh.<sup>145</sup> Sticking with 9/11, Van der Valk stated, in the fall of 2001, mosques in various municipalities were the target of various forms of violence, including arson or attempted arson.<sup>146</sup> Butter and Van Oordt also stated that Mosques and other Islamic institutions across the country were confronted with arson, defacement or threats in the weeks following 9/11.<sup>147</sup>

The attacks also affected the Dutch debate on Islam. Butter and Van Oordt argued that, for many Dutch Muslims, 9/11 is an important turning point in the debate. They quote Nico Landman, then associate professor of Islamology at the University of Utrecht. He said:

‘Until September 11, there was quite a bit of goodwill for Muslims, but that has since changed. Until 2001, for example, the resistance against mosques was mainly designed practically. People who objected mainly used arguments such as parking problems or falling house prices. After 2001, the resistance against Islam became more explicit.’<sup>148</sup>

A quote from Roger van Boxtel, then Minister of Urban Policy, is also discussed in their research. Van Boxtel said things were going well until 9/11.<sup>149</sup> For example, unemployment decreased, crime decreased, and quality of life increased. However, ‘9/11 was a turning point.’<sup>150</sup> According to Van Boxtel, after the end of the Cold War, a new enemy had suddenly emerged. ‘This enemy was less obvious and it was partly living here.’<sup>151</sup> In his book *Dynamics of Power in Dutch Integration Politics* (2012), Uitermark mentions something similar. He argued that, after 9/11, the focus shifted from issues on minorities and integration to the position of Muslims within society.

In his 2012 article about populism in Dutch history, Koen Vossen mainly focused on the political consequences. He argued that the rise of Pim Fortuyn was undoubtedly caused by the events of September 11. In Vossen’s words: ‘With his charisma and his status as a highly learned columnist and speaker, Fortuyn

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<sup>144</sup> Van der Valk, *Islamofobie en discriminatie*, 78.

<sup>145</sup> Ibid.

<sup>146</sup> Ibid.

<sup>147</sup> Butter and Van Oordt, *Zuilen in de Polder?*, 60.

<sup>148</sup> Ibid, 61-62.

<sup>149</sup> Ibid, 62.

<sup>150</sup> Ibid.

<sup>151</sup> Ibid.

formed the last essential puzzle piece that was still missing.<sup>152</sup> In the period from 9/11 until his death on 6 May 2002, Fortuyn played a leading role in the Islam debate. Slegers says the same thing. She writes that a new Islam debate already started in January 2000, when Paul Scheffer wrote his famous article in the newspaper *NRC Handelsblad*. The events of September 11 and the rise of Fortuyn are just the next steps in the further intensification of the debate.<sup>153</sup>

Another consequence of 9/11 was that Dutch Muslims were asked about their Islamic background more often. Partly because of this, Muslims started to orientate themselves more on their Islamic roots.<sup>154</sup> Butter and Van Oordt's research, as well as that of Slegers, contain several personal stories of Dutch Muslims, mostly of Moroccan descent, who became more deeply involved in Islam as a result. Furthermore, as non-Muslims became more curious about the facts behind the stories, the number of converts rapidly increased after 9/11.<sup>155</sup> At the same time, meetings were also held more frequently where Muslims and non-Muslims could meet.<sup>156</sup> In a sense, this is a paradoxical consequence of the public and political debate on Islam. When groups are pushed into a certain corner, they can feel excluded. In their sense of exclusion, they go more deeply into their own culture. Subsequently, they become even more isolated and alienated from Dutch society. As a result, exactly what should have been prevented has happened.

### 3.5 Sub-Conclusion

Several studies have shown that the Rushdie affair was an important event in the relationship between the West and Islam. For example, it is described as the first event in which Islam was broadly discussed, the first event in a chronological lineage of Islamophobic controversies, and the first confrontation between the modern Western world and Islam. Additionally, Falkenhayner argues the Rushdie affair is linked to a narrative that includes 9/11, the *war on terror*, and the Al-Qaeda attacks in Madrid and London.

In the Western world, there was initially little response to the publication of Rushdie's novel in September 1988. However, this did not apply to predominantly Muslim countries such as India, Pakistan, Saudi-Arabia, Egypt, Qatar, Malesia, Somalia, Sudan, and Indonesia. There, the novel was banned after only a few weeks. There were also small-scale protests in England, where Rushdie was living at the time.

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<sup>152</sup> Koen Vossen, "Van marginaal naar mainstream? Populisme in de Nederlandse geschiedenis," *BMGN - Low Countries Historical Review*, vol. 127-2 (2012): 51, <https://libkey.io/libraries/2163/articles/375540254/full-text-file>.

<sup>153</sup> Slegers, *In debat over Nederland*, 59.

<sup>154</sup> Butter and Van Oordt, *Zuilen in de Polder?*, 62.

<sup>155</sup> *Ibid.*, 63.

<sup>156</sup> *Ibid.*

A study by Morton suggests that the Muslims who criticized *The Satanic Verses* were in the mainstream British media often framed as an 'angry, violent, illiterate, and a foreign mob of Islamic fundamentalists.' However, Morton criticised the validity of that frame by arguing that the mainstream British media overlooked other legitimate forms of Muslim response to the novel. Linking Kumar's research on Islam framing to this (see section 1.4), the following frames were mainly used: Islam is a monolithic religion, Muslims are incapable of rationality and science, and Islam has violent tendencies.

In the Netherlands, the protests were not as fierce as in England. The biggest incident took place in The Hague and Rotterdam on 3 and 4 March 1989. There, dolls were burned and the banner 'Death to Rushdie' was displayed. After adequate intervention by the Dutch government, no more incidents took place.

In the Dutch political discourse of the early 1990s, there was increasing criticism of the multicultural society. Frits Bolkestein, party leader of the VVD and de facto opposition leader, believed that large parts of the Muslim world do not respect the liberal constitutional principles such as separation of church and state, freedom of speech, tolerance, non-discrimination, and equal status of women. He argued that the transmission of European values, including liberalism, rationalism, humanism and Christianity, should play a key role in the Dutch minorities policy. Linking Kumar's research into Islam framing to this (see section 1.4), we see that Bolkestein framed Islam as follows: Islam a uniquely sexist religion, and Muslims are incapable of rationality and science. An important difference with the frames surrounding the Rushdie affair is that the violence frame was no longer applied. What is new, however, is that Islam was framed as a sexist religion. Multiple studies have shown that Bolkestein's ideas caused a permanent change in public and political debate. For example, Maris argues that Bolkestein broke the taboo on the public criticism of multicultural policies. However, he did not change the political consensus of the 1990s that the interests of newcomers must be met.

In the Dutch public discourse of the late 1990s, the views of Pim Fortuyn and Paul Scheffer have been particularly influential. In 1997, Fortuyn published his book *The Islamization of our culture* (1997), in which he criticized Islam. Like Bolkestein, he believed that the Netherlands should define and profile a strong national identity in the light of increasing cultural diversity because a strong national identity would strengthen solidarity. He believed that Islam will inevitably pose a threat to Dutch achievements such as the separation of Church and State, equal treatment between the sexes, the freedom of homosexuals and the equality of children and adults. Hereby, Fortuyn applies the same frames as Bolkestein, namely that Islam is not open to rationality and innovation, and that it is sexist and discriminatory. His main contribution to the debate is that he represented the public side, whereas Bolkestein represented the political side. Furthermore, given his situation - Fortuyn was homosexual - he was able to mention his own experiences regarding the discriminatory nature of Islam.

On 29 January 2000, the newspaper NRC Handelsblad published Paul Scheffer's essay *Het Multiculturele Drama*. In it, Scheffer states that the separation of state and church is not accepted in Islamic circles. Furthermore, he argues that Islam contributes to the poor integration of Turkish and Moroccan youth. He pointed to hateful messages from some imams and the legal consequences that Islamic law attaches to apostasy. Scheffer largely used the same frames as Bolkestein and Fortuyn. However, his focus was more on integration than on Islam itself. His main contribution to the debate is that he was affiliated with a left-wing party, the PvdA. Until then it was unusual for a social democrat to criticize the multicultural society and cultural relativism. His essay paved the way for a more open debate in the 2000s.

To summarise, negative Islam framing in the 1990s was notably applied by Bolkestein, Fortuyn and Scheffer. Although they were political-ideological opponents, they had similar views on Islam. The common denominator is that they saw it as a rigid religion that was not open to freedom, equality and science. This is an important political-social change because the taboo surrounding multicultural society and Islam was finally broken.

9/11 was often framed in the context of Huntington's clash of civilizations thesis. The attacks were seen as something fundamental, namely a struggle between two different civilizations. After 9/11, the public discussion about Islam and Muslims was immediately edged. This was partly due to an incident in the city of Ede that eventually became world news. In late September, a poll by survey agency TNS NIPO showed that 63 per cent of the Dutch believed that Muslims who supported the terrorist attacks against the United States should be expelled from the country. Immediately after 9/11, Islam was therefore mainly linked to terrorism. Frames related to discrimination and sexism were rare. However, a nuanced story was told on September 29 by Dutch Prime Minister Wim Kok. In a speech in the Al Kabir Mosque in Amsterdam, he mentioned that the government should build bridges wherever it can, and that generalization should be avoided. In doing so, he avoided negatively associating words, such as terrorism and fundamentalism. Furthermore, he emphasized that Islam was a multifaceted religion. Therefore, the Dutch government did not actively participate in the negative framing of Islam.

Several studies mention 9/11 as an important turning point in the debate. For example, the idea that a new enemy had emerged took on. In addition, the focus shifted from issues on minorities and integration to the position of Muslims within society. Another consequence of 9/11 was that Dutch Muslims were asked about their Islamic background more often. Partly because of this, Muslims started to orientate themselves more on their Islamic roots. Furthermore, as non-Muslims became more curious about the facts behind the stories, the number of converts rapidly increased after 9/11. Thus, negatively framing Islam did not always have the desired effect.

## Chapter 4 Islam framing from 2002 to 2015

### 4.1 Introduction

The previous chapter revealed that the Rushdie affair and 9/11 were pivotal events in Islam framing. The former event was seen as the first confrontation between the modern Western world and Islam. During that event, Islam was mainly framed as a monotheistic, violent and unfree religion. In the 1990s, the frames of discrimination and sexism were also added, as cultural differences between Dutch and non-Western migrants came to light. With 9/11, the terrorism frame was added.

This chapter analysed how the three Dutch Christian parties framed Islam in the aftermath of five moments from 2002 to 2015 that are (negatively) associated with Islam. I looked at which word choices they used to describe Islam and Muslims.

### 4.2 Case 1: Fortuyn's interview in *De Volkskrant* (2002)

In the late 1990s and early 2000s, Pim Fortuyn was an academic, writer and columnist. In 1997, he wrote a book named *The Islamization of our culture*, in which he pointed out the dangers of cultural relativism and Islam. Fortuyn's main argument was that some nations promote a cultural identity that contains the exact opposite of what *we* stand for. Herby, the word *we* refers to people from a Jewish-Christian humanistic culture. This culture is often used as a synonym for the Western culture since Judaism, Christianity and humanism have deep roots in the Western countries. Fortuyn was inspired by Huntington's idea of a clash of civilizations, as Huntington also portrayed Islam as the new opponent of the Western world.

On 26 November 2001, Fortuyn was elected *lijsttrekker* of the newly formed LN, a relatively new party in the centre-right of the political spectrum orientated towards democratising society.<sup>157</sup> Things gained momentum on 9 February 2002 when newspaper *De Volkskrant* published their interview with the upcoming politician.<sup>158</sup> The headline was clear and simple: 'Fortuyn: close borders for Islamist'. Hereby, the newspaper immediately showed Fortuyn had no interest in political correctness since the dominant political discourse at the time was largely uncritical of the multicultural society and Islam. Although Fortuyn used the term *Islamists*, he simply meant Muslims, followers of Islam. In the interview, the journalist asked Fortuyn whether he hated Islam. He replied:

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<sup>157</sup> In the Netherlands, the *lijsttrekker* ('the leader of the list') is the highest placed person on the list of candidates of a political party during elections.

<sup>158</sup> De Volkskrant, "Fortuyn: grens dicht voor islamiet."

'I do not hate Islam. I consider it a [achterlijke] culture. I have travelled much in the world. And wherever Islam rules, it's just terrible. All the hypocrisy. It's a bit like those old Reformed Protestants. The Reformed lie all the time. And why is that? Because they have standards and values that are so high that you can't humanly maintain them. You also see that in that Muslim culture. Then, look at the Netherlands. In what country could an electoral leader of such a large movement as mine be openly homosexual? How wonderful that that's possible. That's something that one can be proud of. And I'd like to keep it that way, thank you very much.'<sup>159</sup>

Interestingly, the Dutch word *achterlijk* has two meanings. It can mean *backward*, meaning Islam is old-fashioned or anti-modern. However, it can also mean *retarded*, meaning that it is a stupid religion. Later in the interview, Fortuyn mentioned he wanted to remove Article 1 of the Constitution. This article forbids any discrimination on any grounds. Thus, Fortuyn argued that it limits freedom of speech, which is mentioned in Article 7.

The interview received a lot of publicity because Fortuyn made three controversial statements: Islam is a backward/retarded culture, Islamists should not be allowed to enter the Netherlands, and Article 1 of the Constitution should be abolished.<sup>160</sup> One day later, after a party emergency meeting, Fortuyn was kicked out of his party because his colleagues rejected his views on Islam and the Constitution. Shortly after his dismissal, Fortuyn founded his own party, the LPF.

There are no government documents that say anything about Fortuyn's interview. In the parliamentary debates in February 2002, not a word is mentioned about Fortuyn or his ideas. This is probably because Fortuyn held no political office. He was only the leader of a new political party, so, in the House of Representatives, he could not be held personally accountable for his ideas.

However, the 2002 yearbook of the DNPP does mention Fortuyn's interview.<sup>161</sup> The DNPP is a department of the University Library of the University of Groningen, which collects (digital) documentation about political parties in the Netherlands. In the first chapter, they discussed the political effect of Fortuyn's interview. The DNPP argued that it had a huge impact because politicians were all over it. Additionally, they mentioned three names: Paul Rosenmöller (party leader of GL), Thom de Graaf (party leader of D66) and Jan Peter Balkenende (party leader of CDA). The first two politicians stated that Fortuyn showed his true face as

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<sup>159</sup> Ibid.

<sup>160</sup> Ibid.

<sup>161</sup> Gerrit Voerman, *Jaarboek Documentatiecentrum Nederlandse Politieke Partijen 2002* (Groningen: Documentatiecentrum Nederlandse Politieke Partijen, 2004), 97,

[https://pure.rug.nl/ws/portalfiles/portal/17368507/2004\\_Gerrit\\_Voerman\\_jaarboek\\_2002\\_def.pdf](https://pure.rug.nl/ws/portalfiles/portal/17368507/2004_Gerrit_Voerman_jaarboek_2002_def.pdf).

an extreme right-wing politician.<sup>162</sup> The latter argued that Fortuyn attacked the law and order.<sup>163</sup>

Balkenende's response shows that he criticized Fortuyn mainly for his constitutional amendment idea and not so much for his views on Islam.

I found two primary sources from 9 February 2002, but neither yielded the desired result. The first primary source was the broadcast of NOS Radio on 9 February 2002, on the same day the interview was published. In this radio programme, the interviewer asked several politicians to comment on Fortuyn's ideas.<sup>164</sup> Unfortunately, only the reactions of PvdA, VVD, and GL could be heard. For example, Ad Melkert, party leader of PvdA, believed that Fortuyn had crossed a line. Hereby, this line referred to the controversial remarks on Article 1. Additionally, he argued that the removal of this article will eventually lead to discrimination, especially of minorities. Similarly, Hans Dijkstal, party leader of VVD, defended Article 1 by describing it as 'the heart of our civilisation.'<sup>165</sup> In addition, he expressed his deepest regret that Fortuyn questioned its usefulness.

The second primary source consists of footage and interviews by the television programme NOVA, a late-evening current affairs programme. Again, it ignored the reactions of the Christian parties.<sup>166</sup> Instead, they only asked Melkert and Dijkstal to comment on Fortuyn's interview. The former merely repeated his previous statements on the NOS radio programme. The latter, however, reacted more fiercely than earlier that day. He argued that Fortuyn's comment on Article 1 is disastrous for the Netherlands. Furthermore, he stated that Fortuyn turned groups against each other. However, Dijkstal did not comment on Fortuyn's remarks on Islam.

Both sources show that Fortuyn was mainly attacked on his constitutional views and not on his anti-Islamic views. However, most politicians did mention that abolishing Article 1 could lead to more discrimination against Muslims - after all, there would no longer have a fundamental right to protect them. What can be cautiously concluded is that the aforementioned parties, PvdA and VDD, did not respond to the statement that Islam is an 'achterlijke' culture.

Ultimately, the reactions of the CDA, CU and SGP to Fortuyn's interview are lost to history. Only one quote from CDA party leader Balkenende had survived, but nothing from the CU and SGP. This is

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<sup>162</sup> Ibid.

<sup>163</sup> Ibid.

<sup>164</sup> "2002-02-09 NOS Radio Reacties Politici," YouTube, accessed October 29, 2021, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IgrUFEUujY8>.

<sup>165</sup> Ibid.

<sup>166</sup> "Pim Fortuyn 2002-02-09 Nova Weg bij LN," YouTube, accessed October 29, 2021, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aAC5djotpRw>.

probably because the CU and SGP were minor parties at the time. For example, the former had 3.29% of the vote and the latter only 1.78% in the 1998 parliamentary elections. However, based on their election programme, their ideology, and the reactions of other parties, it seems unlikely that their reaction differed from those of the PvdA and VVD. In support of this assumption, I refer to a comment made during the broadcast of the aforementioned NOS Radio programme. It stated that the only supporter of Fortuyn's interview was the Belgian politician Filip Dewinter.<sup>167</sup> If the CU and the SGP also supported Fortuyn's ideas, this would undoubtedly have been mentioned by the NOS.

Although the Christian parties were absent from the NOS radio broadcast and the NOVA television broadcast, their 2002 election programme contained information about Islam. These election programmes were published at the end of February 2002, so a few weeks after Fortuyn's interview. Based on this, it can be determined to a certain extent how they wrote about Islam. For example, the search terms *Islam*, *Muslim* and *fundamentalism* did not yield any results in the CDA's 2002 election programme. However, a small paragraph is devoted to international terrorism. It states, among other things, the following: 'The security of countries and civilians can be affected by the actions of hostile military units, international criminal organizations, terrorists and negligence of one's citizens.'<sup>168</sup> In this way, the CDA avoided a negative association of Islam. It's only about stopping terrorists with no further specification of their religious background.

The CU election programme did link terrorism and Islam. This becomes clear in the next paragraph:

'The unprecedented viciousness of the terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001 has determined us both at the fragility of our social order and the high seriousness associated with the office from the government. It is precisely then that Christian politics realize how much it may feel dependent on the God who instituted the government to curb and punish evil. A government should never neglect its duties and responsibilities in the areas of law, the security of citizens and the defence of fundamental values and interests. That sense of responsibility only gets the right weight when a government experiences the authority granted to it as a gift and assignment from God. This also makes her action more powerful and more substantive in the current confrontation with radical fundamentalist notions from the world of Islam.'<sup>169</sup>

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<sup>167</sup> "2002-02-09 NOS Radio."

<sup>168</sup> "Betrokken samenleving, betrouwbare overheid," CDA, accessed October 30, 2021, <https://dnpprepo.ub.rug.nl/424/1/cda02.pdf>.

<sup>169</sup> "Durf te kiezen voor normen," CU, accessed October 30, 2021, <https://dnpprepo.ub.rug.nl/426/1/cu02.pdf>.



This section tells of a confrontation between the Christian world and the Islamic world. This is likely an indirect reference to Huntington's thesis. The 'threat' is also specified: not Islam as a whole, but the radical fundamentalist notions in the Islamic world. It can be argued that the terrorism frame is applied here, as the text suggests that terrorists are followers of Islam. Further on in the CU election programme, there is another negative association with Islam.

‘In international fora such as the United Nations and the policy of the EU, explicit attention is drawn to the danger of totalitarian and nationalist views and aspirations, such as the introduction of Sharia<sup>170</sup> and the ignoring or suppression of the cultural rights of national minorities’<sup>171</sup>

Here, the Sharia is presented as an oppressive law. In reality, *Sharia* is a general term for *Islamic law*. In practice, the extent to which the Sharia is implemented varies from country to country. For example, Dick Douwes wrote in *De Islam in een notendop* (2003) that the application of the Sharia in criminal law attracts the attention of Western media, but the presence of the Sharia in personal and family law usually does not make the news.<sup>172</sup> This means that the Shariah can be implanted in multiple ways, not just the way it is often portrayed in western media. This CU's view of an oppressive Sharia fits with Kumar's frame of portraying Islam as a violent and non-rational religion.

In the election programme of the SGP, it is immediately clear that they are against Islam. For example, on page 24, it states:

‘When it comes to the future of the multi-ethnic society, our greatest concern lies in the increasing multi-religiosity. The SGP is very sad that with the arrival of immigrants in the Netherlands, other religions also are increasingly taking root in our society, especially Islam. The rise of non-Christian religions goes hand in hand with secularization among the native population.’<sup>173</sup>

However, it is not specified which aspects of Islam did not appeal to them. It seems that it was simply a competing religion - the less competition, the better. Yet, the SGP did not directly associate Islam with terrorism. On page 90 is the following paragraph:

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<sup>170</sup> The Islamic law.

<sup>171</sup> Ibid.

<sup>172</sup> Dick Douwes, *Islam in een notendop* (Amsterdam: Uitgeverij Prometheus, Amsterdam, 2003), 78.

<sup>173</sup> “Tot Uw dienst,” SGP, accessed October 30, 2021, <https://dnpprepro.ub.rug.nl/40/7/SGP%20Verkiezingsprogramma%202002-2006.pdf>.

‘Even if security risks have changed over the past ten years, risks remain. This is especially true if we consider the unstable situation in the countries of the former Soviet Union and the Middle East and the actions of all kinds of terrorist organizations. [...] Various brutal attacks have immediately placed the fight against terrorism high on the agenda.’<sup>174</sup>

In the paragraph above, 9/11 is described as a brutal terrorist act, but no linguistical link is made with Islam. Nevertheless, at the end of page 90, the following remark is made: ‘When processing asylum applications, extra attention should be paid to possible terrorist ties that asylum seekers may have.’<sup>175</sup> Since most asylum seekers in the 2000s came from Islamic countries, it is suggested that (Islamic) asylum seekers may have ties to terrorism.

#### **4.3 Case 2: The murder of Van Gogh (2004)**

Theo van Gogh was a Dutch film director and producer, author and newspaper columnist. He was a well-known critic of Islam, and he expressed harsh criticism of the multicultural society. On 29 Augustus 2004, the Dutch public broadcasting network aired Van Gogh’s short film *Submission*, a film in which Islam is accused of misogyny and a culture of violence against women. The film was directed by Van Gogh himself and scripted by Ayaan Hirsi Ali, a former Muslim and VVD politician in the House of Representatives. After the broadcasting, Van Gogh received death threats and was under police protection. Nevertheless, he was assassinated on 2 November 2004 in Amsterdam while cycling to his work. Immediately after the murder, the perpetrator left a note on the scene containing death threats to Hirsi Ali. Because he confessed his act was religiously inspired, it stirred the debate about the position of Islam in the Netherlands.<sup>176</sup>

Since 27 May 2003, the Balkenende II cabinet, consisting of CDA, VVD, and D66, was the head of government. The Prime Minister and name bearer of this cabinet was the aforementioned CDA politician Jan Peter Balkenende. On 2 November 2004, the day of the murder, Minister of Justice Piet Hein Donner (CDA) wrote a letter to the Speaker of the House. In it, he gave more details about the murder and its aftermath. Among other things, Donner wrote the following:

‘We have already informed you that it was necessary to take serious account of the fact that the suspect acted from a radical Islamic conviction. The documents confirm this suspicion. [...] It is also

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<sup>174</sup> Ibid.

<sup>175</sup> Ibid.

<sup>176</sup> NU.nl, “Politiek reageert geschokt op moord Theo van Gogh,”.

disturbing that the suspect, who was born and raised in the Netherlands, went through a radicalisation process here that led him to this unimaginable act.’<sup>177</sup>

Donner chose to reveal that the perpetrator had a radical Islamic conviction. As a result, he made an association between committing murder and having a radical Islamic ideology. His argument for the terminology *radical Islam* was likely that the perpetrator left a threatening letter on the victim's body. This letter contained various Islamic terms and Quranic references. By adding a specification to Islam, he may have tried to distinguish between radical and non-radical Islam. This is a remarkable choice of words because the Dutch dictionary Van Dale states that *radical* means *total* or *far-reaching*.<sup>178</sup> Other dictionaries also list the synonyms *extreme* and *drastic*. So, the word *radical* does not linguistically mean that someone has a different view of Islam, it just means that someone thinks more deeply or drastically about it. Therefore, being a radical Muslim does not mean that someone is violent. However, over time, as we will see in later cases, the word *radical* has become synonymous with *violence*.

Later in his letter, Donner briefly returned to the religious motive of the perpetrator. He wrote:

‘It is of particular concern that radical Muslims abuse Islam in this way. A small group thus casts a stain on the religion of a large group of compatriots. They also force the government to take measures that could also have adverse consequences for well-meaning citizens. [...] Furthermore, discussions with representatives of minority organizations already held shortly after the attack on Mr Van Gogh will be continued to put a stop to these forms of dangerous radicalisation together with the majority of the moderate part of the Muslim population.’<sup>179</sup>

In the above text, Donner wrote that ‘radical Muslims’ took advantage of Islam and thereby stained its reputation. Thus, Donner framed Islam as a religion that had been taken advantage of by radicalised individuals. It can be argued from Donner's written response that he wanted to avoid generalisation. This means that he did not adopt the frame that Islam is a monotheistic and violent religion. In his view, the actions of individuals should not be representative of the total Muslim population. However, in the context of

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<sup>177</sup> “Kamerstuk, 29854 nr. 2,” Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal, November 10, 2004, <https://zoek.officielebekendmakingen.nl/kst-29854-2.html>.

<sup>178</sup> “Betekenis 'radicaal,’” Van Dale, accessed October 30, 2021, <https://www.vandale.nl/gratis-woordenboek/nederlands/betekenis/radicaal#.YX1fBZ5Bw2w>.

<sup>179</sup> “Handeling, nr. 22, pagina 1278-1332,” Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal, November 25, 2004, <https://zoek.officielebekendmakingen.nl/h-tk-20042005-1278-1332.html>.

*words matter*, Donner did associate several negative associations with Islam. Furthermore, he wrote that talks were held with Islamic minority organizations after the attack, so that ‘these forms of dangerous radicalisation can be stopped together with the majority of the moderate part of the Muslim population.’<sup>180</sup> This statement divides Islam, as it were, into a major moderate side and a smaller radical side.

On the same day as the murder and Donner’s letter, Prime Minister Balkenende held a press conference. In it, he condemned the attack but did not say a word about Islam. In his own words:

‘I was horrified to learn of the murder of Theo van Gogh. A lot of violence was used, both with a firearm and with a knife. This is where your mind stops. [...] Theo van Gogh was someone who intervened in the public debate with outspoken points of view. He was a prominent champion of free speech. Someone who stood up for his beliefs. Even if they were controversial.’<sup>181</sup>

On 11 November 2004, members of the House of Representatives debated on the murder. Maxime Verhagen, the chairman of the political group of the CDA, began his speech by stating the following:

‘Speaker. The murder of Theo van Gogh and the open threats against colleagues go against everything this country stands for such as freedom of speech and tolerance. De necessity to counter extremism is not only proven by the brutal murder of Van Gogh and death threats against others but also due to the events up to and including the arrest of several suspected terrorists, yesterday in The Hague. We have to oppose radicalism and terrorism.’<sup>182</sup>

Thus, Verhagen didn't immediately talk about Islam and Muslims. Instead, he preferred the words *extremism*, *radicalisation* and *terrorism*, with no religious specification. In his entire speech, Verhagen only mentioned Islam when he suggested that the government should deny entry to those who want to spread the ‘radical Islamic ideology.’ Therefore, he linguistically associated Islam with terrorism by implying that a radical Islamic ideology could lead to terrorism.

Although the word *Islam* appeared only once in Verhagen’s speech, the word *Muslim* was frequently used. For example, Verhagen stated that both the Balkenende II cabinet and the House of Representatives are responsible for showing that ‘Muslim radicals’ and ‘extreme right-wing radicals’ cannot walk freely. After

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<sup>180</sup> Ibid.

<sup>181</sup> “Extra NOS Journaal - Moord op Theo van Gogh 02-11-2004,” YouTube, accessed October 30, 2021, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kTuSeYIpX9o>.

<sup>182</sup> Overheid.nl, “Handeling, nr. 22, pagina 1278-1332.”

that, he argued that we have to avoid framing Muslims as the *others* since the true *others* are those who are radicalised. However, in the spirit of ‘Don’t think of an elephant,’ it is remarkable that Verhagen also said: ‘If we see a terrorist behind every Muslim, we are at fault.’<sup>183</sup> By using these words, he automatically evoked a frame of Muslims as terrorists.

Eventually, Bas van der Vlies of the SGP had the opportunity to take the floor. He pointed out that the murder of Van Gogh proved that ‘Islamic terrorism’ had arrived in the Netherlands. Thereafter, he mentioned that there are more than one million Muslims in the Netherlands, and some of them belong to a small radical core that encourages violence. He labelled these people ‘violent Muslim extremists.’<sup>184</sup> Afterwards, Van der Vlies used a similar formulation as Verhagen. He said: ‘Of course, not all Muslims are terrorists. Unfortunately, it must be said that most terrorists are Muslims. Therefore, we have to be very careful regarding the far-reaching Islamisation of the Netherlands.’<sup>185</sup> Later, he expressed his disappointment that ‘radicalised Muslims’ rely on the Quran.

André Rouvoet of the CU was the last MP speaker before the sitting was suspended. Initially, he seemed to avoid negative linguistic associations with Islam because he hardly mentioned it. Rouvoet began his speech by explaining that the murder of Van Gogh proved that extremism and terrorism are among us. Afterwards, he used the metaphor ‘jihad in Amsterdam’ to illustrate how close religious-inspired violence had become. The choice of the word *jihad* is remarkable because it is a versatile term. It can range from the personal effort to counter disbelief in oneself to the holy war against unbelievers.<sup>186</sup> Based on the context, Rouvoet seemed to mean primarily an armed struggle. In the remainder of his speech, he mainly discussed the social consequences of the murder and the measures that could have prevented it. In his last paragraph, Rouvoet mentioned his first and only reference to Islam by stating that this debate was about ‘political extremism’ and ‘Islamic terrorism’.<sup>187</sup> Therefore, in the end, he mentioned a direct link between Islam and terrorism.

After the sitting was reopened, Minister Donner answered MPs questions and gave an explanatory statement concerning the cabinet’s position.<sup>188</sup> Donner pointed out that his Ministry did their best to get a hold on terrorism and violent radicalism. Also, he admitted that we are all scared of ‘violent Islamic radicals.’ However, according to Donner, those who burn mosques, churches and schools are just as radical

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<sup>183</sup> Ibid.

<sup>184</sup> Ibid.

<sup>185</sup> Ibid.

<sup>186</sup> Douwes, *Islam in een notendop*, 34.

<sup>187</sup> “Handeling, nr. 22, pagina 1278-1332.”

<sup>188</sup> Ibid.

and threatening to society. At the end of his speech, he believed that it is necessary to combat terrorism and Islam radicalism on an international level.

Next, I looked at the election programmes of the CDA, the CU and the SGP to find out whether the murder of Van Gogh still played a role in their Islam position. The elections to the House of Representatives took place on 22 November 2006, just over two years after the murder of Van Gogh. The search term *terrorism* appears no less than twenty times in the CDA election programme, while *Islam* is only mentioned four times. For example, on page 9 it says:

‘The security problem has recently become increasingly complex: failing states, terrorism and the possession of nuclear knowledge can all come together. Terrorist networks seek to spill cultural tensions into the streets and schools of London, Paris, Madrid, New York and Amsterdam. The task of connecting people, cultures and religions is gaining in urgency because of all this.’<sup>189</sup>

Further on, it also states: ‘The focus on radicalisation and terrorism must not be allowed to slacken.’<sup>190</sup> Additionally, Islam is only spoken of in a cultural sense. For example, on page 33, it says: ‘In addition to the Jewish, Christian, and humanist traditions, Islam, Buddhism, Hinduism and other philosophies of life are part of our society.’<sup>191</sup> Based on their texts, it becomes clear that that CDA deliberately chose not to link past terrorist attacks to Islam, and even acknowledged that Islam belongs to the Netherlands.

In the election programme of the CU, the proportions are different. It talks about terrorism thirteen times and Islam eight times. Furthermore, it refers directly to Huntington's thesis. For example, on page 36 it says:

‘The presence of more than 900,000 Muslims in the Netherlands and a worldwide debate about increasing religious extremism and clashing civilizations pose challenges for Islam. The CU wants nothing more than to live together peacefully and build bridges where necessary. [...] At the same time, there are major issues: Islamic-inspired terrorism must be fought vigorously, but to prevent young people from doing so, we must work together with Islamic civil society organisations, Muslim leaders and individual Muslims on the sustainable integration of Muslims in the Western society.’<sup>192</sup>

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<sup>189</sup> “Vertrouwen in Nederland. Vertrouwen in elkaar,” CDA, accessed October 30, 2021, <https://dnpprepo.ub.rug.nl/6/21/CDA%20verkiezingsprogramma%202006-2011.pdf>.

<sup>190</sup> Ibid.

<sup>191</sup> Ibid.

<sup>192</sup> “Duurzaam voor elkaar,” CU, accessed October 30, 2021, <https://dnpprepo.ub.rug.nl/31/1/cu06.pdf>.

So, in contrast to the CDA, the CU was a lot more critical of Islam. Firstly, they referred to the theory of clashing civilizations, suggesting that the Islamic culture is hostile. Secondly, they mentioned that religious extremism and Islamic-inspired terrorism could escalate the conflict. Thus, Islam is framed more than once as a source of violence and terrorism.

Terrorism and Islam are discussed more frequently in the election programme of the SGP than in those of the CDA and CU. Terrorism is discussed twenty-two times and Islam is discussed twenty times. For example, on page 34, there is the following comment: ‘The scourge of emerging (Islamic) terrorism is one of the greatest dangers in the world today. The Netherlands was confronted with the murder of Van Gogh.’<sup>193</sup> The following text on page 27 also leaves nothing to the imagination:

‘If there is one subject that has occupied people's minds in recent years, it is the question of how we should live together with an ever-growing group of people in our country who has a different origin and often has a different religion and way of life. For a long time, many in The Hague bury their heads in the sand for the enormous problems of such a multicultural and multi-religious society. Until September 11, Pim Fortuyn, and the murder of Theo van Gogh. Then, it turned out that this naivety was dangerous.’<sup>194</sup>

And a little further on:

‘The often heated debates on this theme cannot be seen in isolation from the worldwide rise of Islam. This leads to tensions all over the world: the Middle East first, but also in Russia, Indonesia, many African countries, and Europe. In almost all Islamic countries, dissenters, including many Christians, have a hard time. What determines the image of Islam most at the moment are radicalisation, hatred, intolerance and violence against dissenters.’<sup>195</sup>

Here, it becomes clear that the SGP did not see regular or general terrorism as the greatest danger in the world, but *Islamic terrorism* in particular. The SGP also stated that ‘the dangerous naivety towards Islam’ stopped after 9/11, the rise of Fortuyn, and the murder of Van Gogh. This enumeration links Islam to violence and terrorism, without nuances or extenuating circumstances. It is also stated that the growing

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<sup>193</sup> “Naar eer en geweten,” SGP, accessed October 30, 2021, <https://dnpprepo.ub.rug.nl/37/1/sgp06.pdf>.

<sup>194</sup> Ibid.

<sup>195</sup> Ibid.

number of Muslims in the Netherlands will cause problems, with the assumption that terrorist attacks will take place more often.

#### 4.4 Case 3: Wilder's short film *Fitna* (2008)

After leaving the VVD in September 2004, Geert Wilders started his own party in February 2006. His party is known for its criticism of Islam and opposition to immigration. On 27 March 2008, Wilders put his short film *Fitna* on the internet. Not surprisingly, this film is critical about Islam. For example, it claims that Islam encourages terrorism, antisemitism, and violence against women, while simultaneously showing images of terroristic acts and quotations from the Quran. *Fitna* provoked a reaction from the mainstream media, other politicians and the Muslim community, both domestic and abroad.<sup>196197</sup>

On the same day, Prime Minister Balkenende wrote a letter to the House of Representatives in which he explained the government's view. He wrote:

‘The film shows images of atrocities and holds Islam and the Quran responsible for them. The government condemns such acts and their perpetrators. In the film, Islam is equated with committing atrocities. We reject this representation. The vast majority of Muslims reject extremism and violence. The victims are often Muslims too. [...] Muslims, Christians and people of other faiths can live together very well. The problem is not religion, but abuse of religion to sow hatred and bigotry. That's why we ask for respect for everyone's deepest beliefs.’<sup>198</sup>

Remarkably, Balkenende fell for a typical framing pitfall. His opponent, Wilders, framed Islam as a violent, misogynistic and terroristic religion. Thereafter, Balkenende linguistically denied what Wilders claimed. But by repeating Wilders' accusations, the association, as explained in more detail in Chapter 2 of this thesis, remained. The framing theory says that if something (Islam) is continuously mentioned in connection with negative associations (terrorism and violence), then there must be a kernel of truth in it.

Prime Minister Balkenende also gave a reaction to the parliamentary press that same day. He said: ‘In the film, Islam is equated with committing atrocities. We reject this representation. The vast majority of Muslims rejects extremism and violence. The victims are often Muslims too. We regret that Mr Wilders

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<sup>196</sup> Tran, “Dutch government could ban anti-Islam film.”

<sup>197</sup> BBC News, “Nato fears over Dutch Islam film.”

<sup>198</sup> “Kamerstuk, 31402 nr. 1,” Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal, April 3, 2008, <https://zoek.officielebekendmakingen.nl/kst-31402-1.html>.



brought this movie out.<sup>199</sup> Here, Balkenende again repeated that Islam has nothing to do with the accusations made by Wilders, but he again repeated Wilders' terminology.

On 15 April 2008, members of the House of Representatives debated on the effect of *Fitna*. The first speaker to stand behind the platform was Pieter van Geel, the chairman of the political group of the CDA – after Maxime Verhagen became the new Minister of Foreign Affairs. Van Geel argued that people should not underestimate the effect and the possible consequences of the film.<sup>200</sup> Hereby, he referred to his recent meeting with President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan of Turkey, in which Erdogan expressed his concern about it. After that, Van Geel reminded the MPs that the Balkenende III cabinet had already asked Wilders to respect other religions. He also pointed out that he considers the film to be ‘malevolent, unnecessary offensive’, and not contributing to the fight against terrorism and the integration of Muslims.<sup>201</sup> Next, he said:

‘We should not look at the quality of the film, but instead at its political message. I can only say that the film is cunningly made and is meant maliciously. The most malevolent is the assumed connection between Muslim terrorism, the presence of Muslims in his county, and the fear of a Muslim state. The intention is clear. The frame has to stick into people’s minds and hearts. Old footage of violence and terror are malevolently connected to the assumed threat of a couple of hundred thousand Muslims in the Netherlands. As if they are all jihadis. This comparison is not right and very harmful. Of course, there is a fear of Muslim terrorism in this country. This should and should not be underestimated. But we have to reduce the problems.’<sup>202</sup>

Van Geel disagreed with the content of *Fitna*. For example, he believed it unjust that Dutch Muslims are portrayed as potential enemies. As for his choice of words, it is striking that he mentioned ‘Muslim terrorism’ twice. Especially in the context that there is a certain fear of domestic Muslim terrorism among the Dutch population.

Arie Slob, party leader of the CU, argued that *Fitna* is political propaganda and consists of a series of horrible images.<sup>203</sup> In addition, he said that it remains shocking and horrifying to see what happens when

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<sup>199</sup> “Pauw & Witteman,” NPO, March 27, 2008, [https://www.npostart.nl/pauw-witteman/27-03-2008/VARA\\_101163098?utm\\_medium=refferal&utm\\_source=tvblik](https://www.npostart.nl/pauw-witteman/27-03-2008/VARA_101163098?utm_medium=refferal&utm_source=tvblik).

<sup>200</sup> “Handeling, nr. 70, pagina 4924-4937,” Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal, April 15, 2008, <https://zoek.officielebekendmakingen.nl/h-tk-20072008-4924-4937.html>.

<sup>201</sup> Ibid.

<sup>202</sup> Ibid.

<sup>203</sup> Ibid.

people take advantage of religion to legitimise hate and violence. His biggest criticism of *Fitna* was that it does no justice to all Muslims. Furthermore, Slob argued that filmmaker Wilders showed he is incapable of portraying Islam. However, he admitted that Islam has a radical and violent side and that we should not close our eyes to atrocities and wrongdoing that are committed in the name of Islam. Near the end of his speech, Slob said an almost poetic sentence: ‘The Bible shows me not to live in fear, but to use love in approaching and interacting with others, whoever they are and whatever their beliefs are.’<sup>204</sup> Thus, he framed Islam in the same way as Van Geel did, namely as a normal religion that had been taken advantage of by hateful individuals.

Van der Vlies of the SGP pointed out that his party had always denounced the dangers of Islam. For example, he mentioned the events in New York, Jerusalem, London, and Madrid. Next, he summed up that international terrorism in the name of Allah left its mark, the Dutch secret service warned for growing radicalisation among Muslim youth, and growing antisemitism among Muslims is food for thought. Therefore, Van der Vlies argued that he finds it reasonable that Islamisation evokes fear. Nevertheless, he rejected *Fitna* because it generalised the entire Muslim community. Van der Vlies also claimed that many Muslims are moderate and want nothing to do with violence. After that, he repeated his frame from November 2004 when he stated that ‘most terrorists are Muslim, but luckily most Muslims are no terrorists.’<sup>205</sup> Nevertheless, he believed it justifiable to point at the dark sides of Islam. Thus, Van der Vlies approved most of the film’s content but disapproved of the method.

Towards the end of the debate, Prime Minister Balkenende was allowed to respond to all questions asked from the MPs of the House of Representatives. He stated that his cabinet rejects *Fitna* because it shows atrocities and extremism and unjustifiably connects them to Islam and the Quran. Additionally, they disapproved that Wilders associated the entire Muslim community with perpetrators of terrorism and violence. His cabinet acknowledged the existence of radicalisation and extremism but is careful not to put everything under the same umbrella indiscriminately. In their view, a small radicalised group should not ruin it for a larger group. Thus, Balkenende frames Islam in the same way as Van Geel and Slob, namely as a normal religion that had been taken advantage of by radicalised or violent individuals.

#### **4.5 Case 4: Charlie Hebdo shooting (2015)**

Charlie Hebdo is a French satirical weekly newspaper that features cartoons, reports, and jokes. It attracted worldwide attention for its cartoons of the Islamic prophet Muhammad. On 7 January 2015, twelve people

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<sup>204</sup> Ibid.

<sup>205</sup> Ibid.

were killed and eleven people were injured in an attack on their offices. Hatred for Charlie Hebdo's cartoons is considered to be the principal motive for the massacre. The gunmen identified themselves as belonging to a branch of Al-Qaeda. In the aftermath of this attack, the phrase 'Je suis Charlie' became a common slogan of support.

On the day of the attack, CDA party leader Sybrand Buma tweeted: 'Horrible act of terror in Paris. It is an attack against democracy. My condolences go out to the victims and relatives.'<sup>206</sup> In his tweet, he made no mention of the background or the motives of the terrorists. Later that day, he told a NOS reporter the following:

'This is contrary to everything. That does not belong in our western democracy. Western democracy knows freedoms and responsibilities, but above all, it knows the right of everyone to live in freedom. Dramatically, this attack in Paris shows how fragile our democracy can be and how important it is to defend ourselves against attacks against it.'<sup>207</sup>

Again, he did not say a word about the background or motive of the perpetrators. Instead, he focused on the consequences of the attack, which is that it is an attack on democracy.

On 13 January, Buma gave an interview in the newspaper *De Telegraaf*, in which he says that his patience with Ivo Opstelten, the Minister of Security and Justice is being severely tested.<sup>208</sup> Buma thought that Opstelten was too slow in developing an action programme against jihadism. In the interview, he also said that Dutch Muslims should speak out much more strongly against the radicalisation and abuse of their religion by terrorists.<sup>209</sup> In this way, he acknowledged that the terrorists came from the Muslim community and that there are people within that community with a passive attitude.

On 14 January, members of the House of Representatives debated on the causes and consequences of the Charlie Hebdo shooting. Buma stated that 'radical Muslims' touched the heart of our Western society' when they attacked Charlie Hebdo and a Jewish supermarket. Furthermore, he predicted that more attacks

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<sup>206</sup> "Rutte: Laffe terreurdaad raakt ons allemaal," RTL Nieuws, January 7, 2015,

<https://www.rtlnieuws.nl/nieuws/artikel/1420841/rutte-laffe-terreurdaad-raakt-ons-allemaal>.

<sup>207</sup> "Koning Willem-Alexander diept geschokt door aanslag," NOS, January 7, 2015, <https://nos.nl/artikel/2012122-koning-willem-alexander-diep-geschokt-door-aanslag>.

<sup>208</sup> "Harde kritiek CDA-leider Buma op Opstelten," BNR, January 13, 2015, <https://www.bnr.nl/nieuws/politiek/10044450/harde-kritiek-cda-leider-buma-op-opstelten>.

<sup>209</sup> "Handeling, nr. 41, item 7," Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal, February 5, 2015, <https://zoek.officielebekendmakingen.nl/h-tk-20142015-41-7.html>.

will come since the ‘terror of radical Islam is the biggest threat to our safety.’<sup>210</sup> Thereafter, he mentioned that our continent is shaped by a century-old Jewish-Christian and humanistic tradition. Therefore, we value freedom, respect and responsibility for your actions. The terrorists, he argued, are against these values.

Sometime later, he said:

‘It is naïve to claim that it has nothing to do with Islam. After all, radicals shouted that they represent true Islam. However, it is just as nonsense to say that it is about *the* Islam.’<sup>211</sup> The sound of peaceful, on democracy and liberal-oriented Islam should dominate. The radical sound must be cut off the pass, especially in the aftermath of the terrible events in Paris.’<sup>212</sup>

It is noticeable that Buma linguistically associated Islam with terrorism, as he argues that radicals proclaim that they represent the true Islam. For him, this is sufficient proof that Islam and terrorism are indeed linked. However, Buma does indicate that there are two types of Islam: a democracy and liberal-oriented Islam and a radical Islam. Thus, Buma framed Islam as a source for terrorism, but not as a monolithic religion.

On the other hand, Kees van der Staaij, party leader of the SGP, did not mention the word *Islam* in his speech.<sup>213</sup> He simply discussed terrorism and violence without mentioning religious backgrounds. For example, he stated that he rejects violence and argued that we should combat terrorism. Thus, he avoided connecting Islam to individual actions. The only time Van der Staaij hinted at Islam was when he discussed prevention measures against terrorism. For instance, he asked the government how Muslim communities could assist in preventing radicalisation. However, when MP Tunahan Kuzu asked him about safety measures against mosques and Islamic schools, he replied:

‘Everyone in our country has the right to protection against violence. We know that Muslim radicals pay special attention to the Jewish community and that is why I have asked for special measures to be taken for this community. As far as I know, the violence of Muslim radicals focuses less on the mosques in the Netherlands.’<sup>214</sup>

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<sup>210</sup> Ibid.

<sup>211</sup> Here, Buma emphasised the word *the*, by which he refers to one kind of Islam.

<sup>212</sup> Ibid.

<sup>213</sup> Ibid.

<sup>214</sup> Ibid.

Hereby, Van der Staaij used the words *violence* and *radical Muslims* right after each other. Therefore, he evoked a frame of radical Muslims as violent persons, which did not correspond to his previous frame in which any negative association with Islam was avoided.

Likewise, Arie Slob of the CU avoided the words *Islam* and *Muslim(s)* in his prepared speech. However, he expressed his concern about emerging jihadism and the rapid radicalisation of young people. In his words:

‘The attacks in France are not isolated; they also affect our country. As a western society, they define us by the fact that freedom cannot be taken for granted, by the great concern about the emerging jihadism and by the alarmingly rapid radicalisation of young people. They show that violence can come very close, as we have seen before, for example in the terrible attack on the Jewish Museum in Brussels last year, the murder of Theo van Gogh and the attack on the Twin Towers and the Pentagon in the United States.’<sup>215</sup>

His speech showed that Slob makes no linguistic connection between Islam and terrorist attacks. In his view, only individuals should be held accountable for their actions, not an entire group.

#### **4.6 Case 5: Jihadis in the Syrian and Iraqi Civil Wars (2014-2015)**

In the 2010s, it was violent in the Middle East due to the Syrian civil war and the War in Iraq. Throughout 2014, with the rise of IS, the number of foreign jihadists drastically increased. At least three hundred Dutch Muslims joined jihadist movements in Iraq and Syria. Furthermore, especially the execution of American journalist James Foley in August 2014 often made the news. However, in the summer of 2015, it became apparent that the first group of jihadis would return home. This caused some unrest in the public and political debate. This case study examines how the Christian parties responded to Dutch jihadists but also analyses the desired consequences of jihadism for Dutch citizenship.

##### *September 2014*

On September 18, 2014, a plenary debate was held on the approach to Dutch jihad fighters. The first speaker of that day was Sybrand Buma of CDA. In his first paragraph, he said the following:

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<sup>215</sup> Ibid.

‘Speaker. Images of terror from IS in Iraq and Syria, reports of Dutch participation in the most horrific atrocities, jihadists travelling back and forth, young people cheering with IS flags on the street and threatened Jewish fellow citizens and threatened Muslim fellow citizens. The summer of 2014 showed that the threat from radical Muslims is great and close at hand. It is currently the greatest domestic threat: the threat from IS and the threat from radicalising young people. [...] The moderate Muslims, the vast silent majority, who want nothing more than a good future for their children in a safe society, were treated differently. They were taunted, insulted, threatened because they did not join in the radicalisation.’<sup>216</sup>

Buma made a distinction between moderate Muslims and radical Muslims. He was also of the opinion that radical Muslims pose a major threat to Dutch society. Furthermore, he stood up for moderate Muslims, who according to him, suffer from the behaviour of radical Muslims. Interesting for this thesis, Alexander Pechtold, party leader of D66, asked Buma a question about Buma’s distinction between moderate and radical Muslims. He asked:

‘In these kinds of debates, it is always important to pay attention to the terminology, the use of words. Mr Buma distinguishes two groups in Dutch society: the radicalised and the moderate Muslims. Shouldn't we just be talking about "the others"? Why "the moderates", as if at least the rest of the Muslims aren't as bad as the radicalised group? I hold up a mirror to Mr Buma.’<sup>217</sup>

Buma answered:

‘I think that Mr Pechtold has a point without a doubt. It's about the Muslims. I say: the ordinary Muslims, like all of us, with 16 million, are ordinary Dutch or just Christians or Muslims. Whether this should be labelled "moderate" is the question. I mention it here because I want to show that we - that goes for Mr Pechtold and that goes for me - should stand behind those Muslims and not be against them. If Mr Pechtold would like to think of a better term for that, I would be very happy to participate.’<sup>218</sup>

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<sup>216</sup> “Handeling, nr. 105, item 2,” Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal, September 18, 2014, <https://zoek.officielebekendmakingen.nl/h-tk-20132014-105-2.html>.

<sup>217</sup> Ibid.

<sup>218</sup> Ibid.

In response, Pechtold said that with a word like *moderate* he would feel cornered. Thereafter, Buma said: ‘I call them radical Muslims, but we have to realize that this is about the political way of interpreting Islam.’<sup>219</sup> It is noticeable that Buma indicated that he had consciously thought about his exact choice of words. Nevertheless, he is open to suggestions, on which other terminology can be used.

Gert-Jan Segers of the CU said the following in the same debate:

‘Madam Speaker. Jihadism is a theology of death and destruction. Jihadism, ISIS and their caliphate are, and I say it in so many words, demonic forces. And their policy is one of intimidation and intimidation. The tragic thing is that these policies often work.[...] It is also an ideological battle. It is a battle between ideas. It is a battle for the hearts and minds of a new generation of young Muslims.’<sup>220</sup>

According to Segers, jihadism leads to nothing but death and destruction. Furthermore, he talked about an ideological struggle and a struggle of ideas, which can be interpreted as a kind of new Cold War. If Segers had been referring to Huntington, he should have mentioned cultures or civilizations. However, what is clear is that young Dutch Muslims must be convinced to stay in the Netherlands and not travel to the caliphate.

In his opening words, Van der Staaij of the SGP avoided the word *Islam*. He started with the following sentences:

‘Speaker. It was a rough summer. The series of attacks and fighting in the Middle East, persecution of Christians and Yazidis, struggle in Syria and Iraq, formation of IS and the accompanying barbarism, terror by Hamas in the Gaza Strip, demonstrations in the Netherlands in which terror is glorified; it didn't stop.’<sup>221</sup>

As could be read above, Van der Staaij only mentioned barbarism and terrorism, without any specification. In total, the word *Islam* only appeared in one paragraph:

‘Meanwhile, it is too crazy for words that ISIS, Al-Qaeda or Hamas are given the space to manifest themselves openly in the Netherlands and advertise gross, barbaric violence. For example, you would

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<sup>219</sup> Ibid.

<sup>220</sup> Ibid.

<sup>221</sup> Ibid.

have fled to the Netherlands from the Middle East and think you have a safe haven from radical Islamic forces, and openly see this kind of display out here on the street!’<sup>222</sup>

Hereby, in a single sentence, barbarism and terrorism are immediately linked to radical Islam. This makes it clear that Van der Staaij saw a direct link between the actions of ISIS, Al-Qaeda, and Hamas and a radical Islamic ideology.

### *March 2015*

On 8 March 2015, another debate was held on passport deprivation for terrorist offences. This debate took place two months after the Charlie Hebdo shootings. The debate was about a bill that makes it possible to deprive someone of Dutch nationality in the event of terrorist offences. MP Peter Oskam of CDA said the following:

‘The CDA faction supports the bill because it clearly shows that the rights and obligations of Dutch citizenship have clear limits. Committing and/or preparing terrorist offences goes against all values for which the Dutch constitutional state stands. As far as the CDA faction is concerned, someone who has been irrevocably convicted of committing such crimes can no longer call himself a Dutchman and can no longer claim the associated rights. [...] The status of a Dutch citizen is incompatible with participation or attempts to do so, in the terror of IS.’<sup>223</sup>

It can be concluded from his speech that the CDA was in favour of depriving someone of citizenship in the event of terrorist offences. It is argued that someone who has been irrevocably convicted of committing such crimes can no longer call himself a Dutchman and can no longer claim the associated rights. In Oskam's view, therefore, citizenship is more than just a passport - it is also a collection of the associated rights. Later in the debate, Oskam said the following about returning jihadists:

‘More answers from the memorandum, in response to the report, raises questions for the CDA group, first of all about the problem of the returned jihadists. The minister indicates that nine returnees have

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<sup>222</sup> Ibid.

<sup>223</sup> “Handeling, nr. 57, item 8,” Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal, March 5, 2015, <https://zoek.officielebekendmakingen.nl/h-tk-20142015-57-8.html>.



been arrested, four of whom are detained. Why not the other five? And what is the background to the difference in approach with these returned jihad fighters?’<sup>224</sup>

It can be concluded from this that the CDA did not mention the word *Islam*, but did believe that returning jihadists should be arrested. Based on what Oskam said earlier, the CDA probably thought that someone's citizenship should also be taken away in the event of proven facts.

Gert-Jan Segers of the CU had a different view on deprivation of citizenship in terrorist crimes. He said the following during his contribution:

‘Mrs Speaker. Young people who leave our country and families, who leave the city of Huizen, who settle in IS territory, who participate in a terrorist fight, who join a community with values that are at odds with ours: it's incomprehensible, but it happens. We see that the number of jihad fighters is not decreasing, but only increasing. That is incredibly sad, especially for the young people who join a murderous gang in the Middle East from all over the world, but also from the Netherlands. [...] However, revoking the passport and nationality is not the solution. If such a person returns, I hope there is a place in such a de-radicalisation programme.’<sup>225</sup>

The CU said nothing about the role of Islam on the whole. However, Segers did mention a ‘murderous gang in the Middle East’. Concerning depriving someone of citizenship, he said that this is not an option for the CU. He believed that taking someone's passport does not solve the problem. Instead, he preferred a so-called ‘de-radicalisation programme’.

On behalf of the SGP, Kees van der Staaij said the following:

‘Speaker. It has often been discussed today that the threat of jihadist terrorism requires a firm approach, a smart approach and a broad approach with both preventive and repressive measures. [...] We strive for the fastest and most adequate solution to lose Dutch citizenship in this situation.’<sup>226</sup>

In his short contribution, nothing is mentioned about Islam. Instead, Van der Staaij used the term *jihadist terrorism*. About revoking one's citizenship, the SGP believed that such a thing is appropriate in terrorist crimes. This puts them in line with the CDA.

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<sup>224</sup> Ibid.

<sup>225</sup> Ibid.

<sup>226</sup> Ibid.

July 2015

A few months later, on 8 July 2015, a political debate was held about the construction of a mosque in the city of Gouda. This debate took place at a time when it was rumoured that more and more Dutch jihadists would return to the Netherlands. The CDA was critical of the Rutte II cabinet's approach. As the first speaker of that day, MP Oskam of the CDA said the following:

‘The case is illustrative of the cabinet's lack of insight into financing from non-free countries and the possible influence from Salafist movements. [...] We always see incidents and each time the cabinet responds on a case-by-case basis, ad hoc. Does the government still maintain that it is doing everything it can in the fight against radicalisation and terrorism?’<sup>227</sup>

Talking about the situation in the Middle East, Oskam used the words *Salafist*, *radicalisation*, and *terrorism*. The word *Islam* is not mentioned, although Salafism is indeed a movement within Islam. With such a word choice, Oskam showed that he does not mean the whole of Islam, and therefore all Muslims, but only a certain movement.

Later in the debate, in a discussion with MP Tunahan Kuzu, Gert-Jan Segers of the CU said the following:

‘Mr Kuzu does not have to worry about the extent to which religious freedom is valued within the CU faction. I can reassure him here. It is now about the concerns expressed here, not about "the Muslims", not about "Islam", not about everything and everyone, but the influence of Salafism. The AIVD says that the boundary between Salafism and jihadism is blurring. Then my question is: what are Mr Kuzu's proposals to do what is necessary, given that concern, to counter the impending radicalisation towards jihadism?’<sup>228</sup>

Segers indicated that, for him, it is not about Muslims or Islam, but about the influence of Salafists. He also used the terms *radicalisation* and *jihadists*.

The SGP was not present at this parliamentary debate, so they were unable to contribute.

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<sup>227</sup> “Handeling, nr. 95, item 18,” Overheid.nl, July 8, 2015, <https://zoek.officielebekendmakingen.nl/h-tk-20142015-95-18.html>.

<sup>228</sup> Ibid.

## 4.7 Sub-Conclusion

In this chapter, the responses of the CDA, the CU, and the SGP were examined in the aftermath of five Islam-related events. Below is an analysis in which I linked the word choices of the parties to Kumar's research into the framing of Islam in political discourse after 9/11.

### *CDA*

In February 2002, the CDA did not apply a single frame from Kumar's research. I have not been able to find any statements that say anything negative about Islam. Furthermore, Islam is not mentioned in their election programme.

After the murder of Theo van Gogh, there was no uniform terminology by the CDA. Prime Minister Balkenende did not mention the religious background and motives of the perpetrator. He chose to focus on the seriousness of the act. Donner, the Minister of Justice, believed that a small group of radical Muslims abuse Islam. He also indicated that there is fear of 'violent Islamic radicals' in the Netherlands. MP Verhagen labelled the murder as 'extremism' and 'radicalism'. However he did point out, that not the entire Muslim community is hostile, but only the radicalised individuals. Thus, the CDA did not apply a frame from Kumar's research, but they did linguistically associate Islam with e.g. terrorism and violence.

After the publication of *Fitna*, Prime Minister Balkenende copied Wilders' framing but added negations. Framing theory shows that denial does not prevent a certain image from being set, so Balkenende linguistically associated Islam with atrocities, extremism and violence. In the parliamentary debate following the commotion surrounding *Fitna*, Van Geel indicated that there is a fear of 'Muslim terrorism' in the Netherlands. Thus, again, the CDA did not apply a frame from Kumar's research but did linguistically associate Islam with e.g. terrorism and violence.

On the same day as the Charlie Hebdo shooting, party leader Buma tweeted about the attack but made no mention of the background or the motives of the terrorists. A week later, during the parliamentary debate, he called the attackers 'radical Muslims'. Additionally, he predicted that more attacks will follow because the terror of radical Islam is the biggest threat to our safety. However, he did not think that these radicals represented all of Islam. Nevertheless, he believed that something is wrong with Islam, otherwise, the perpetrators would not commit crimes in the name of it. Thus, the CDA framed Islam as a religion that spawns violence.

On 18 September 2014, a few weeks after the online publication of James Foley's execution video by IS, the House of Representatives debated on Dutch jihad fighters. Buma stated that the 'threat from radical Muslims is great and close at hand.' In his view, there was a distinction between moderate Muslims and radical Muslims. On 8 March 2015, there was a debate on passport deprivation for terrorist offences. The

CDA was a proponent of a bill that allows depriving someone of Dutch nationality in the event of terrorist offences. They argued that ‘someone who has been irrevocably convicted of committing such crimes can no longer call himself a Dutchman and can no longer claim the associated rights.’ During the debate, MP Oskam did not mention the word *Islam*. Instead, he only used the term *jihad fighters*. In July 2015, a debate was held at a time when it was rumoured that more and more Dutch jihadists would return to the Netherlands. During the debate, the word *Islam* was not mentioned. Instead, the CDA used the words *Salafist*, *radicalisation*, and *terrorism*. Thus, a frame about Islam was largely avoided, and the focus shifted to stopping radicalisation and jihadism.

## CU

In the same month as Fortuyn’s interview, the CU had a strong opinion about the relationship between Islam and terrorism. For example, their election programme stated that the ‘radical fundamentalist notions’ in Islam must be countered because they caused 9/11. Hereby, they applied the frame that (a part of) Islam spawns terrorism. They also wrote about a ‘confrontation’ with the Islamic world, which implicitly referred to Huntington’s thesis of a clash of civilisations.

The CU saw the murder of Van Gogh as proof that extremism and terrorism had arrived in the Netherlands. Party leader Rouvoet specified this type of terrorism as ‘Islamic terrorism.’ He also used the metaphor ‘jihad in Amsterdam’ to indicate that more and more religiously inspired violence is on the rise. Thus, the CU applied the frame that (a part of) Islam spawns terrorism.

After the publication of *Fitna*, the CU stood up for Islam. Although party leader Slob believed that Islam had a radical and violent side, he felt that *Fitna* did not do justice to all Muslims. Additionally, he stated that Wilders was unable to give a truthful representation of Islam. Thus, the CU did not apply a frame from Kumar’s research but did state that (a part of) Islam encourages violence.

One week after the Charlie Hebdo shooting, Slob mainly discussed the seriousness of the act and not so much about the motives of the perpetrators. During the parliamentary debate, the word *Islam* was not mentioned in his speech. However, Slob did argue that a solution must be found for the emerging jihadism and alarmingly rapid radicalisation. Thus, the CU did not apply a frame from Kumar’s research.

During the debate on 18 September 2014, the CU described jihadism as ‘a theology of death and destruction.’ Party leader Segers also indicated that an ideological battle was taking place between IS and the West. However, he did not mention the word *Islam* throughout his speech. Instead, he preferred the word *jihadism*. On 8 March 2015, the CU said nothing about the role of Islam on the whole. Instead, Segers mentioned a ‘murderous gang in the Middle East.’ Concerning depriving someone of citizenship, the CU party leader said that it was not an option. He believed that taking someone’s passport does not solve the

problem. In July 2015, the word *Islam* again was not mentioned. Segers only used the terms *radicalisation* and *jihadists*. Thus, a frame about Islam was largely avoided, and the focus shifted to stopping radicalisation and jihadism.

### *SGP*

In February 2002, the SGP was very concerned about Islam. However, their concerns were only cultural and religious, as they saw Islam as an unwanted competitor. No link was made between terrorism and believing in Islam.

The SGP was specific about the perpetrator's religious background. Party leader Van der Vlies stated that the murder is proof that Islamic terrorism had arrived in the Netherlands. He also said that radicalisation, hatred, intolerance and violence against dissenters determined the image of Islam. Furthermore, Van der Vlies believed that, for the last couple of years, the Dutch were dangerous naive towards Islam. Additionally, he stated that most terrorists are Muslim, implying that such a thing cannot be a coincidence. Thus, the SGP applied the frame that Islam is irrational, violent and spawns terrorism.

After the publication of *Fitna*, the SGP was critical of Islam. For example, Van der Vlies stated that it was understandable that Islam causes fear and that his party always had denounced the dangers of Islam. He also repeated his sentence during the parliamentary debate on the murder of Van Gogh, in which he said that most terrorists are Muslim. However, Van der Vlies did argue many Muslims are moderate and want nothing to do with violence. Thus, the SGP apply the frame that (part of) Islam encourages violence and spawns terrorism.

One week after the Charlie Hebdo shooting, during a parliamentary debate, the SGP did not mention the word *Islam*. However, the words *Muslim radicals* were mentioned a few times, in the context of attacks on the Jewish community. According to party leader Van der Staaij, solutions must be sought together with the Muslim community to prevent radicalisation. Thus, the SGP did not apply a frame from Kumar's research but indicated that violence by individuals occurs.

During the parliamentary debate on 18 September 2014, Van der Staaij used the word *Islam* once when he said that 'radical Islamic forces' were active in ISIS, Al-Qaeda and Hamas. He also labelled their actions 'gross, barbaric violence'. In March 2015, during the second debate, the SGP did not mention Islam. Instead, Van der Staaij used the term *jihadist terrorism*. Concerning revoking one's citizenship, the SGP believes that such a thing is appropriate in terrorist crimes. Thus, during the first debate, the SGP applied the terrorist frame. However, during the parliamentary debates in March 2015, a frame about Islam was largely avoided, and the focus shifted to stopping jihadism and terrorism.

## Chapter 5 Conclusion

This thesis analysed the framing of Islam by the CDA, CU and SGP in the aftermath of five Islam-related events between 2002 and 2015. It applies a qualitative research method in which all relevant information was gathered from websites, documents, interviews and videos.

There is no single definition of framing because it can be interpreted and used in multiple ways. However, based on the literature, three aspects come up repeatedly. Firstly, framing is a prejudiced act, because when constructing frames, it is pre-selected which aspects will and will not be brought forward. Secondly, the purpose of framing is to make a certain point of view stand out because if it stands out, there is more chance that the desired goal will be achieved. Thirdly, a frame is understandable for the public and corresponds to their prior knowledge.

Frames have the potential to exert considerable influence on public opinion. If people believe that a public problem is associated with a particular concept, they believe that the latter applies to the former. A politician can establish this link by explicitly stating the connection or by implying it. However, not everyone is equally susceptible to frame-setting. The extent to which framing impacts the individual differs according to the degree of media consumption and other personal circumstances. There are also other factors, such as the strength and repetition of the frame, the competitive environment, and individual motivations.

In analysing the word choices and frames of the three political parties, I mainly made use of Deepak Kumar's research on Islam framing. In 2010, he argued that five dominant frames are used in the political discourse to discuss the Islam problem in the post-9/11 world. These frames are: (I) Islam is a monolithic religion, (II) Islam is a uniquely sexist religion, (III) the 'Muslim mind' is incapable of rationality and science, (IV) Islam is inherently violent, and (V) the West spreads democracy, while Islam spawns terrorism.

Several studies have shown that the Rushdie affair was an important event in the relationship between the West and Islam. For example, it is described as the first event in which Islam was broadly discussed, the first event in a chronological lineage of Islamophobic controversies, and the first confrontation between the modern Western world and Islam. Additionally, the Rushdie affair is linked to a narrative that includes 9/11, the *war on terror*, and the Al-Qaeda attacks in Madrid and London.

In the Dutch political discourse of the early 1990s, there was increasing criticism of the multicultural society. Frits Bolkestein, party leader of the VVD and de facto opposition leader, believed that large parts of the Muslim world did not respect the liberal constitutional principles such as separation of church and state, freedom of speech, tolerance, non-discrimination, and equal status of women. He argued that the transmission of European values, including liberalism, rationalism, humanism and Christianity, should play a key role in the Dutch minorities policy. Multiple studies have shown that Bolkestein's ideas caused a

permanent change in public and political debate. However, he did not change the political consensus of the 1990s that the interests of newcomers must be met.

In the Dutch public discourse of the late 1990s, the views of Pim Fortuyn and Paul Scheffer have been particularly influential. Fortuyn believed that Islam will inevitably pose a threat to Dutch achievements such as the separation of Church and State, equal treatment between the sexes, the freedom of homosexuals and the equality of children and adults. His main contribution to the debate is that he represented the public side, whereas Bolkestein represented the political side. Scheffer stated that the separation of state and church is not accepted in Islamic circles. Furthermore, he argued that Islam contributes to the poor integration of Turkish and Moroccan youth. His main contribution to the debate is that he was affiliated with a left-wing party, the PvdA. Until then it was unusual for a social democrat to criticise the multicultural society and cultural relativism. His essay 'Het multiculturele drama' paved the way for a more open debate in the 2000s.

Several studies mention 9/11 as an important turning point in the debate. Furthermore, 9/11 was often framed in the context of Huntington's clash of civilizations thesis because the attacks were seen as something fundamental. Immediately after 9/11, Islam was mainly linked to terrorism. Frames related to discrimination and sexism were rare. However, it should be stated that the Dutch government did not actively participate in the negative framing of Islam between 1989 and 2001.

If we look at frameshifts in the period 2002-2015, some things stand out. Firstly, representatives of the CDA, CU and SGP were more moderate in their wording than politicians such as Frits Bolkestein, Pim Fortuyn and Geert Wilders. Secondly, all three parties had reservations about Islam on several occasions.

The CDA warned for the first time against 'the radical side of Islam' after the murder of Theo van Gogh. However, different word choices were used by different party members. For example, Prime Minister Balkenende avoided negative connotations with Islam, while the Minister of Justice Donner and MP Verhagen frequently mentioned the religious background and motives of the perpetrator.

After the publication of *Fitna*, Prime Minister Balkenende copied Wilders' framing but added negations. However, framing theory shows that denial does not prevent a certain image from being set. Nevertheless, Prime Minister Balkenende indicated several times that *Fitna* gives a wrong picture of Islam.

During the party leadership of Sybrand Buma, the CDA became more critical of Islam. For example, shortly after the Charlie Hebdo shooting, Buma called the attackers 'radical Muslims' and stated that radical Islam is the biggest threat to our safety. Furthermore, he believed that something was wrong with Islam, otherwise, not so many crimes would be committed in the name of this religion. During the debates about jihadism, Buma stated that the 'threat from radical Muslims is great and close at hand.' Thus, during both events, party leader Buma framed Islam as a religion that spawns violence. However, in almost every debate, he also said that radical Muslims do not represent the entire Muslim community.

Up to and including the murder of Van Gogh, the CU was very critical in their wording. This was partly because they agreed with Huntington's clash of civilizations thesis. For example, in their 2002 election programme, the CU wrote about a 'confrontation' with the Islamic world, which implicitly refers to Huntington's thesis. Furthermore, in the same election programme, they stated that the 'radical fundamentalist notions' in Islam must be countered because they resulted in 9/11. The CU saw the murder of Van Gogh as proof that extremism and terrorism had arrived in the Netherlands. Party leader André Rouvoet specified this type of terrorism as 'Islamic terrorism.' He also used the metaphor 'jihad in Amsterdam' to indicate that more and more religiously inspired violence is on the rise. Thus, in November 2004, the CU applied the frame that Islam spawns terrorism.

However, after the publication of *Fitna*, the CU stood up for Islam. Although party leader Arie Slob believed that Islam had a radical and violent side, he felt that *Fitna* did not do justice to all Muslims. Additionally, he stated that Wilders was unable to give a truthful representation of Islam. Thus, the CU did not apply a frame from Kumar's research but did state that (a part of) Islam encourages violence.

Since Arie Slob's party leadership in 2007, the CU has looked more at solutions and used fewer generalising words. For example, after the Charlie Hebdo shooting, Slob hardly mentioned the motives of the perpetrators. Furthermore, during the corresponding parliamentary debate, he did not use the word *Islam*. Instead, Slob argued that a solution must be found for the emerging jihadism and alarmingly rapid radicalisation. This makes it clear that Slob tried to avoid negative connotations with Islam, unlike his predecessor Rouvoet.

During the party leadership of Gert-Jan Segers, confrontations are discussed more, but the word *Islam* is kept out of the debate. For example, during the parliamentary debates in September 2014, March 2015 and July 2015, the word *Islam* is not mentioned. Instead, Segers only discussed the issue of jihadism. For example, during the debate on 18 September 2014, Segers described jihadism as 'a theology of death and destruction.' Although *Islam* and *jihadism* are semantically linked, they have different connotations. Therefore, speaking negatively about jihadism does not mean that people will also think more negatively about Islam.

In 2002, the SGP was very concerned about Islam. However, their concerns were only cultural and religious, as they saw Islam as an unwanted competitor. No link was made between terrorism and believing in Islam. After the murder of Van Gogh, their view changed significantly. Under the party leadership of Bas van der Vlies, sharp words were used and Islam was seen as a danger to the Netherlands. For example, Van der Vlies stated that the murder is proof that Islamic terrorism had arrived in the Netherlands. He also said that radicalisation, hatred, intolerance and violence against dissenters determined the image of Islam. Furthermore, he stated that most terrorists are Muslim, implying that such a thing cannot be a coincidence.



After the publication of *Fitna*, the SGP was still critical of Islam. For example, Van der Vlies stated that it was understandable that Islam causes fear and that his party always had denounced the dangers of Islam. Therefore, it can be argued that the SGP made Islamophobic statements after the murder of Van Gogh and the publication of *Fitna*.

During Kees van der Staaij's party leadership, the SGP became less critical and used different words. For example, after the Charlie Hebdo shooting, during a parliamentary debate, the SGP did not mention the word *Islam*. Instead, the words *Muslim radicals* were mentioned a few times, in the context of attacks on the Jewish community. According to party leader Van der Staaij, solutions must be sought together with the Muslim community to prevent radicalisation. During the three debates about jihadism, Van der Staaij barely used the word *Islam*. Instead, he preferred the words *jihadism* and *terrorism*, without religious specification. However, this does not mean that the SGP has started to think more leniently about Islam. It only shows that they used moderate, non-generalising word choices in debates.

The idea of a clash of civilizations had little influence on Christian party politics between 2002 and 2015. The CDA and the SGP never referred to it in debates, interviews and party programmes. Only the CU implicitly referred to it in their 2002 election programme. For example, they wrote that there is a 'confrontation' with the Islamic world. After the Charlie Hebdo shooting, party leader Segers did mention a confrontation, but then on an ideological level, so you cannot speak of a true clash of civilizations, since this confrontation should mainly take place on a cultural level.

Looking at citizenship at the time of the emerging jihadism, we see once again that the CU takes a different position than the CDA and the SGP. During the parliamentary debate in March 2015, the CDA and the SGP were in favour of taking away someone's passport (and additional rights) if it turns out that someone was participating in terrorist activities. The CU thought this was going too far and preferred to see a de-radicalization programme start.

For future research, I recommend that other cases be used, so that the research results become more representative. It is also advisable to include more political movements in the research so that a broader conclusion can be drawn about Islam framing in the Netherlands.

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