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Contemporary Issues in Historical Perspective

The Strange Death of Dutch Tolerance: The Timing and Nature of the Pessimist Turn in the Dutch Migration Debate*

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Around 2000 the Netherlands seemed to have been hit by a seismic shock that changed it almost overnight from an apparent leader in tolerance and multiculturalism into an anti-immigrant and anti-Muslim bulwark. The most conspicuous personification of the turning tide was Pim Fortuyn (1948–2002), who shot up like a rocket out of the Dutch political landscape at the end of the twentieth century and who was assassinated on May 6, 2002. Nine days later his brand-new party, the Lijst Pim Fortuyn, became a force to be reckoned with when it won twenty-six of the 150 seats in Parliament out of the blue. The murder of Fortuyn unleashed a stream of resentment against the Left, especially left-wing politicians, as Fortuyn's view of them as a naive cosmopolitan elite who had burdened the Netherlands with migration and integration politics took root. His diatribes against the Left and what he saw as the undemocratic elites in general (including the right-wing Liberal Party, the People's Party for Freedom and Democracy [Volkspartij voor Vrijheid en Democratie; VVD]) and his openly anti-immigration and anti-Muslim stance did not vanish with his death. The 9/11 attacks, the murder of Theo van Gogh (1957–2004) after the release of his anti-Islam movie, and the subsequent rise of Geert Wilders's nativist party led to a highly polarized political atmosphere, with Muslims, the Left, and "political elites" as prime targets.¹

The question that was posed by many, both abroad and in the Netherlands, was how this sudden change had come about. To date, however, explanations have been ad hoc and partial at best. As the economy was booming at the time, and as

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¹ For the background of the murders of Van Gogh and Fortuyn and their exemplification of cultural traumas, see Ian Buruma, *Murder in Amsterdam: The Death of Theo van Gogh and the Limits of Tolerance* (London, 2007); and Ron Eyerman, *The Cultural Sociology of Assassination: From MLK and RFK to Fortuyn and van Gogh* (New York, 2011).

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Fortuyn's ascendancy predated 9/11, many pointed to Fortuyn's charisma and, later, to the keen political antennae of Geert Wilders. Yet while individuals obviously matter and can be considered a necessary condition for the rise of anti-immigrant politics, alone they are not sufficient. For such politicians to be successful there has to be a breeding ground of discontent. Given the main message of both Fortuyn and Wilders, the most obvious such area surrounds the issues that certain segments of the population had with immigration and with the integration of foreigners. The latter certainly played an important role, especially owing to the nuisance behavior and street criminality of some Dutch-born Moroccan boys and youngsters from the Dutch Antilles and, furthermore, the increasing public visibility of Islam and illiberal tendencies among some Muslims. Nevertheless, such an argument does not explain why politicians such as Fortuyn and Wilders became visible much earlier. Mass immigration, both of former guest workers from Morocco and Turkey and of the Surinamese, had occurred from the mid-1970s onward and coincided with a long recession that pushed unemployment levels among these groups to over 50 percent in the late 1980s. The key question, therefore, is why issues with immigration were not expressed in those years.

Apart from the timing, there is another issue that has been neglected in the public and scholarly discussion about the "pessimistic turn" in the Netherlands: the nature of the anti-immigrant response. Although at first sight Fortuyn and Wilders might be labeled as extreme-right, or at least right-wing, populists, this does not entirely fit with their background and ideas. Fortuyn, in particular, was a mixed bag ideologically speaking; he had flirted with communism and was attracted to social democratic ideals until the late 1980s, when he shifted to a more neoliberal position. Moreover, as we will see, an important element among the "integration pessimists"—those who criticized the immigration policies and the ensuing multiculturalist integration policies as much too liberal and who warned against the illiberal influence of Islam—came from the Left. The second question that we need to address in order to understand the "Fortuyn Revolt" is, therefore, why his sentiments were so broadly shared and to what extent they were rooted in a much longer left-wing and social democratic tradition that stressed the interests of native workers.²

In this article we aim to formulate a convincing answer to the timing and nature of the nativist turn in Dutch politics by taking a long-term perspective and looking at a broad political spectrum. We hope that this will enable us to put the Dutch case in a wider European perspective and to develop suggestions for further comparative research.

² See, in this respect, also David Scott Fitzgerald and David Cook-Martín, *Culling the Masses: The Democratic Origins of Racist Immigration Policy in the Americas* (Cambridge, MA, 2014).

THE RISE OF PIM FORTUYN

During the course of the 1990s, the political and social climate on immigration and multiculturalism in the Netherlands gradually became more negative, even though the economy had recovered from the recession of the 1980s and unemployment had gone down. It was at this time that a political maverick by the name of Pim Fortuyn entered the political arena. For years Fortuyn had written influential critical columns on Islam and immigration in the leading right-wing weekly *Elsevier*. Furthermore, he had reproached the reigning “purple” coalitions (right-wing liberals and socialists) for not acting against these “threats.” Then, in 2001, he decided that it was time to mobilize discontent on immigration, Muslims, and the political correctness that he believed pervaded the media, administration, and politics. His program was a mix of classical right-wing issues, from being tough on crime to the restriction of immigration. The most attention, however, was drawn by his anti-Muslim stance, which he elaborated in columns, in interviews on Dutch television, and in booklets with titles like “Against the Islamization of our Culture” (1997). Due to his controversial stance, in January 2002 he was ousted as the leader of a new moderate populist party in the making (Leefbaar Nederland/Livable Netherlands), after which he decided to accept the leadership of a new local party, Leefbaar Rotterdam. When Fortuyn participated in the municipal elections of Rotterdam, the second largest city of the Netherlands and a longtime bulwark of the Labor Party (Partij van de Arbeid; PvdA), in March 2002, he dramatically altered the political landscape by winning almost 35 percent of the votes, becoming the biggest party in a single stroke. After this spectacular and (to many) unexpected victory, he decided to run for Parliament.

A few weeks before the national elections in May 2002, however, Fortuyn was assassinated by an animal rights activist as he left a TV studio in Hilversum. His death shocked Dutch society, which had no modern precedent for political murders (the last one being that of the brothers De Witt in 1672). In the elections a few weeks later, the new party he had founded (Lijst Pim Fortuyn) became, in one stroke, the second largest party in the country, drawing its voters predominantly from the lower-educated demographic.³

The anti-immigration and anti-Muslim feelings that Fortuyn had appealed to certainly did not disappear after his death.⁴ On the contrary, the political climate became increasingly negative on these issues, as public debate focused heavily on the social and cultural problems of the “second generation”—the children of former Turkish and Moroccan guest workers—and to a lesser extent on lower-class

³ Philip Van Praag, “De LPF-kiezer: Rechts, cynisch of modaal?” *Jaarboek Documentatiecentrum Nederlandse Politieke Partijen*, 2003, 96–116, 104.

⁴ After a brief and chaotic coalition government and a series of internal conflicts, the LPF soon lost mass support and was finally dissolved in 2008.

colonial migrants from the Dutch Antilles. Building on Fortuyn's diatribes against social democrats who betrayed their natural constituency, political entrepreneurs like Geert Wilders and others accused the Left of having facilitated mass immigration in the 1970s and subsequently having devised a multicultural integration policy in the 1980s that had been a complete failure. The Left's alleged cultural relativist underpinnings would only have aggravated the problems with the second generation, who allegedly rejected entirely the core Western liberal values of gender equality, acceptance of homosexuality, democracy, and free speech.

With the rise of anti-Islam nativism, the Netherlands seemed to follow the conventional binary left-right scheme, which identifies anti-immigrant nativism with the Right and multiculturalism with the Left.⁵ As soon as we start scratching the surface, however, that depiction loses its cogency. Fortuyn may have joined the right-wing Liberal Party (VVD) in the early 1990s, just as Wilders did before he started his own Freedom Party in 2004, but in the 1970s Fortuyn had started out as a would-be communist and until 1989 had been a member of the Labor Party (PvdA). Moreover, the political ideology he had developed since the 1990s was an interesting conglomeration of right-wing and left-wing ideas with a libertarian touch, the latter most visible in his openly homosexual behavior but also apparent in his unexpected (to many) plea for the regularization of 5,000 illegal immigrants. He explicitly rejected the accusation that he was a Dutch version of extreme right-wing politicians like Jean-Marie Le Pen in France or Filip Dewinter in Belgium, stressing that while he was in favor of a ban on (Muslim) immigration,⁶ he would never expel children of migrants born in the Netherlands ("they may be thugs, but they are our thugs").⁷

It is much too easy, and misleading, to label Fortuyn a right-wing racist (or worse), and he was far from the only prominent Dutch politician who voiced his

⁵ Ian Buff, "The Netherlands, the Challenge of Lijst Pim Fortuyn, and the Third Way," *Politics* 23 (2003): 156–63; Conny Roggeband and Rens Vliegthart, "Divergent Framing: The Public Debate on Migration in the Dutch Parliament and Media, 1995–2004," *West European Politics* 30 (2007): 524–48; Ruud Koopmans and Jasper Muis, "The Rise of Right-Wing Populist Pim Fortuyn in the Netherlands: A Discursive Opportunity Approach," *European Journal of Political Research* 48 (2009): 642–64; Hans De Witte and Bert Klandermands, "Political Racism in Flanders and the Netherlands: Explaining Differences in the Electoral Success of Extreme Right-Wing Parties," *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 26 (2000): 699–718; Dennis Spies and T. Franzmann, "A Two-Dimensional Approach to the Political Opportunity Structure of Extreme Right Parties in Western Europe," *West European Politics* 34 (2011): 1044–69; Ilse N. Rooyackers and Maykel Verkuyten, "Mobilizing Support for the Extreme Right: A Discursive Analysis of Minority Leadership," *British Journal of Social Psychology* 51 (2012): 130–48.

⁶ Pim Fortuyn, "Grenzen dicht," *Elsevier* 53 (1997): 25.

⁷ Interview with Fortuyn on May 5, 2002 (one day before his assassination), by Jean Dohmen and Milja de Zwart, from the *Algemeen Dagblad*.

discomfort with immigration and Islam. His integration pessimism was shared by the doyenne of Dutch social democracy, feminist Hilda Verwey-Jonker (1908–2004), and by journalist and prominent Dutch Labor Party member Paul Scheffer (b. 1954), who wrote the highly influential article “The Multicultural Drama” in January 2000. Another key player was the Somali-Dutch politician Ayaan Hirsi Ali (b. 1969), who in 2002 traded the Labor Party for the Liberal Party and who, together with Theo van Gogh, produced the controversial *Submission 1* movie, in which antifemale Koran texts were projected onto the naked body of a veiled woman.⁸ It was this movie that led a Dutch-Moroccan Islamist to savagely murder Van Gogh in the streets of Amsterdam in 2004. That “Dutch 9/11” heightened fears of Islam and confirmed the widespread belief that Muslims as a group constituted a real threat to society.⁹

A crucial element of the Dutch “pessimistic turn” was the belief broadly shared on both left and right that progressive elites were to blame for the rise of illiberal Islam in the Netherlands and for the problems caused by the descendants of immigrants. Such elites, according to this view, had allowed unrestricted immigration in the past and had forced their fateful multicultural and cultural relativist policies on the majority of the Dutch population. Before we go deeper into the roots of integration pessimism,¹⁰ therefore, we will look into these accusations, starting with the idea that left-wing politicians were responsible for the mass migration of Moroccans, Turks, and their families in the 1970s and 1980s.

COMPETITION FOR GUEST WORKERS AND CHRISTIAN CONCERN FOR FAMILY LIFE

In the 1950s, very few people anticipated that the Netherlands was on the verge of a large-scale influx of immigrants. The war had left the Low Countries with a heavily damaged infrastructure and industrial base and had aggravated the already existing shortage of housing. Until the beginning of the 1950s, unemployment was considerable, and the loss of the Dutch East Indies in 1949, coupled with the fear of becoming, together with Germany, the theater of a third (nuclear) world war between Russia and the West, added to the generally gloomy atmosphere. Dutch governments considered the Netherlands (with 10 million inhabitants, a figure that has now grown to 16.8 million) to be overpopulated and therefore actively promoted emigration. Successive governments launched an in-

⁸ See the movie on YouTube: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aGtQvGGY4S4>. For further background, see Buruma, *Murder in Amsterdam*.

⁹ Eyerman, *Cultural Sociology of Assassination*.

¹⁰ Leo Lucassen and Jan Lucassen, *Winnaars en verliezers: Een nuchtere balans van vijf eeuwen immigratie* (Amsterdam, 2011). For the German translation, see Leo Lucassen and Jan Lucassen, *Gewinner und Verlierer: Fünf Jahrhunderten Immigration; Eine nüchterne Bilanz* (Münster, 2014).

tensive campaign to encourage people to settle in former British white settler colonies overseas, such as South Africa, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand, as well as the United States.¹¹ Emigration was deemed even more urgent because the country had been forced to accept some 300,000 postcolonial migrants from the former Dutch East Indies.¹² In the end, half a million Dutch did emigrate, although one-third of them returned to the Netherlands in the end.

When the economy finally recovered, buttressed by the American Marshall Plan, and the Trente Glorieuses finally made their appearance, emigration fever dropped rapidly, and in some sectors of the economy (mining, ship building, textile production) a scarcity of low-skilled labor soon became noticeable. Employer organizations therefore started putting pressure on the Ministries of Economic and Social Affairs to allow the employment of temporary workers from abroad. Like Germany, Belgium, and France, the Netherlands soon developed schemes to recruit “guest workers” from Italy, Spain, Greece, and Yugoslavia, as well as, shortly afterward, Morocco, Tunisia, and Turkey. The idea was that these low-skilled workers would stay only as long as they were needed and then return to their countries of origin. As we now know, this is not what happened. Instead, many of them, especially Turks and Moroccans, stayed permanently, and from the 1970s onward they used their worker rights to bring their families to the Netherlands, thereby quintupling the original number of guest workers.

This story may be well known,¹³ but opinions about the causes of this settlement of low-skilled labor migrants and their families during the recession of the late 1970s and 1980s differ widely. One can make a rough distinction between, on the one hand, explanations that stress the unintended and built-in effects of liberal democracies and welfare states and, on the other, intentionalist theories that blame the Left for having consciously opened the floodgates in the 1970s by being far too soft on immigration under the banner of international solidarity and multi-

¹¹ For Dutch overseas migration, see Marlou Schrover and Marijke van Faassen, eds., “Invisibility and Selectivity: Special Issue on Dutch Overseas Migration in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Century,” *Tijdschrift voor Sociale en Economische Geschiedenis*, vol. 7, no. 2 (2010).

¹² Wim Willems, *De uittocht uit Indië, 1945–1995* (Amsterdam, 2001), and “No Sheltering Sky: Migrant Identities of Dutch Nationals from Indonesia,” in *Europe’s Invisible Migrants: Consequences of the Colonists’ Return*, ed. Andrea L. Smith (Amsterdam, 2003), 33–59. See also Ulbe Bosma, *Terug uit de koloniën: Zestig jaar postkoloniale migranten en hun organisaties* (Amsterdam, 2009); and Ulbe Bosma, Jan Lucassen, and Gert Oostindie, “Introduction: Postcolonial Migrations and Identity Politics; Towards a Comparative Perspective,” in *Postcolonial Migrations and Identity Politics: Europe, Russia, Japan and the United States in Comparison*, ed. Ulbe Bosma, Jan Lucassen, and Gert Oostindie (New York, 2012), 1–22.

¹³ Jan Lucassen and R. Penninx, *Newcomers: Immigrants and Their Descendants in the Netherlands, 1550–1995* (Amsterdam, 1997); Lucassen and Lucassen, *Winnaars en verliezers*.

culturalism. As we argued above, this latter assumption became popular at the end of the 1990s in the circles of “integration pessimists”: those who blamed the Left for all migration and integration problems, not only in the Netherlands but also in France (Le Pen), Belgium (Dewinter), and, later, Germany (Thilo Sarrazin).¹⁴

The problem with this second explanation, however, is that—notwithstanding its apparent attraction—it does not fit the facts. Although there was a direct causal link between the actions taken by the center-left government led by the Labor Party (1973–77) and mass immigration, the underlying causality was far different from that claimed by integration pessimists. It is true that this government was suffused with a spirit of progressive social engineering, equality, and international solidarity, and one would therefore expect to find that it championed the cause of the guest workers. The reality was quite different, however. Confronted with the Netherlands’ first “oil crisis” in 1973, only a few months after coming to power, the government decided to stop the recruitment of guest workers immediately and proclaimed a restrictive aliens policy. It was clear to all, not just to the socialists in power, that “the party was over” and immigration had to be stopped. More radical parties on the Left agreed with this as well and expected, as did members of most parties, that guest workers would return to their countries of origin. At the same time, however, they stressed that labor migrants who were already in the Netherlands should be treated with as much equality as possible vis-à-vis other workers. This meant that even guest workers who had entered the labor market illegally, outside the official recruitment procedures, should be given the chance to regularize their status. Following the lead of the governments of France (1973) and Belgium (1974), and under pressure from lobbying groups (including churches), the Dutch government organized “regularizations” in May 1975. In all, some 18,000 illegals (predominantly Turks and Moroccans) submitted requests for regularization, of which 15,000 were accepted. Those now enjoying legal status realized that if they left the Netherlands, as they had done so often in the past, commuting between their countries of origin and Western Europe, their chances of being allowed back in would be minimal. Moreover, many of them—especially Moroccans and Turks¹⁵—understood that their stays might be less tempo-

¹⁴ In the Netherlands the most vocal representative was the journalist-turned-politician Martin Bosma (b. 1964), party ideologue of Wilders’ Freedom Party; see Martin Bosma, *De schijn-élite van de valse munters: Drees, extreem-rechts, de sixties, nuttige idioten, Groep Wilders en ik* (Amsterdam, 2010). In May 2014 it became known that a manuscript of Bosma’s new book *Handlangers van de ANC-Apartheid* (Accomplices of the ANC-Apartheid) was refused by his publisher (Bert Bakker). In this (unpublished) book he claimed that the Netherlands were on the verge of becoming a new South Africa, where the white Afrikaners functioned “as guinea pigs in the multicultural laboratory”; he considered this to be a realistic fear for the native Dutch population (*De Volkskrant*, May 21, 2014).

¹⁵ Simone A. W. Goedings, *Labor Migration in an Integrating Europe: National Migration Policies and the Free Movement of Workers, 1950–1968* (The Hague, 2005).

rary than initially expected and started exercising their rights to bring their families over to the Netherlands.¹⁶

The policies of the center-left government, therefore, did indeed stimulate immigration, but in a very different way from that the integration pessimists had assumed. The surge of Turks and Moroccans settling in the Netherlands in the 1970s was not caused by lowering entrance criteria; rather, it was the unintended result of the message that the borders would be closed, which produced an effect exactly opposite to the one anticipated. It was only then that most (former) guest workers from non-European countries realized that when they left they would lose all the residential and social rights they had built up.

The integration pessimists may have a point, however, when it comes to the conscious political actions of pressure groups, who were a mix of left-wingers and Christian Democrats. They did constitute a social movement that stressed the importance of nondiscrimination and equality and voiced outrage at treating guest workers as “disposables.” Their actions did make a difference as they put pressure on the government and Parliament to ensure humane treatment of immigrants who had contributed to the economic growth of the country. Furthermore, we should realize that the general ideological and political climate in the 1970s was moderately progressive (across the political spectrum), and this climate also influenced the courts of law, whose rulings followed the progressive spirit. Saskia Bonjour has demonstrated that the image of “judicial activism” and judges “aggressively defending the rights of individuals against intrusive states,” as C. Joppke claimed, is not justified.¹⁷ Coalition governments themselves, irrespective of their political color, followed the broadly shared pursuit of equality, which meant that in many cases the state could not treat immigrants differently from the way in which it treated natives.¹⁸

The second explanation, which underlines the unexpected effects of “embedded rights,” seems more convincing.¹⁹ Here the argument is that the prolonged stay of guest workers strengthened their residential status so that it soon became very difficult to expel them, even in cases in which they had lost their jobs. Moreover, few contemporaries realized that guest workers not only had entered the

¹⁶ For a European picture, see Marcel Berlinghoff, *Das Ende der “Gastarbeit”: Europäische Anwerbestopps 1970–1974* (Paderborn, 2013; on Germany, France, and Switzerland) and Jozefien de Bock, “‘Alle wegen leiden naar Gent’ Trajecten van mediterrane migranten naar de Arteveldestad, 1960–1980,” *Brood en Rozen: Tijdschrift voor de geschiedenis van sociale bewegingen* 3 (2012): 47–76 (on Belgium).

¹⁷ Christian Joppke, “The Legal-Domestic Sources of Immigrant Rights: The United States, Germany, and the European Union,” *Comparative Political Studies* 34 (2001): 339–66, 358.

¹⁸ Saskia Bonjour, “The Power and Morals of Policy Makers: Reassessing the Control Gap Debate,” *International Migration Review* 45 (2011): 89–122, 92.

¹⁹ James F. Hollifield, *Immigrants, Markets, and States: The Political Economy of Postwar Europe* (Cambridge, MA, 1992).

territory of Western European states but also were included in their newly created welfare states. Ironically, this “second entrance” was enabled by unions that had opposed the guest worker system because they feared unequal competition and wage debasement. From the very beginning, therefore, unions demanded that guest workers be treated equally, which meant that they not only received equal wages but also contributed to the social insurance system. This entrance to the welfare state would not have strengthened the position of guest workers, however, had states stuck to a rotation system that obliged these workers to leave the country and return to their home countries after two years, to be replaced by others.²⁰ Such a rotation system would have effectively prevented the buildup of residential and social rights. In contrast to similar systems in late nineteenth-century Prussia, which made the settlement of Russian Polish agricultural workers impossible,²¹ rotation in postwar Europe never materialized. The main reason was that employers waged a successful lobbying campaign against this idea, arguing that it would be much too costly and would reduce productivity. Moreover, Dutch employers pointed out that as long as other countries allowed a longer stay for guest workers, rotation would create an unequal playing field in the fierce international competition for migrant labor. The result was that extended stays were allowed from the very start—a policy whose consequences would become visible only when the recession started some fifteen years later.

The second decision with far-reaching consequences had to do with the workers’ right to be joined by their spouses and children. As Bonjour has demonstrated for the Netherlands, this had already become an issue in the late 1950s, when Italian and Spanish wives of guest workers were not allowed to enter the country to reunite with their husbands. Subsequently, politicians, especially Christian ones (both Protestants and Catholics), voiced their indignation at this violation of “sacred” family life.²² They were supported by the right-wing Liberal Party, which defended the interests of the employers and argued that other countries were much more lenient in this respect. Refusing to allow guest workers to enjoy a family life in the Netherlands would, they argued, have a negative effect on the country’s ability to attract workers at a time when there was stiff international competition for them. The outcome of the political debate was that, in principle, spouses could join their husbands. Not many guest workers took advantage of this benefit at that time, but the precedent was firmly established, and its effects, like those of the rejection of the rotation system, were felt much later. To use a botanical metaphor: the seeds that were planted around 1960 would germinate only in the mid-1970s—when everyone had completely forgotten about their existence.

For the Netherlands, as for other Continental Western European countries, the long-term effect was, first, that immigration and family reunification could not be

²⁰ Berlinghoff, *Das Ende der “Gastarbeit.”*

²¹ Klaus J. Bade, *Migration in European History* (Oxford, 2003).

²² Saskia Bonjour, *Grens en gezin: Beleidsvorming inzake gezinsmigratie in Nederland, 1955–2005* (Amsterdam, 2009), and “Power and Morals of Policy Makers.”

stopped when the economy plunged into a recession and, second, that the settlement of Turks and Moroccans rose spectacularly during the course of the 1970s, as figure 1 shows. Both Turks and Moroccans had a lot to lose, and for them the prospect of returning home was most unattractive, as unemployment rates were sky-high in North Africa and Turkey. For Italian workers, in contrast, there was no “punishment on leaving,” because they were members of the European Economic Community, and from 1961 onward had complete freedom of movement within that community.²³

We can therefore conclude that the long-term unintended effects of these decisions, taken by center-right governments and based on short-term economic interests mixed with Christian preoccupations with the sanctity of the family, dovetailed in the mid-1970s with a new ethical spirit that stressed the equality and human dignity of people who could not simply be treated as throwaway workers. Or, to quote the well-known ironic maxim by the writer Max Frisch, commenting in 1965 on the moral panic generated by the presence of Italian guest workers in his home country, Switzerland: “A small master race feels itself endangered: they called for workers and they got people instead.”²⁴

THE “CULTURAL REVOLUTION”

Although this reconstruction shows that mass immigration was not the consequence of the actions of left-wing do-gooders, it is undeniable that in the 1960s and 1970s the public’s attitude was much more positive toward immigrants, conflicts between natives and newcomers in working-class neighborhoods notwithstanding, and that many—from left to right—thought that guest workers and other migrants should be treated with respect and could not just be sent back home after years of hard work. This compassion toward the downtrodden fitted perfectly with the ideals of the unfolding cultural revolution that took place from the 1950s to the 1970s—a multifaceted antiauthoritarian process, with its center of gravity in North America and Western Europe—which stressed pacifism, radical democracy, equality, and the emancipation of women, gays, and ethnic minorities.²⁵

²³ Goedings, *Labor Migration in an Integrating Europe*, 155.

²⁴ Jérôme Jamin, “Fremde Heimat: Zur Geschichte der Arbeitsmigration aus der Türkei,” in *50 Jahre Bundesrepublik, 50 Jahre Einwanderung: Nachkriegsgeschichte als Migrationsgeschichte*, ed. Jan Motte, Rainer Ohliger, and Anne von Oswald (Frankfurt am Main, 1999), 145–64, 163. The original citation is “Ein kleines Herrenvolk sieht sich in Gefahr: man hat Arbeitskräfte gerufen, und es kommen Menschen.”

²⁵ John C. McWilliams, *The 1960s Cultural Revolution* (Westport, CT, 2000); Arthur Marwick, “Youth Culture and the Cultural Revolution of the Long Sixties,” in *Between Marx and Coca Cola: Youth Cultures in Changing European Societies, 1960–1980*, ed. Axel Schmidt and Detlef Siegfried (Oxford, 2006), 39–58. For the Netherlands see also Bonjour, *Grens en gezin*.

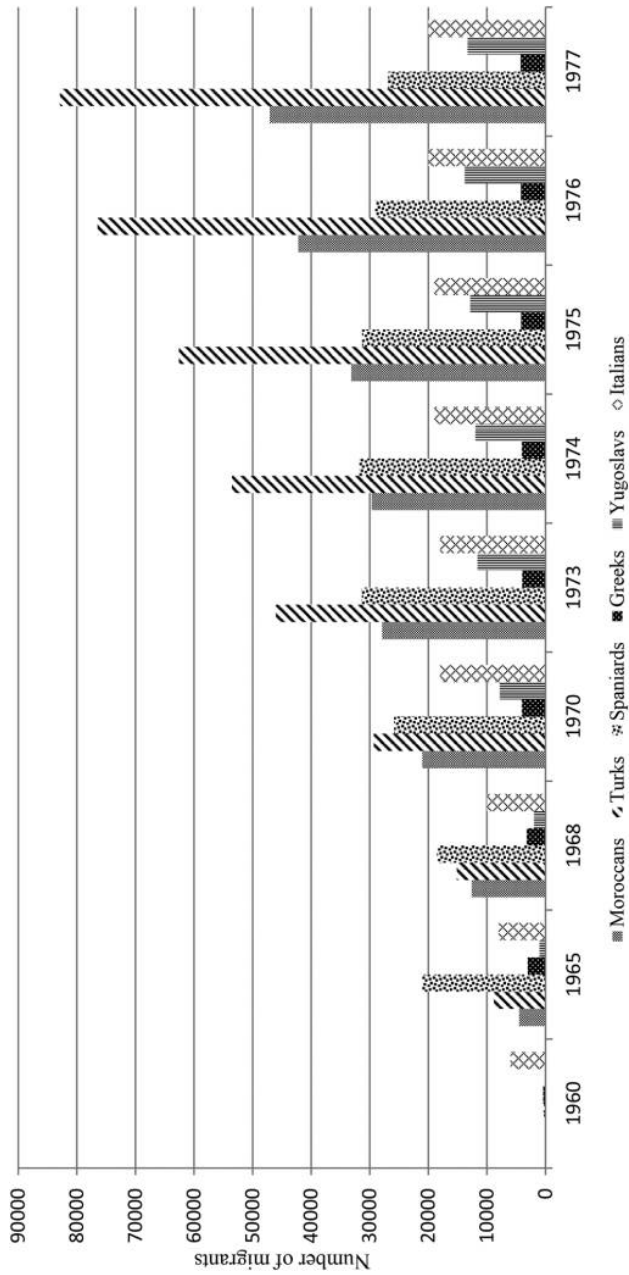


FIG. 1.—Number of guest workers in the Netherlands, per nationality (1960–77). Source: Lucassen and Lucassen, *Winnars en verlezers*, 123

If we want to understand the dominant ideology of equality and antiracism in the 1960s and 1970s, we need to zoom in on the more specific “ethical” element of the cultural revolution. That ethical aspect originated in the growing awareness of the atrocities of the Second World War, especially the Holocaust, the full weight of which was only acknowledged, after a considerable time lag, from the 1960s onward. Added to this was indignation about apartheid in South Africa and—again belatedly—about the war crimes committed by European states in the postwar decolonization process (by France in Algeria, the Netherlands in Indonesia, Belgium in the Congo). This created moral indignation and prompted international awareness, at least in the West, of the grave dangers of racism and discrimination and led to the wish to ban such barbaric behavior once and for all.

In the Netherlands this “ethical revolution” was more intense than in other countries (with the exception of Germany), partially owing to the realization that the survival rate of Jews in the Netherlands had been much lower than that in neighboring countries. This awareness hit home with the broadcast in the first half of the 1960s of *The Occupation*, a television series on the Second World War presented by the director of the Center for War Documentation, Loe de Jong, in which the details of the persecution of the Jews and the passive and active collaboration of Dutch authorities and the population were critically discussed. That realization was strengthened by the publication of Jacques Presser’s *Ondergang* (Destruction), which painted a vivid and gruesome picture of the fate of the Dutch Jewry during the war and made an indelible impression.²⁶ Although more recently historians have shown that this low survival rate was not primarily due to the cowardly attitude of the Dutch,²⁷ at the time it greatly stimulated a collective feeling of guilt, and wartime failures have haunted the public debate on immigration ever since.²⁸ This feeling intensified as the civil rights movement in the United States and the battle against apartheid in South Africa got underway (as in Sharpeville in 1960). In other words, it became blatantly clear what the consequences of discrimination on the basis of race and religion could be. This was a message that was strengthened by international humanitarian agreements and by the antiracist mission of international bodies like UNESCO, which in 1968 organized a year of international human rights, explicitly focusing on racism and

²⁶ Jacques Presser, *Ondergang: De vervolging en verdelging van het Nederlandse Jodendom 1940–1945* (The Hague, 1965).

²⁷ More recently scholars have argued that this low survival rate was not due to anti-semitism or cowardice but may be explained by other more distal factors, such as the percentage of the local population engaged in agriculture and thus the availability of farms that could serve as refuges. See Peter Tammes and Wouter Ultee, “De Duitse bezetting, de verzuildheid van Nederlandse gemeenten, de overlevingskansen van hun joodse inwoners,” in *Twee eeuwen Nederland geteld: Onderzoek met de digitale volks-, beroeps- en woningtellingen, 1795–2001*, ed. Onno Boonstra (The Hague, 2001), 395–414.

²⁸ Buruma, *Murder in Amsterdam*.

critiquing European colonialism and “global white supremacy.”²⁹ Finally, publicity in 1969 about war crimes by the Dutch army during the colonial war against Indonesian nationalists at the end of the 1940s came as a shock and added to this feeling of collective guilt.³⁰

WORLD CHAMPIONS OF MULTICULTURALISM?

It is against this national and international background that scholars, policy makers, and politicians in Europe, Oceania, and North America started thinking about (or rethinking) how to deal with immigration and with the increasing ethnic diversity of their societies. For most of them it was clear that the old “assimilation paradigm” that had dominated earlier periods of mass immigration on both sides of the Atlantic had been discredited.³¹ In the words of Nathan Glazer and Daniel P. Moynihan, immigration societies were “beyond the melting pot” and had become multicultural societies for which the “salad bowl” metaphor was more apt.³² The baseline was that it was morally wrong to expect migrants to give up their cultural heritage. Instead, receiving societies had to change at a fundamental level and allow for a much more diverse citizenship. Twenty years later this new perspective was still very much alive. Whether we like it or not, Glazer argued in 1997, “we are all multiculturalists now.”

This is not the place to debate to what extent these claims were symbolic and whether earlier phases of mass immigration were really so different.³³ What is relevant for our argument is that the “assimilation paradigm” that prevailed well into the 1960s among scholars and policy makers, and most politicians, was dis-

²⁹ Anthony Q. Hazard Jr., *Postwar Anti-racism: The United States, UNESCO, and “Race,” 1945–1968* (Basingstoke, 2012), 167.

³⁰ See Herman Vuijsje, *Vermoorde onschuld: Etnisch verschil als Hollands taboe* (Amsterdam, 1986); and Buruma, *Murder in Amsterdam*, for further information on this guilt feeling and its relationship with political correctness.

³¹ Nancy Foner, *From Ellis Island to JFK: New York’s Two Great Waves of Immigration* (New Haven, CT, 2000); Richard D. Alba and Victor Nee, *Remaking the American Mainstream: Assimilation and Contemporary Immigration* (Cambridge, MA, 2003); Leo Lucassen, *The Immigrant Threat: The Integration of Old and New Migrants in Western Europe since 1850* (Urbana, IL, 2005).

³² Nathan Glazer and Daniel P. Moynihan, *Beyond the Melting Pot: The Negroes, Puerto Ricans, Jews, Italians, and Irish of New York City* (Cambridge, 1970); Nathan Glazer, *We Are All Multiculturalists Now* (Cambridge, MA, 1997).

³³ Ewa Morawska, “In Defense of the Assimilation Model,” *Journal of American Ethnic History* 13 (1994): 76–87; Foner, *From Ellis Island to JFK*; Rogers Brubaker, “The Return of Assimilation? Changing Perspectives on Immigration and Its Sequels in France, Germany, and the United States,” *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 24 (2001): 531–48; Lucassen, *Immigrant Threat*; Nancy Foner and Leo Lucassen, “Legacies of the Past,” in *The Changing Face of World Cities: Young Adult Children of Immigrants in Europe and the United States*, ed. Maurice Crul and John Mollenkopf (New York, 2012), 26–43.

credited.³⁴ This discursive and normative turn became very clear in the first policy briefs on the “integration” of newcomers (initially termed “cultural minorities”) in the Netherlands. The rethinking of these policies was greatly speeded up by the dramatic terrorist actions (the hostage-taking at a primary school and the hijacking of trains in 1975 and 1977) of second-generation Moluccan youths. The root of their discontent was the forced migration of some 12,500 Moluccan colonial soldiers and their families to the Netherlands in 1951, with the expectation that they would return to an independent Moluccan state, separate from Indonesia. Although it soon became evident that this perspective was not realistic because Indonesia (backed by the United States) refused to jeopardize its newly established republic, the dream of an independent state remained alive. Moreover, there were great frustrations about the refusal of the Dutch state to support the Moluccan claim for independence.

Various terrorist actions between 1970 and 1978, which cost eight Dutch citizens and six Moluccan hijackers their lives, were brutal wake-up calls for Dutch society and underlined the urgency of taking the demands and minority position of Moluccans seriously. Although the Dutch state refused to support Moluccans’ political demands for an independent state or autonomous region within Indonesia, they offered them a degree of cultural autonomy with the ultimate aim of better integrating them into Dutch culture and avoiding violent outbursts in the future. The comprehensive plan that was quickly developed in close cooperation with representatives of the Moluccan community, and that included support for cultural activities and bilingual education, would serve as a blueprint for the more general integration policy of other immigrant groups, or “cultural minorities.” This “multicultural turn” was further speeded up by the sudden and unexpected mass immigration of some hundred thousand Surinamese (of both African and Indian background) from the mid-1970s onward. These colonial migrants, who were, on average, more highly skilled than the guest workers, were quite active in demanding cultural group rights as well.³⁵

These postcolonial influences shaped, to a large extent, the general “minorities policy” that was developed from 1978 onward and that specifically targeted only those immigrant groups who were deemed not only ethnically different but also socially at risk because of their disadvantaged position with regard to the labor market, housing, and education.³⁶ Given the conspiracy theories developed by

³⁴ Milton M. Gordon, *Assimilation in American Life: The Role of Race, Religion, and National Origins* (New York, 1964).

³⁵ Mies van Niekerk, *Premigration Legacies and Immigrant Social Mobility: The Afro-Surinamese and Indo-Surinamese in the Netherlands* (Lanham, MD, 2002); Floris Vermeulen, *The Immigrant Organising Process: The Emergence and Persistence of Turkish Immigrant Organisations in Amsterdam and Berlin and Surinamese Organisations in Amsterdam, 1960–2000* (Amsterdam, 2006).

³⁶ Leo Lucassen and André J. F. Köbben, *Het partiële gelijk: Controverses over het onderwijs in de eigen taal en cultuur en de rol daarbij van beleid en wetenschap (1951–*

Fortuyn and others about the responsibility of the Left for the multicultural project, it is notable that these policies were devised and implemented in the 1980s by center-right governments. Moreover, if we look beyond rhetoric, measures of an explicit multicultural nature, such as subsidizing bilingual education at primary schools and immigrant associations,³⁷ were only a small part of the total money spent on “integration.” Most politicians and civil servants realized by 1980 that their main concerns were the social and economic problems that immigrants faced. The accelerating family reunification of Turks and Moroccans and the simultaneous deterioration of their labor market position was a particularly alarming development.

The unintentional result of admitting guest workers to the social system and granting them family reunification rights, coupled with the threat that they would have to give up these rights when they returned to their countries of origin, produced an unprecedented migration dynamic in which surging immigration and unemployment went hand in hand, as figure 2, using the example of the Moroccans, shows. (A similar picture can be drawn for the Turks.)

The prime aim of the integration policy in the 1980s was, therefore, to soften the effects of the economic recession through housing, education, and income assistance (granting unemployment benefits or classing laid-off low-skilled workers collectively as “disabled”), all wrapped in a symbolic multicultural packaging. Or, in the words of Jan Willem Duyvendak:

The 1970s policy on cultural identity can easily be misunderstood as multiculturalist, for its central tenet was that “guest workers” should maintain their identities. The reason for this, however, was not to accommodate pluralism in the Netherlands, but to facilitate guest workers’ return after they had fulfilled their function as unskilled laborers in the Netherlands. In the early 1980s, when it became clear that most migrants were going to stay, policies turned to the ideal of group empowerment as a means towards their “emancipation.” . . . The emphasis on group empowerment faded over the 1980s as the objective of individual socio-economic integration and participation took center stage.³⁸

The main concern of policy makers in the 1980s and 1990s was how to prevent migrants and their children from developing into an underclass and thereby aggravating potential social problems and tensions with the native working class. The stress on the social dimension was fed not only by the ideal of equality but also by worries that the extreme Right would take advantage of this situation.

1991) (Amsterdam, 1992); Bosma, *Terug uit de koloniën*; Bosma, Lucassen, and Oostindie, “Introduction.”

³⁷ Marlou Schrover, “Pillarization, Multiculturalism and Cultural Freezing: Dutch Migration History and the Enforcement of Essentialist Ideas,” *BMGN* 125 (2010): 329–54, 347–48.

³⁸ Jan Willem Duyvendak, *The Politics of Home: Belonging and Nostalgia in Europe and the United States* (London, 2011), 86; Jan Willem Duyvendak and Peter W. A. Scholten, “Beyond the Dutch ‘Multicultural Model’: The Coproduction of Integration Policy Frames in The Netherlands,” *Journal of International Migration and Integration* 12 (2011): 331–48.

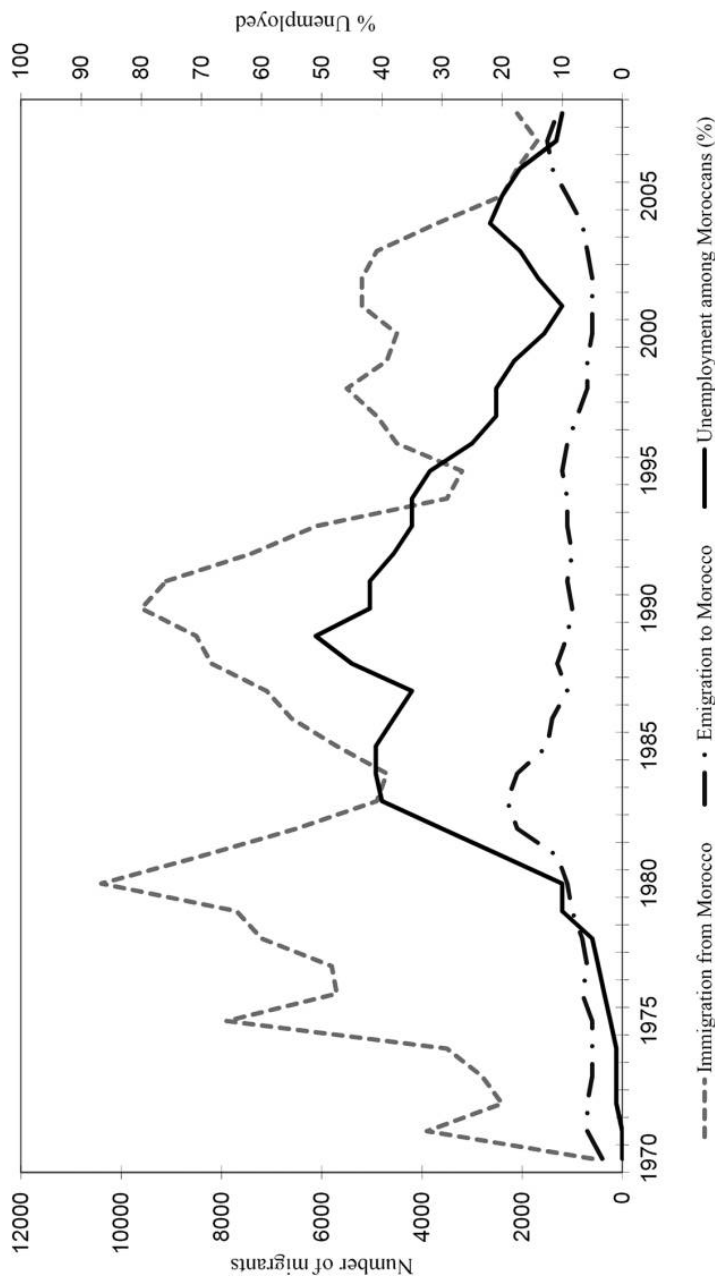


Fig. 2.—Yearly immigration from and emigration to Morocco compared with unemployment among Moroccans in the Netherlands, 1970–2009. Source: Lucassen and Lucassen, *Winnars en vertelers*, 66. Color version available as an online enhancement.

Although extreme right-wing parties were not very successful in national elections, they made a strong showing in lower-class neighborhoods of The Hague and Rotterdam.³⁹ Moreover, research among union members revealed a strong aversion to Moroccan and Turkish migrants, who were seen as culturally alien and as welfare profiteers.⁴⁰

Fears that the extreme Right would mobilize voters on the basis of immigration were particularly widespread, especially when the party (Centrumpartij) of Hans Janmaat (1934–2002) won a seat in Parliament in 1982.⁴¹ In response, the mainstream political parties reached an agreement to marginalize such parties as much as possible and not to politicize migration. This reaction was rooted in a deep belief among many Dutch across the entire political spectrum that anti-immigrant sentiments could easily lead to racism and discrimination and should be avoided at all costs. In this politically correct atmosphere, problems with immigration were barely discussed in the public domain, and those who did bring up such issues—such as the extreme right-wing parties and the left-wing local Maoist Socialist Party⁴²—were either ignored or heavily criticized on moral grounds. A good example is the pamphlet published in 1983 by the then-sectarian Socialist Party titled “Guest Work and Capital.” Taking a stance very similar to that of Friedrich Engels in his 1845 book on Irish immigrants in Manchester,⁴³ the pamphlet argued that big employers used guest workers to divide the working class. This resulted in bad living and working conditions for the guest workers as well as tensions with the native working class, which the Socialist Party represented. The Socialist Party’s critique, however, went beyond an anticapitalist diatribe and illustrates its culturalist and primordial perspective: “Our research shows that the problems are particularly serious with [guest] workers from the countryside, who profess Islam and who most probably have great trouble adapting to the work and living customs of our country. This is especially true for guest

³⁹ Carolein Bouw, Jaap van Donselaar, and Carien Nelissen, *De Nederlandse Volks-Unie: Portret van een racistische splinterpartij* (Bussum, 1981).

⁴⁰ Ruud de Jongh, Marion van der Laan, and Jan Rath, *FNV’ers aan het woord over buitenlandse werknemers* (Leiden, 1984).

⁴¹ It is interesting to note that Janmaat also was involved, to some extent, in the cultural wars of the 1960s and 1970s as one of the radical students who occupied the University of Amsterdam in 1969 (Maagdenhuisbezetting). Soon afterward, however, in 1972, he joined the Catholic People’s Party and then a conservative offshoot of the Labor Party (Democratisch Socialisten ’70) before becoming a member of the nationalist anti-immigrant party Centrumdemocraten in 1980. See Cas Mudde, *The Ideology of the Extreme Right* (Manchester, 2000).

⁴² The Socialistische Partij was established in 1972 as an activist Maoist party and soon gained seats in local elections. In 1994 some of its candidates entered Parliament, and since then it has become an important left-wing populist party.

⁴³ Friedrich Engels, *Die Lage der arbeitenden Klasse in England* (Leipzig, 1845). English translation: *The Condition of the Working-Class in England in 1844* (London, 1892).

workers from Turkey and Morocco and their families. Due to the arrears in development and the consistent convictions pertaining to their (Islamist) religion, they will not stand a chance in our society."⁴⁴ This brochure raised a storm of protest from left to right, and party members were accused of being crypto-fascists, playing into the hands of the extreme Right.

In other words, the weight of the ethical revolution explains to a large extent why, at a moment when unemployment and social problems for Moroccans and Turks were at their peak, politicians, the media, and a considerable part of the Dutch population refused to engage in open discussions of sociocultural tensions between immigrants and the native population. Immigrants in a vulnerable position, including most Surinamese, were seen as easy victims who had to be shielded from discrimination. Many people simply deemed it morally wrong to make migrants a plaything of political strife and societal discontent.

This attitude changed slowly toward the end of the 1980s, when both scholars and politicians, in an authoritative report for the government, cautiously suggested that the integration policy be modified by paying more attention to citizenship and compulsory Dutch language courses in order to facilitate reintegration in the labor market and to improve school results. These reforms, however, remained in the realm of technocratic policy making and did less to address social and cultural tensions. That even such subtle and reasonable suggestions had to be presented with extreme care shows the force of political correctness. And even then, these proposals had already gone too far in the eyes of many. One of the authors of the report written for the renowned Scientific Council for Government Policy, the sociologist Han Entzinger, was accused by fellow scholars of acting in an unethical and incompetent manner by voicing such ideas, and some even asked for his dismissal.⁴⁵ This somewhat twisted atmosphere would soon change dramatically.

THE RUSHDIE AFFAIR AND MUSLIMS AS A TROJAN HORSE

The publication of the Dutch translation of Salman Rushdie's *The Satanic Verses* in 1989 signaled a turning point in the public discussion of immigration and integration in the Netherlands. The original English version came out in September 1988. Soon it was banned in India and South Africa, and in January 1989 it was burned by Muslims in Bradford. Demonstrations against the book in Hyde Park,

⁴⁴ Socialistiese Partij, *Gastarbeid en kapitaal* (Rotterdam, 1983), back cover (our translation).

⁴⁵ Peter W. A. Scholten, *Constructing Immigrant Policies: Research-Policy Relations and Immigrant Integration in the Netherlands, 1970–2004* (Enschede, 2007), 176–77. See also P. Scholten, "The Coproduction of Immigrant Integration Policy and Research in the Netherlands: The Case of the Scientific Council for Government Policy," *Science and Public Policy* 36 (2009): 561–73.

London, followed, as did riots in Islamabad and Kashmir a month later. It was only then that the book came to the attention of the Iranian regime, which, in the person of Ayatollah Khomeini, immediately issued the notorious fatwa on February 14, calling Muslims to kill the writer for his “outrageous blasphemy.”⁴⁶

Soon the novel, or rather the publicity around it, inflamed Muslims in the Netherlands as well, especially those of Moroccan and Turkish descent. When Muslims took to the streets in all parts of the world, including the United States and Western Europe, the reaction in the Netherlands took a notable turn. Although many Muslims in the West disapproved of the fatwa, many of their cocitizens saw outraged Muslims in the streets of London, Brussels, Cologne, The Hague, and Rotterdam (early March 1989) as a Trojan horse: immigrants who, after having been accepted in Europe, finally showed their real (intolerant) face. In the Netherlands, such views, remarkably enough, were voiced less by the (extreme) Right than by prominent representatives of the Left: Jan Blokker (1927–2010), a leading journalist of the left-wing daily *De Volkskrant*, and Gerrit Komrij (1944–2012), a left-wing writer, translator, and poet laureate. Whereas the center-right government declared that it would examine whether the book was deliberately blasphemous and could be banned on that ground, Komrij was outraged by the demonstrations in Dutch streets by Muslims demanding the banishment and burning of Rushdie’s book and calling for the writer to be killed. A few days later he wrote an inflammatory column for the leading newspaper *NRC Handelsblad*:

If one thing has become clear, as thousands of Mohammedans turn to the streets, ranting and raving, it is the total failure of the multi-racial multicultural policy that was so praised by politicians. . . . It has all been in vain, the social workers and their chit chat about anti-racism. . . . Not a fraction of reason and tolerance has stuck to a group that has lived so long in a society that had a lot to offer. . . . We ourselves gave them the stick that they now use to beat us. We spoiled them as wretches and get them as wolves in return.⁴⁷

The general editor of the left-wing weekly *Vrij Nederland* backed up Komrij when he wrote that he understood why people called out “Nuke the Mullahs” and that it was high time that the government insisted on a more assimilationist course.⁴⁸ Jan Blokker, the most influential left-wing journalist of his time, let his antireligious feelings flow freely: “Their religion dies out, like all religions, and grim-faced holds on to its last bridgehead on dirty carpets, faded couches, stained bedspreads, and absurd night attire, and therefore they hate everything that looks

⁴⁶ Daniel Pipes, *The Rushdie Affair: The Novel, the Ayatollah, and the West* (New Brunswick, NJ, 2003).

⁴⁷ *NRC Handelsblad*, March 8, 1989 (our translation).

⁴⁸ *Vrij Nederland*, February 25, 1989, 8. Cited in Annika Fickers, “At the Crossroad: The Impact of the Rushdie Affair on the Framing of the Dutch and British Public Debate on Immigrant Integration” (MA thesis, Leiden University, 2012), 37.

better. We will have to cover the world with pagan, heretic, and atheist temples, mosques, and cathedrals in order to keep off the pyjama nation."⁴⁹

Although internationally the most avid support for Rushdie also came from the Left, from renowned spokesmen like Edward Said, their attacks were directed not so much against Muslim migrants in the West as against Khomeini and the Iranian regime.⁵⁰ Very few targeted immigrants from North Africa and Turkey, as did Komrij and other leftist intellectuals in the Netherlands. In Great Britain, in the longer run, the Rushdie affair even had the opposite effect, as it evoked a debate about British identity and the place of religion in an ever more multicultural society, resulting not so much in a critical stance toward Muslims as in problematizing the racism and discrimination directed against Muslims in British society.⁵¹

After the initial outburst by left-wing journalists and intellectuals, the debate on integration calmed down briefly until, in December 1990, the leader of the right-wing Liberal Party (VVD), Frits Bolkestein (b. 1933), took over the culturalist critique of Islam and broke the political consensus not to criticize minorities. In public speeches in Amsterdam, and half a year later in Lucerne (for the Liberal International), he called the Islamic culture inferior to the Western heritage of Enlightenment due to its illiberal attitude toward women and homosexuals, its lack of freedom of speech, and the totalitarian inclinations of extreme forms of Islam.⁵² With hundreds of thousands of Muslims living in the Netherlands, it was high time to accept pluralism but reject cultural relativism: society had to stand firm for the central values of liberal democracy.⁵³ Rereading Bolkestein's speech some twenty years later, it is remarkable how much controversy it caused, but a more important point is that with his stance he successfully reclaimed this type of critique of Islam for the political Right and that, consequently, its leftist origins fast disappeared under a thick layer of dust.

This political appropriation would soon lead to the broadly accepted idea that the Left had been responsible for the long-lasting political correctness that had now finally been broken. In reality, however, the discomfort with integration, in both social and cultural respects, was politically much more widespread, with the

⁴⁹ Cited by Will Tinnemans, *Een gouden armband: Een geschiedenis van mediterrane immigranten in Nederland, 1945–1994* (Utrecht, 1994), 338 (our translation).

⁵⁰ Pipes, *Rushdie Affair*, 159–63.

⁵¹ Fickers, "At the Crossroad."

⁵² Frits Bolkestein's speech in the Beurs van Berlage on December 9, 1990, titled "Liberalisme en cultuur" (Liberalism and culture) can be found at <http://www.fritsbolkestein.com/>. The speech at the Liberal International Conference in Lucerne on September 6, 1991, was titled "On the Collapse of the Soviet Union" and also discussed the problematic values of Muslims in European societies (http://www.liberal-international.org/editorial.asp?ia_id=873).

⁵³ Lucassen and Lucassen, *Winnaars en verliezers*.

centrist Christian Democrats holding on most stubbornly to the moderately multiculturalist policy not only because of their respect for religious values but also, in the case of Catholics, because of their own emancipation struggle since the middle of the nineteenth century in the Protestant-dominated Netherlands.

One of the remarkable effects of the Rushdie affair and the increasing problematization of Muslim migrants was that colonial migrants from Suriname and the Antilles, although phenotypically much more conspicuous due to their dark skin color, gradually became regarded as belonging to the Dutch nation much more than Moroccans and Turks and their descendants. The fact that they spoke Dutch, that many of them were (at least nominally) Christians, and that they largely identified with the Netherlands and its royal family (elements that, taken together, formed a “colonial bonus”) played a crucial role in this divergence.⁵⁴

THE COVERT RETURN OF THE LEFT

As political correctness gradually evaporated in the course of the 1990s, the space for expressing the frustrations of people who had felt silenced and falsely accused of racism in the past just because they discussed the more negative sides of immigration grew correspondingly. The idea that the Left was to blame proved to be irresistible, notwithstanding the fact that—as we have seen—politicians from the Left to the Right had been rather progressive in this respect for a long time. Such politicians included key members of Bolkestein’s Liberal Party, who, moreover, had been responsible for devising and implementing the Dutch integration policy since the early 1980s. As multiculturalism was increasingly associated with the Left, it was much easier for right-wingers to shed this common past, whereas the Left was maneuvered into a vulnerable position, forced to defend itself against a misleading accusation.

This left-right polarization also hid from view the strong left-wing roots and tradition of anti-immigrant discourse. The discomfort of the Left with Islam, which they saw as a threat to the liberal and antireligious values they had fought for so long during the cultural revolution, could not compete with the dominant right-wing discourse that demanded assimilation, and they became increasingly wary about the chances that Muslim immigrants would even be able to integrate. This effective burial of the leftist tradition was further stimulated by the political conversion of the most prominent representative of the populist anti-immigration current of the 1990s, Pim Fortuyn, whose political pedigree was laid out at the beginning of this article. He was, however, not the only “integration pessimist”

⁵⁴ With the exception of the offspring of Surinamese (largely Hindu) indentured laborers (and a small group from Java), who were shipped to the colony in the 1860s from India. For the concept of the colonial bonus, see Gert J. Oostindie, *Postcolonial Netherlands: Sixty-Five Years of Forgetting, Commemorating, Silencing* (Amsterdam, 2011).

whose roots went back to the radical years of the 1970s. As we have already seen, a culturalist critique of Islam had been expressed in 1983 by the former Maoist Socialist Party, while other key players, like Paul Scheffer, started out in the same milieu.⁵⁵

Having been a (radical) activist in the cultural revolution was not in itself a predisposition to hold such views. For left-wingers it was a necessary but by no means sufficient condition. If we analyze the writings not only of integration pessimists like Fortuyn and Scheffer but also of the founding fathers of the Socialist Party, it seems that a left-wing anti-immigration nativism could develop only if combined with a communitarian view of “the people,” with national identity overruling class antagonisms. Sometimes the ideological roots were hidden, as in the case of Fortuyn, who had denounced his leftist past; sometimes they were more exposed, as in the case of Scheffer.

Like Fortuyn, Scheffer started out at the far left of the political spectrum, as a student in the 1970s at the Catholic University of Nijmegen.⁵⁶ At that time this small university town on the border with Germany had become one of the centers of the radical democratization movement. In 1963, it gave birth to the Student Trade Union, of which Scheffer would become an important spokesperson. Inspired by the protest events of May 1968 in Paris, students in Nijmegen demanded the Right to co-govern the university, and when this was refused, some 1,500 students occupied the university in May/June 1969.⁵⁷ This heralded a period in which Nijmegen became one of the centers of the radical student movement, trading Catholicism for Marxism. Nijmegen and the nearby town of Oss were also the cradle of the Maoist Socialist Party, which—as we saw—in 1983 proposed to give guest workers the choice either to integrate or to leave (rewarding them with 75,000 guilders and a portion of the social premiums they had paid if they chose the latter).⁵⁸ More interesting, however, was their essentialist assessment of Islam and the communitarian and nationalistic framing of Dutch workers, whom they clearly juxtaposed against foreigners.

In the 1990s, Scheffer, as well as Fortuyn to some extent, developed a very similar vision in which Islam, Muslims, and immigration more generally became the central point of critique. In the course of the 1980s, Scheffer, like Fortuyn and

⁵⁵ Like Gabriel van den Brink. See A. Verbij, *Tien rode jaren: Links radicalisme in Nederland 1970–1980* (Amsterdam, 2005), 102.

⁵⁶ The Catholic Polytechnic in Tilburg only formally became a university in 1986.

⁵⁷ Jacques Janssen and Paul Voestermans, *De vergruisde universiteit: Een cultuurpsychologisch onderzoek naar voorbije en actuele ontwikkelingen in de Nijmeegse studentenwereld* (Meppel, 1978); Hugo Kijne, *Geschiedenis van de Nederlandse studentenbeweging 1963–1973* (Amsterdam, 1978); Gerd-Rainer Horn, *The Spirit of '68: Rebellion in Western Europe and North America, 1956–1976* (Oxford, 2007).

⁵⁸ Kees Slager, *Het geheim van Oss: Een geschiedenis van de SP* (Amsterdam, 2001), 360–61.

many others, had gradually shifted to the right. Unlike Fortuyn, however, Scheffer remained a member of the Labor Party (PvdA) as a staff member of its Scientific Bureau (Wiardi Beckman Stichting), where around 2000 he would also meet Hirsi Ali (before she moved over to Bolkestein's Liberal Party in 2002). Whereas Fortuyn left the PvdA and started his own movement, Scheffer became an influential spokesperson for those who were wary of what was regarded as a cosmopolitan and elitist socialism that repudiated the traditional roots of the party, "the ordinary native workers in the old neighborhoods" who felt threatened by immigrants with an alien culture. This was very much in line with the course the Socialist Party had already chosen in the early 1980s and a far cry from similar leftist nativist critiques in prewar Sweden and France.⁵⁹ In 1995 Scheffer published an article about the Dutch in which he argued that due to the mass immigration of newcomers with a different cultural background (Muslims) as well as the process of European integration, the Dutch identity—which he defined in rather essentialist terms—was under threat.⁶⁰ He therefore pleaded for more attention to Dutch history and a reevaluation of the national identity, a plea that was supported by Jan Marijnissen (b. 1952), the leader of the Socialist Party, which, since the 1990s, has been a significant player in the Dutch political landscape.

Scheffer would establish his name, nationally and internationally, in one blow in January 2000 with a hugely influential newspaper article, "The Multicultural Drama," in the leading daily the *NRC Handelsblad*. Here he accused the cosmopolitan Left of ignoring the grave social and cultural problems that the mass immigration of Muslim Turks and Moroccans had caused.⁶¹ This article can be regarded as the keystone of the fierce criticism of political correctness that had started with the Rushdie affair in 1989 and the Bolkestein speech a year later. Together with the tempestuous rise of Pim Fortuyn, "The Multicultural Drama" started a highly polarized debate on immigration and integration. Political correctness was finally fit for the scrap heap, and the few remaining defenders of multiculturalism found themselves in the dock. The anonymous death threats by radical Muslims against Ayaan Hirsi Ali, Geert Wilders, and Theo van Gogh, and especially Van Gogh's brutal assassination in 2004 by a radical Islamist of Moroccan descent, simply further stimulated the anti-Islam mood.

⁵⁹ Leo Lucassen, "A Brave New World: The Left, Social Engineering, and Eugenics in Twentieth-Century Europe," *International Review of Social History* 55 (2010): 299–330; Jean-Paul Brunet, *Jacques Doriot: Du communisme au fascisme* (Paris, 1986).

⁶⁰ Paul Scheffer, "Nederland als een open deur," *NRC Handelsblad*, January 7, 1995. This article sparked a great deal of reaction, as can be found in Koen Koch and Paul Scheffer, eds., *Het nut van Nederland: Opstellen over soevereiniteit en identiteit* (Amsterdam, 1995).

⁶¹ Paul Scheffer, "Het multiculturele drama," *NRC Handelsblad*, January 29, 2000. For an extended English version, see Paul Scheffer, "The Land of Arrival," in *The Challenge of Diversity: European Social Democracy Facing Migration, Integration, and Multiculturalism*, ed. René Cuperus, Karl A. Duffek, and Johannes Kandel (Innsbruck, 2003), 23–30, and, more recently, his 2011 book.

Although the anti-immigrant/Islam tide has turned somewhat since that time, especially after the electoral loss of Geert Wilders's Freedom Party in the 2012 elections, the basic ideas of Fortuyn, Scheffer, and others are still alive and kicking. This can be illustrated by the enthusiastic reception given to David Goodhart, director of the British think tank Demos, by the Dutch labor minister of social affairs (and vice prime minister) Lodewijk Asscher in May 2013 when he invited Goodhart to discuss his book *The British Dream: Success and Failures of Post-war Immigration*.⁶² Although the title of Goodhart's book (and his speech in Amsterdam) suggests a balanced account of the pros and cons of immigration, the narrative is rather one-sided and is dominated by pessimism. The author sketches what he calls "the progressive dilemma" between the belief in universalism and multiculturalism and the eroding trust, cohesion, and solidarity of societies that experience mass immigration. His remedy is simple: a radical reduction of immigration, especially (but not only) of low-skilled and culturally different immigrants, and more attention to a joint and common historical national identity. Goodhart stresses that this will particularly benefit those of the native (white) working class who, in the current situation, feel like strangers in their own country and who are ousted by foreign competitors, not only in the labor market but also in schools and universities.⁶³ Asscher was very much taken by Goodhart's analysis, as it legitimized his own restrictive and new assimilationist policies, and on August 18, 2013, he and Goodhart published an alarmist warning in *The Independent* pertaining to the alleged disruptive economic and cultural effects of Eastern European workers in Western European labor markets.⁶⁴

Notwithstanding the many similarities, there are also interesting differences between the British and Dutch left-wing anti-immigration stances. Whereas Goodhart is very concerned about the British working class and the alleged erosion of British identity, Scheffer is more obsessed with Islam as a serious threat to an open society, combining that concern with a conspicuous libertarian stance that is rooted in the cultural revolution of the 1960s and 1970s. This position is well expressed in the words of Pim Fortuyn: "I have no desire to go through the emancipation of women and homosexuals all over again."⁶⁵ When combined with a communitarian vision of the people, it is not difficult to understand why many on the Left in the Netherlands consider (Muslim) migrants, especially since the Rush-

⁶² The debate was co-organized by the scientific bureau of the Dutch Labor Party (the Wiardi Beckman Stichting). For a recording of the debate, see <http://www.debalie.nl/artikel.jsp?articleid=477027>.

⁶³ David Goodhart, *The British Dream: Success and Failures of Post-war Immigration* (London, 2013), 29–33, 44.

⁶⁴ David Goodhart and Lodewijk Asscher, "So Much Migration Puts Europe's Dykes in Danger of Bursting," *Independent*, August 18, 2013. A Dutch translation was published by *de Volkskrant* on August 17, 2013.

⁶⁵ Interview in *de Volkskrant*, September 2, 2002.

die affair, to be endangering progressive values such as women's and gay rights and freedom of speech—rights that were wrenched from the traditional conservative elites. It was this mixture that basically formed the political program of Pim Fortuyn, who was regarded as a Dutch Jean-Marie Le Pen or Filip Dewinter, but whose political program was a very mixed bag of left-wing and right-wing ideas.

CONCLUSION

Whoever wants to understand the rather sudden “pessimistic turn” in the Dutch immigration and integration debate should take note of two things. First of all, there is the timing—the unanticipated effects of a strong normative political correctness caused by the cultural revolution of the 1960s and 1970s, buttressed by a typical Dutch version of an ethical revolution and nourished by guilty feelings about the mass deportation of Jews and Dutch war crimes during the decolonization of Indonesia. This ethical revolution was an international phenomenon and led to a broadly shared political correctness, ensuring that racism and discrimination were taboo subjects, and it seems to have been particularly strong in the Netherlands. When the Netherlands turned into an immigration country due to the settlement of large numbers of colonial migrants from Suriname and former guest workers and their families from Morocco and Turkey, discussing, let alone criticizing, social and cultural problems linked to this immigration was considered by many as playing into the hands of the extreme Right. This belief was so strong and widespread that, notwithstanding the “bad timing” of the immigration during a long period of economic recession and the social problems that went with it, immigration and integration were not politicized, and discontent among the population was considered to be an expression of racist gut feelings. Once this political correctness evaporated, starting with the Rushdie affair in 1989 and ending with Scheffer's essay “The Multicultural Drama” in 2000, the counterreaction was even more intense.

Second, there is the nature of the pessimistic turn. We argue that the resentment and revanchism that has characterized the anti-immigrant movement since Fortuyn's emergence was not limited to the Right, let alone the extreme Right. The rise of feelings of discomfort toward immigration and Islam—from 2004 onward cunningly exploited by Geert Wilders—has deep roots within the Left. Notwithstanding important political differences, Dutch politicians, journalists, and intellectuals—such as Fortuyn, Marijnissen, and Scheffer—share a mix of ideological principles that boil down to a combination of a cultural nonconformist stance and a communitarian conception of the people.⁶⁶ The first criterion is deeply rooted in

⁶⁶ For more on the notion of conformism, see Herbert Kitschelt, “Growth and Persistence of the Radical Right in Postindustrial Democracies: Advances and Challenges in Comparative Research,” *West European Politics* 30 (2007): 1176–1206, 1178.

avowed progressive ideas on equality, gender, homosexuality, and free speech, embedded in the typical Dutch radical antireligious version of the cultural revolution. By communitarian, we mean a notion that privileges national and native ethnic identifications over other political, cultural, or class divides and that aims to defend the native “people” against elitist cosmopolitanism and culturally alien immigrants. These criteria do not fit with the views of the extreme Right, as is often too easily assumed by political scientists,⁶⁷ and we agree with Herbert Kitschelt that Fortuyn’s political movement does not qualify as such, “as it combined strong groupness (culturalism) with a libertarian gridness [stance], defending individual civil liberties and universalistic multiculturalism against religious cultural intolerance.”⁶⁸ Although political scientists have noted the role of left-wing integration pessimists in the Netherlands, most of their general conclusions stress the left-right divide that developed in the late 1990s, in which the Left, in general, held on to the multiculturalist frame.⁶⁹ In itself this conclusion is correct, but by looking at the general picture, they tend to underestimate the (deep) ideological roots of the Left’s discomfort with immigration.⁷⁰

Finally, our analysis of the Dutch case forces on us the question of how it fits with broader postwar international developments, especially where the role of the Left is concerned. Although at this point our ideas are provisional, we think there are enough clues to formulate hypotheses for further research.

The most important hypothesis is that the left-wing discomfort with immigration, as most recently manifested by Goodhart and Asscher, represents a long-standing current within Labor that goes back to discussions about class versus ethnic solidarity within the Second International (1889–1916). During the First World War it took a distinct ethnocentric turn, as the national perspective of the socialist movement replaced the international solidarity of workers.⁷¹ More fun-

⁶⁷ See, e.g., Spies and Franzmann, “A Two-Dimensional Approach,” 1052 (in the case of Fortuyn); and Rooyackers and Verkuyten, “Mobilizing Support for the Extreme Right” (for Wilders). The approach of Koopmans and Muis is more nuanced and layered: they label Fortuyn primarily as a “right-wing populist” but largely ignore his leftist roots: Koopmans and Muis, “Rise of Right-Wing Populist Pim Fortuyn.”

⁶⁸ Kitschelt, “Growth and Persistence of the Radical Right,” 1179.

⁶⁹ See, e.g., Roggeband and Vliegthart, “Divergent Framing,” 535–37.

⁷⁰ We note that working-class conservatism has a long history in other countries, as shown by the rise of the former French communist Jacques Doriot in the 1930s (Brunet, *Jacques Doriot*) and the great appeal of Enoch Powell in the United Kingdom for working-class voters in the 1960s.

⁷¹ Claudine Weill, *L’Internationale et l’autre: Les relations inter-ethniques dans la IIe Internationale* (Paris, 1987); Marcel van der Linden, “The National Integration of European Working Classes, 1871–1914: Exploring the Causal Configuration,” *International Review of Social History* 33 (1988): 285–311; for socialist trade unions on foreign sailors, see Mathias van Rossum, *Hand aan hand (blank en bruin): Solidariteit en de werking van globalisering, etniciteit en klasse onder zeelieden op de Nederlandse koopvaardij, 1900–1945* (Amsterdam, 2009).

damentally, in the Communist movement Stalin's "socialism in one country" doctrine added to the possibilities of nation-centered politics. From that time on, the "progressive dilemma," albeit often implicit, became part of the Left's ideological stock-in-trade. A telling example is the nativist turn of the Swedish Labor Party in the 1930s and, more specifically, of its intellectual leaders Alva and Gunnar Myrdal. They not only cherished conspicuously radical ideas about eugenic measures against the underclass but also strongly advocated a culturally homogenous Swedish nation (the "folkhem").⁷² Although the Myrdals were not opposed to immigration from neighboring countries, they regarded immigrants from southern and eastern Europe, Africa, and Asia as a cultural and social threat to the Swedish people, since, in their view, that type of immigration would erode Swedish homogeneity and lower the social standards of the working classes to unacceptable levels.⁷³

Although Goodhart does not refer to the Myrdals, his 2004 trailblazing article in *Prospect* ("Too Diverse?"), his recent book, and his article with Asscher basically follow the same line.⁷⁴ All champion an explicit and self-conscious form of communitarian nationalism, which puts an assumed cultural homogeneity of the people over internal class, regional, and religious differences. As a proponent of this vision, Goodhart joins forces with similar left-wing immigration critics, like Scheffer, who also first published a highly provocative and influential article in a leading Dutch newspaper before following it, seven years later, with a high-profile book.⁷⁵ What Scheffer and Goodhart share, as do to some extent the German social democrat Thilo Sarrazin and the French philosopher and member of the prestigious Académie Française Alain Finkielkraut,⁷⁶ is a rather static and homogeneous conception of national cultures and the—largely unsubstantiated—conviction that cosmopolitan elites (especially from the Left) have betrayed their natural constituency, the native white workers, who are left to bear the burden of diversity.

In order to systematize future research, we propose the typology illustrated in figure 3, which combines the two key elements of Dutch anti-immigrationism:

⁷² Lucassen, "Brave New World." See also Alberto Spektorowski, "The Eugenic Temptation in Socialism: Sweden, Germany, and the Soviet Union," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 46 (2004): 84–106.

⁷³ Allan Carlson, *The Swedish Experiment in Family Politics: The Myrdals and the Interwar Population Crisis* (New Brunswick, NJ, 1990), 84; Gunnar Myrdal, "Population Problems and Policies," *Annals* 197 (1938): 200–215, 203.

⁷⁴ David Goodhart, "Too Diverse?" *Prospect*, February 20, 2004.

⁷⁵ Paul Scheffer, "The Multicultural Drama," *NRC Handelsblad*, January 29, 2000. For a thorough analysis of the impact of this article on the framing of the immigration debate, see Roggeband and Vliegthart, "Divergent Framing." Paul Scheffer, *Het land van aankomst* (Amsterdam, 2007). The English version was published in 2011: *Immigrant Nations* (Cambridge, 2011).

⁷⁶ Thilo Sarrazin, *Deutschland schafft sich ab: Wie wir unser Land aufs Spiel setzen* (Munich, 2010); Alain Finkielkraut, *L'identité malheureuse* (Paris, 2013).

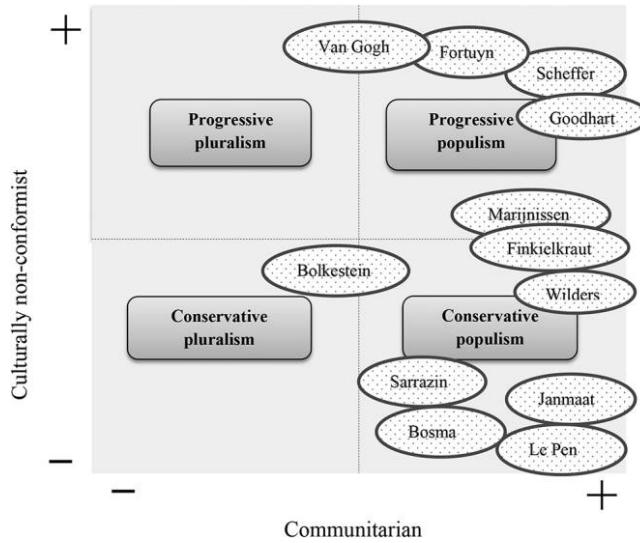


FIG. 3.—Typology of progressive and conservative anti-immigrant nativism. Color version available as an online enhancement.

communitarianism and libertarianism. As such, it offers a starting point for comparative research in time and space that would enable us to better understand the different ideological positions both across the political spectrum and within the Left. The additional value of this interpretative framework is that it gets us away from categories such as “extreme Right,”⁷⁷ which are often morally overloaded and imprecise.

This typology makes us aware of the similarities and differences between anti-immigrationists beyond conventional political categorizations. Whereas the Left is mostly associated with progressive pluralism, the Dutch case study shows that an important communitarian current is much better characterized as progressive nativism. The strong stress on communitarianism, as in the case of Goodhart and Scheffer, for example, explains their joint critique of “elitist cosmopolitanism.”⁷⁸ Those on the Left who not only take a communitarian position but also cherish

⁷⁷ As used in, e.g., Rooyackers and Verkuyten, “Mobilizing Support for the Extreme Right.”

⁷⁸ We also find this mix, to some extent, in Geert Wilders’s Freedom Party, which, with regard to social issues (the welfare state), has recently shifted to the left, although this turn seems to spring from opportunism more than from a deep ideological conviction. See Koen Vossen, “Vom konservativen Liberalen zum Nationalpopulisten: Die ideologische Entwicklung des Geert Wilders,” in *Populismus in der modernen Demokratie: Die Niederlande und Deutschland im Vergleich*, ed. Florian Hartleb and Friso Wielenga (Münster, 2011), 77–104, and *Rondom Wilders: Portret van de PVV* (Amsterdam, 2013).

conservative values—like the German social democrat Sarrazin and the French philosopher Alain Finkielkraut—come close to the conservative nativism of politicians like Wilders and Marine Le Pen.

A very interesting element, finally, is conservative pluralism. In the Dutch context, in the early 1950s, this position was occupied by ex-colonials who could not accept the “loss” of the Dutch East Indies and who supported the claims of the Moluccan minority for an independent Moluccan state within Indonesia. As this was not a realistic option, in the 1960s and 1970s various ex-colonial organizations of Dutch “pieds-noirs” therefore supported the demand for minority rights of Moluccans and Eurasians against the prevailing assimilationist wind.⁷⁹ Of the Dutch integration pessimists whom we have discussed in this article, Frits Bolkestein’s stance seems to come closest to this view. Seen by some as the spiritual father of Wilders,⁸⁰ he used the “Rushdian moment” to appropriate the critique on multiculturalism among the liberal right, and in figure 3 he therefore takes a position more toward the middle. This stance partly overlaps with that of pluralist conservative politicians in the United Kingdom who support the claim of South Asian immigrants to retain their culture as long as it does not conflict with core values of Western societies.⁸¹

In the case of the United Kingdom, this cultural pluralism, which had already developed by the 1960s, should be understood within the imperial context in which migrants from India and Pakistan are regarded, in principle, as being part of British (imperial) culture; this reproduces the pluralist colonial ideology. In the Netherlands such views were largely limited to colonial migrants such as the Eurasians from the former Dutch East Indies and the Surinamese. It had no palliative effect, however, for Turks and Moroccans during the rise of anti-Islam feelings; rather the contrary. The Eurasians and most Moluccans still shared bitter reminiscences of anti-European Muslim fanaticism during Indonesia’s struggle for independence.⁸² Whereas in Great Britain the colonial background of most Muslim migrants gave rise to mutual identification, such a cushioning effect for former Muslim guest workers in the Netherlands (and other countries like Belgium) was lacking.⁸³

A second function of this typology is that it helps us to develop a comparative temporal and spatial research agenda for the study of left-wing anti-immigrationism since the nineteenth century. It is widely known that nativism

⁷⁹ Willems, “No Sheltering Sky”; Bosma, *Terug uit de koloniën*.

⁸⁰ Meindert Fennema, *Geert Wilders: Tvenaarsleerling* (Amsterdam, 2010), 11–25, 257.

⁸¹ David Feldman, “Why the English Like Turbans: Multicultural Politics in British History,” in *Structures and Transformations in Modern British History*, ed. David Feldman and Jon Lawrence (Cambridge, 2011), 281–302.

⁸² According to some, it is no coincidence that Wilders’s maternal family is also Eurasian. Wilders himself, however, never has played this card as far as we know.

⁸³ With the exception of a tiny minority of Moluccans.

has always been a strong element within the Left, especially as the rise of nationalism and the welfare-state interests of native workers often overruled solidarity with the “workers of the world.”⁸⁴ However, there is no systematic comparative research that tries to understand under what conditions nativism operates or why this communitarian position is, in some cases, reversed into what we have dubbed progressive pluralism. As the Dutch case shows, easy answers will not do; it is not simply the Left becoming increasingly progressive, touched by the postwar international antiracist and prohumanitarian turn. Instead of linear/evolutionist assumptions, we think that the communitarian and multiculturalist currents have always coexisted and that in the long run progressive pluralism may be the exception rather than the rule. It is not only the Dutch case study but also discussions among the Left in other countries, like Australia, Malaysia, and the United States, to mention a few, that illustrate the ongoing dilemma.

⁸⁴ Weill, *L'Internationale et l'autre*; Leo Lucassen, “The Great War and the Origins of Migration Control in Western Europe and the United States, 1880–1920,” in *Regulation of Migration: International Experiences*, ed. Anita Böcker, Kees Groenendijk, Tetty Havinga, and Paul Minderhoud (Amsterdam, 1998), 45–72; Rinus Penninx and Judith Roosblad, eds., *Trade Unions, Immigration, and Immigrants in Europe, 1960–1993: A Comparative Study of the Attitudes and Actions of Trade Unions in Seven West European Countries* (New York, 2000); Donna R. Gabaccia and Fraser Otanelli, eds., *Italian Workers of the World: Labor Migration and the Formation of Multiethnic States* (Urbana, IL, 2001); Van Rossum, *Hand aan hand (blank en bruin)*.