

Dutch 'Multiculturalism' Beyond the Pillarisation Myth

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This article is about the state of multiculturalist politics in the Netherlands. It assesses the popular claim that a paradigmatic change has occurred in the Netherlands due to events such as 9/11 and the murders of Pim Fortuyn and Theo van Gogh. The article argues that although changes are significant, both in discourse and in practice, they must be viewed as part of a process of rethinking the relation between newcomers and the state that goes back as far as the end of the 1980s. Long-standing claims about the exemplary form of multiculturalism in the Netherlands were always ambiguous at least, or even hard to sustain. The article criticises the persistent idea that Dutch accommodating integration policies since the end of the 1970s are an extension of the historical tradition of 'pillarisation'. Only by going beyond this myth can we understand why recent changes are much less of a break with the past, and why multiculturalism was never accepted or practised as fully as has often been suggested in more stereotypical depictions of Dutch integration policy.

The turn from multiculturalism to civic integration reflects a seismic shift not just in the Netherlands, but in other European societies as well (Joppke, 2004, p. 249).

Dutch integration policy has been well documented and one can safely say that, for a medium-sized country, the Netherlands is one of the most over-studied cases in the international migration literature (see e.g. Lucassen and Penninx, 1997; Vermeulen and Penninx, 2000 for good historical overviews). Until a few years ago it was commonplace to categorise the Netherlands as one of the few European countries with an integration model that comes closest to the multicultural ideal-type in which the government endorses the principle of cultural diversity and actively supports the right of different cultural and ethnic groups to retain their distinctive cultural identities. In 2003, Han Entzinger, a leading Dutch scholar on immigrant integration stated: 'Wake up any expert on immigrant integration in the middle of the night and ask that person to name a country known for its multiculturalism. Ten to one that the answer will be Canada, Australia or the Netherlands' (Entzinger, 2003, p. 59).

Things could not be more different today, it seems. A strong consensus about the Netherlands as one of the front-runners of multiculturalism has been replaced by an equally strong consensus about the Netherlands as the prodigal son of multiculturalism. Christian Joppke (2004) speaks of a 'seismic shift'. Entzinger, cited above, already spoke about the rise *and* fall of multiculturalism in the Netherlands, and Jeroen Doomernik, another Dutch migration scholar, concludes

in his overview on the state of multiculturalism in the Netherlands: 'In so far as the term comes up, multiculturalism is relegated to the dunghill of political history' (Doomernik, 2005, p. 35).

So what happened? At a global level one could point to the impact of 9/11, which has led to a growing assertion of the liberal state coupled with a declining willingness to tolerate diverse cultural practices 'under the cloak of "multicultural" toleration' (Joppke, 2004, p. 252). In a recent work Joppke even observes the rise of a 'repressive liberalism', with the Netherlands adapting 'the most repressive variant of civic integration' (Joppke, 2007, p. 19). Moving to the domestic context, the challenge to multiculturalism, political correctness and the 'Islamification of Dutch identity' came most dramatically from the populist politician Pim Fortuyn (Pels, 2003). He was murdered in 2002 by an environmentalist activist just days before the general election, but left an unmistakable mark on the Dutch political system by causing the biggest electoral upset ever (his new party won 26 seats in the May 2002 election).

Four other crucial names from recent Dutch politics can be mentioned when talking about challenges to multiculturalism. First, the film-maker and columnist Theo van Gogh, who was brutally murdered in 2004 by a Dutch citizen of Moroccan descent (see Buruma, 2006 for an account of this murder and its wider implications). Second, the Somali-born immigrant and former MP Ayaan Hirsi Ali, who received death threats following her campaign against illiberal aspects of Islam, and left both parliament and the Netherlands in 2006 to work at the American Enterprise Institute in Washington (see e.g. Hirsi Ali, 2006 for a treatise on the position of women within Islam). Third, the former immigration minister 'Iron' Rita Verdonk, who became known for a tough stance on immigration and integration. Fourth, and most recently, the populist politician Geert Wilders, whose Freedom party won nine seats in the general election of November 2006 on an anti-immigration and anti-Islam agenda.

Although all these events and key figures have been at the centre of often heated discussions about Dutch integration policy over the past five years, most observers would probably agree that crucial challenges to Dutch 'multiculturalism' took place well before 2001. A cultural line of critique goes back to 1991 when Frits Bolkestein, then leader of the liberal party VVD, publicly questioned the compatibility between Islamic and Western values. These 'clash of civilisations' criticisms would come to the surface of mainstream political discourse again after September 2001 (see e.g. Fortuyn, 2001 for a new edition of a work from 1997 that originally received relatively little attention). A more pragmatic line of argument goes back as far as 1989 when the influential Scientific Council for Government Policy observed that Dutch integration policy had not been able to prevent the marginalisation of immigrants (WRR, 1989, p. 9). This line of argument was picked up in a widely debated Op-Ed article about the 'multicultural tragedy' (see Scheffer, 2000). The author pointed to the socio-economic

failures of the Dutch integration model and observed the rise of a new 'ethnic underclass' (compare De Beus, 1998; Koopmans, 2002; Schnabel, 1999).

Hence Fortuyn and others did not so much start a new debate in the wake of September 11th, but rather radicalised a discourse of 'new realism' that had been developing for over a decade (Prins, 2002; see also Roggeband and Vliegthart, 2007 for a recent analysis of the Dutch public debate on migration). This long-term perspective on challenges to 'multiculturalist' politics in the Netherlands is probably relatively uncontroversial among scholars. Yet we need to go one crucial step further in order to avoid falling into the trap of a black-and-white analysis of a country that once was a multiculturalist haven and now is 'a grubbier, sadder, less hopeful place' (Kuper, 2006a, p. W1; see Kuper, 2006b). In order to do so we need to go beyond the still fashionable myth that Dutch accommodating integration policies are an extension of the historical tradition of 'pillarisation', which combined group autonomy with elite cooperation. Although perhaps a tempting story, migrants were never integrated in the old pillarised system in the same way as the old religious groups were. As a result, the article argues, early Dutch 'ethnic minorities' policy may have recognised comparatively soon that migrants and their offspring 'were there to stay', but multiculturalism was never accepted or practised as fully as suggested in more stereotypical depictions of Dutch integration politics.

Developing a 'Multicultural' Integration Policy

After 1945, decolonisation, labour migration and forced migration contributed to a long period of net migration to the Netherlands. Net migration, together with higher birth rates among the immigrant population, has contributed to around 50 per cent of the population growth over the last three decades (*Jaarrapport Integratie*, 2005, p. 15). Only since 2004 does the Netherlands once again have a negative net migration figure as more people emigrated than arrived, with traditional emigrant destinations such as Canada, Australia and New Zealand joined by newer ones such as France and Spain (see Ter Bekke *et al.*, 2005).

In the immediate period after the Second World War almost 300,000 Dutch citizens returned to the 'motherland' after the independence of the former Dutch East Indies (1949) and New Guinea (1958), despite a rather reluctant Dutch government that attempted to minimise 'repatriation' (Entzinger, 1984, p. 74). From the 1960s onwards a comparable number of supposedly temporary 'guest workers' (*gastarbeiders*) arrived from Mediterranean countries, first from Italy and Spain, and later from Turkey and Morocco. Although as a result of the 1973 oil crisis the recruitment of foreign workers virtually stopped, 'the immigration of non-workers continued on a fairly large scale because the existing restrictions in this field were not easy to enforce' (Entzinger, 1985, p. 64). There were three reasons for this. First, Surinamese independence in 1975 led to a second wave of around 180,000 colonial immigrants arriving shortly before

independence. Since the 1980s the immigration of Dutch citizens from the Netherlands Antilles and Aruba also increased. Second, a substantial number of Turkish and Moroccan migrants arrived in the Netherlands under family reunification regulations. In 2006 more than 10 per cent of the population were either first or second-generation immigrants, with Turks, Moroccans, Surinamese and Antilleans accounting for around 1.15 million immigrants or 7 per cent of the resident population. Third, the number of asylum seekers has been steadily increasing from around 1,000 in the early 1980s to a peak of more than 50,000 in 1994. More recently, the annual number of asylum applications has decreased to around 10,000.

For most of the post-war period, no explicit government policy existed in the Netherlands to deal comprehensively with the legal status and social integration of these newcomers. The main reason for this tacit approach was that repatriates from former colonies, apart from an emergent need for housing upon their arrival, were assumed to have no difficulties with integration in Dutch society, and that 'guest workers' were assumed to return to their countries of origin after a few years working in the Netherlands. This resulted in a rather *ad hoc* way of dealing with immigrants. The turning point came in 1979 when the Scientific Council for Government Policy (WRR) completed a report on 'Ethnic Minorities', which it broadly defined as including minorities from former colonies as well as guest workers and their families. The Council criticised the notion of temporality underlying government policy *vis-à-vis* these minorities because this would lead to a socially disadvantaged position and cultural isolation (WRR, 1979, p. XVII). An academic commission of high-level experts from that same year also came to the conclusion that the government could no longer deny that the Netherlands had *de facto* become a country of immigration (ACOM, 1979, pp. 19–20).

In its 1983 Minorities Memorandum the Dutch government recognised that 'in many ways our country has been given a different face after the Second World War ... Therefore conditions must be created by the minorities policy to realize the equivalence and equal opportunities of all residents' (Dutch Government, 1983, p. 3). With its new minorities policy, the Netherlands was comparatively early in formulating a comprehensive integration policy (Vermeulen, 1997, p. 143). The new approach included a number of general provisions that related specifically to the legal status of immigrants, most notably with regard to political participation and citizenship status. The introduction in 1985 of local voting rights for non-national immigrants after five years of residence was a direct result of the new minorities policy and put the Netherlands on the map as one of the most 'immigrant-friendly' countries of Europe. The importance of a generous naturalisation policy was also underlined in the Memorandum (Dutch Government, 1983, p. 92), and was facilitated after the 1986 Nationality Act replaced the outdated Act from 1892. A complete toleration of dual citizenship between 1992 and 1997 aimed at strengthening the incorporation of migrants into Dutch

society and successfully increased the annual number of naturalisations to a peak of more than 80,000 in 1996.

Another important aspect of the new integration policy was the promotion of equality before the law, and the significance of a new anti-discrimination policy was underlined in article 1 of the new Dutch constitution adopted in 1983: 'All persons in the Netherlands shall be treated equally in all circumstances. Discrimination on the grounds of religion, belief, political opinion, race or sex or on any other grounds whatsoever shall not be permitted'. Of particular importance here is the 1994 Equal Treatment Act which created an Equal Treatment Commission (ETC) that examines cases of direct and indirect discrimination, mainly in employment and education. The ETC's non-binding rulings are seen as authoritative. Discrimination in the labour market was targeted by a 1994 Act, and particularly by its 1998 successor, Act for Stimulation of Labour Market Participation. The Act was implemented by the national employment service in cooperation with 'corporate minority advisers' (*bedrijfsadviseurs minderheden*), who aimed to achieve a more proportionate placement of ethnic minorities in the labour market trajectories developed for people with major employability problems (see Guiraudon *et al.*, 2005, pp. 78–9).

Apart from improving legal and socio-economic conditions, the new minorities policy also aimed at promoting the emancipation of ethnic communities in a broader social and cultural sense. The policy targeted a number of specific groups: Moluccans from the East Indies, citizens of Surinamese and Antillean descent, guest workers from countries such as Italy, Greece, Yugoslavia, Spain, Portugal, Tunisia, Morocco and Turkey, as well as 'caravan dwellers', 'gypsies' and refugees – the latter being still a fairly small group by the early 1980s. The government saw that these groups had become a permanent part of Dutch society and that the country would therefore assume 'a permanent multicultural character' (Dutch Government, 1983, p. 12). Minorities, it was argued, needed to be provided with the opportunity to maintain and develop their own cultural identities. This meant, in negative terms, that 'within the wide boundaries of the Dutch legal order' the government should not interfere with the identity expressions of these groups; and, more positively, that minority groups had the same rights as other 'identity groups' as far as obtaining public subsidies for broadcasting, education and other welfare activities (Dutch Government, 1983, pp. 107–8).

Since 1985, for example, there is a publicly subsidised Dutch Muslim Broadcasting Service, and since 1994 a Hindu one too. Since 1988 Islamic and Hindu primary schools have been founded and there are currently around 40 Islamic primary schools in the Netherlands. By the end of the 1990s there were around 450 mosques in the Netherlands (Sunier, 1999, p. 69). Other practical outcomes of the minorities policy include funding for a variety of 'minority organisations' and the institution of consultative bodies where the government would discuss policy issues with representatives of these minority groups. As late as 1997 a new Law on the Consultation of Minority Policy (*Wet Overleg Minderhedenbeleid*) was

adopted with the goal of contributing to the development of a 'harmonic multicultural society' (Dutch Government, 1996, p. 3). Within the framework of the National Minorities Consultation (*Landelijk Overleg Minderheden*) the government meets at least three times per year with eight subsidised minority groups to discuss integration policy. These 'official' minority groups represent Chinese, Turks, Moluccans, Southern European communities, Caribbean Dutch, Surinamese, Moroccans and refugees (see www.minderheden.org).

The 'Pillarisation' Myth

The Dutch approach thus, in many ways, seemed to provide a classic illustration of liberal multiculturalism in action: a relatively liberal immigration and naturalisation policy combined with a strong anti-discrimination policy and a group-based identity policy. By far the most common explanation for this specific Dutch integration policy is that it chimes with the pluralistic tradition of socio-political 'pillarisation' (*verzuiling*), where despite strong social segregation between mainly Protestants, Catholics and to a lesser extent socialists, all segments of society peacefully coexisted due to a pacification strategy of group-based autonomy combined with consultation and compromise at the elite level (see Lijphart, 1975 for a classic study of the Dutch 'politics of accommodation'). Although pillarisation has lost much of its significance since the 1960s as a result of secularisation and individualisation, many institutional legacies in present-day Netherlands still reflect its pillarised past, for example in its public broadcasting system, in the school system and – it is often argued – also in integration policy. Here is a brief selection of some typical observations:

Immigrants could and did make use of the principles of the system of pillarization (Vermeulen and Penninx, 2000, p. 28).

The notion of creating and supporting separate provisions and institutional arrangements as a means of preserving group identity and promoting emancipation simultaneously is also vividly present in the minorities' policy (Entzinger, 2003, p. 64).

[T]he policy on ethnic minorities ... extended 'pillarization' (*verzuiling*) and the Dutch commitment to equality to new groups (Guiraudon *et al.*, 2005, p. 75).

Just as previously Dutch education allowed for Roman Catholic, Protestant and neutral school types, and similar divisions in the media, hospitals, trade unions and employers, and all other social spheres, it now offered Muslims and Hindus the same opportunities (Doomernik, 2005, p. 35).

When Muslim immigrants began to arrive, it was natural that the Dutch would allow them to build their own 'Muslim' pillar. Muslims would be

given a chance to emancipate themselves in the context of their cultural identity (Carle, 2006, p. 71).

Classic 'pillarisation' perspectives provide an apparently comfortable, albeit stereotypical, account of Dutch integration policy. That is to say, they provide an explanation that chimes well with an idealised, and perhaps somewhat naïve, picture of the Netherlands as a country with a very accommodating and 'immigrant-friendly' integration policy. The pillarisation perspective, however, is much more difficult to square with the more recent picture of a country where 'multiculturalism' seems to have become outdated, where immigration policies have tightened and where integration policies have become more demanding and less 'accommodating'.

Martin van Bruinessen, a Dutch scholar of Islam, observes for example that the Netherlands has become a country where people:

insist that Muslims have to distance themselves from Islam in order to be admitted. In discussions at the local level, proof of loyalty is also demanded, but in the less drastic form of opting for Dutch citizenship and adapting to Dutch habits. The notion that integration demands adaptations from both sides appears to be submerged (van Bruinessen, 2006, p. 21).

When comparing recent developments in the Netherlands, France and Germany, Joppke observes that

the supposedly difference-friendly, multicultural Netherlands is currently urging migrants to accept 'Dutch norms and values' in the context of a policy of civic integration that is only an inch (but still an inch!) away from the cultural assimilation that had once been attributed to the French (Joppke, 2007, p. 2).

Although it may be contested whether these observations are in line with the reality of current Dutch politics (there is at least no law or policy asking potential immigrants to denounce their religion), it is clear that there is a misfit with the classical accommodating 'pillarisation' perspective on Dutch integration policy. Three explanations can be brought forward for this apparent misfit. The first explanation, proposed by van Bruinessen, points to the decline of the 'pillar' system. In other words, no more pillarisation, no more multiculturalism. The main problem with this explanation is that, as argued above, the pillar system has been in decline already since the 1960s, so why would we see these changes only now? The second explanation, proposed by Joppke, would be to point to the rightist turn of the political climate. In other words, the Netherlands, led by populist politicians such as Pim Fortuyn, Rita Verdonk or Geert Wilders, has taken a turn away from multiculturalism, in the direction of 'repressive liberalism'. The main problem with this explanation also relates to timing; not so much that we see these changes only now, but rather – as argued before – that in fact we see

significant changes in the political climate long before 2001 (as Joppke, 2004, p. 249 also notes; but see Joppke, 2007, p. 7 for a somewhat different perspective).

The third explanation is that there never was a pillarised Dutch integration policy to begin with. This has been argued already by Jan Rath, Rinus Penninx, Kees Groenendijk and Astrid Meyer in a 1999 article, where they observe that a new pillar never developed in the Netherlands as a result of post-war immigration. Rath and colleagues look specifically at the case of a presumed 'Islamic pillar', which may be viewed as a most likely case: if any new pillar should have been expected to evolve, it would have been an Islamic pillar.

In summary, generally the formation of Islamic institutions has been a rather selective process. A great deal has happened, but at the same time a great deal has not. In view of the ideal-typical model of Dutch pillarisation, Islamic daily and weekly papers might have been expected, and Islamic secondary and special schools, maternity clinics, hospitals, care homes, swimming clubs, trade unions, pressure groups, housing associations, political parties, emigration foundations, and so on and so forth, but in practice none of them are in evidence. Contrary to what some spokesmen are keen to claim, in terms of institutional arrangements, there is no question of an Islamic pillar in the Netherlands, or at least one that is in any way comparable to the Roman Catholic or Protestant pillars in the past (Rath *et al.*, 1999, p. 59, emphasis in original).

The persistence of this pillarisation myth can be traced back to the notion of 'integration with preservation of own identity' (*integratie met behoud van eigen identiteit*), which is often cited to underline the 'multicultural' intentions of integration policy in the Netherlands but is problematic, and in fact misleading, in two important ways. First, when policy-makers recognised by the end of the 1970s that guest workers were permanent rather than temporary, the notion of 'integration with preservation of own identity' was explicitly rejected as a guideline for integration policy. Back in 1979, the Scientific Council for Government Policy had rejected the idea of creating new 'pillars' for newcomers. It recognised that the 'preservation of own identity' seemed to fit well in the Dutch tradition of religious pillarisation, but a pillarisation strategy was seen as too much of an excuse for government inaction. 'Preservation of own identity' needed to be replaced by a more active encouragement of minorities to participate in Dutch society (WRR, 1979, p. XXI).

Second, when the term 'multicultural' was used in early Dutch integration discourse, this was only in a descriptive sense to coin the increasing ethnic diversity of Dutch society, but not with the normative connotation that we attribute to it today (Penninx, 2005, p. 5). When the government in a 1970 report stressed that foreign employees should have the chance to 'preserve their own identities', this had nothing to do with a multicultural ideology of respect for other cultures, or with a tradition of group emancipation. Rather it was a

pragmatic strategy aimed at preparing guest workers for return to their countries of origin, which would be facilitated by integrating foreign workers as little as possible into their temporary host society (Rijkschroeff *et al.*, 2003, pp. 22–7). Later on, when the idea of guest workers returning to their countries of origin became an increasingly unlikely scenario, the government's 'ethnic minority' policy consisted indeed of a group-based approach to migrants, but only for certain groups, and always in a strictly top-down, even condescending manner. Minority organisations needed to be supported in order to provide the government with clearly identifiable and, hopefully, representative discussion partners. This process has been aptly coined as the 'minorisation' of minorities (Rath, 1991).

In so far as early Dutch integration policy did recognise the importance of cultural identity, the accent was clearly on 'integration' rather than on the 'preservation of own identity' (Rijkschroeff *et al.*, 2003, pp. 34–6). There was never any serious discussion of an unequivocal right for newcomers to express their identities from an assumed symmetry of cultures. The 1983 Memorandum discarded outright such a relativist notion of cultural equality: 'It [integration] is a confrontation between unequal partners. The majority culture is after all anchored in Dutch society' (Dutch Government, 1983, p. 108). The group-oriented basis of the ethnic minority policy may have reflected a 'pillarisation reflex', but newcomers simply lacked the necessary power basis to claim a form of cultural autonomy equal to that of the old denominational groups (Koenis, 1997, p. 65).

So Where Does That Leave Us Now?

Debunking the often ascribed 'multicultural' origins of Dutch integration policy does not, of course, mean that nothing has changed over the course of the past twenty years. There is no doubt that the way in which integration policy in the Netherlands is discussed and practised today would have been stigmatised as 'politically incorrect' even just a few years ago. At the level of ideology, the critical contributions by Scheffer and Fortuyn in 2000 and 2001 led to fierce public reactions (Fortuyn's supporters would even speak of 'demonisation'), with Fortuyn's discussion of the holy cow of article 1 of the constitution – the anti-discrimination provision – probably representing the most direct attack on multiculturalism. Yet Fortuyn did not say things that were radically different from an infamous statement made in 1996 by the right-wing politician Hans Janmaat on the 'abolition of the multicultural society' that led to a conviction for discriminatory statements. As said before, Fortuyn should not so much be seen as the cause of a changed discourse, but rather as its prime exponent. After Fortuyn's post-mortem electoral victory in May 2002 even new Christian Democratic prime minister Jan-Peter Balkenende stated that he did not think that 'multicultural society is something to strive for'.

At a policy level the results of these paradigmatic changes became increasingly visible in the course of the 1990s. The allowance of dual nationality in the period from 1992 to 1997 was perhaps an exception (or a final souvenir of the 1980s), but the return to the doctrine of one nationality in 1997 was a clear manifestation of these altered circumstances. In 1997 the Dutch Senate vetoed the introduction of multiple citizenship in Dutch citizenship law and abrogated the permissive policy that had been in place since 1992. In 1998 the Dutch Parliament adopted a Law on Civic Integration of Newcomers, aimed at self-sufficiency of migrants in Dutch society, and also a Law on Benefit Entitlements (in Dutch called the 'Linkage Act'), which 'linked' enjoyment of public services closer to legal status. The 2000 Immigration Law that tightened asylum policy provides a final illustration of important pre-2001 policy changes (Vink, 2005).

More recently, the previous government of Christian Democrats, Liberals and Liberal Democrats left no doubt about its intentions: 'This cabinet ... distances itself from multiculturalism as a normative ideal, from the open-endedness of the past and from a government that takes ethnic minorities by the hand as if they were subjects in need of care' (Dutch Government, 2004, p. 3). When a parliamentary committee that reviewed Dutch integration policy presented its final report, symbolically titled 'Building Bridges' for its attempt to balance not only the failures but also the successes of Dutch integration policy (Commissie Blok, 2004), the government publicly distanced itself from the 'untimely' accommodating tone of the report. The same goes for the perhaps equally well-intentioned report from the Scientific Council for Government Policy on 'Dynamism in Islamic Activism' that, in so far as it was not largely neglected, was criticised precisely for its overly accommodating message (WRR, 2006). As a consequence, talk about the necessity to integrate newcomers (and even so-called 'old-comers') into Dutch society has become less 'cheap' and more demanding with new buzzwords such as 'own responsibility' and 'civic integration duty' dominating official government discourse (e.g. Dutch Government, 2003, p. 9).

In terms of concrete measures, apart from all kinds of ideas that were floated by former immigration minister Verdonk but never made it into policy (such as the idea to enforce speaking Dutch in public places), two new laws stand out. In March 2006 a new Civic Integration Abroad Act (*Wet Inburgering Buitenland*) entered into force. The Act is aimed mainly at restricting immigration through family reunion and obliges persons that apply for a residence permit from abroad to take a civic integration exam. The exam tests knowledge of Dutch language and society, is held orally at an embassy or consulate and costs approximately €350 (with the permit itself costing another €800). A further €63 secures an authorised information package, which includes an audio CD with questions and answers to prepare for the exam, as well as the film *Coming to the Netherlands*, which includes images of undressed sunbathing women and explicit expressions of homosexuality, which 'are quite ordinary and acceptable in the Netherlands' (see www.

naarnederland.nl).¹ Obtaining the required level of knowledge is fully the 'personal responsibility' of the newcomer.

In December 2006, a new Civic Integration Act (*Wet Inburgering*) was adopted which replaces the still relatively new Act from 1998. A key difference from the previous 'Civic Integration for Newcomers Act' is that it obliges not only newcomers, but also so-called 'old-comers', to take part in a 'civic integration course' and to take a 'civic integration exam'. The rationale for this new Act was clearly a widely shared perception that the 'old-style' Civic Integration Act failed to deliver the intended results: those people that were eager to participate often had to wait for a place on an 'integration course' and easily got lost in the complex administrative procedures, while those who were not so willing to participate more often than not got away with not showing up or dropping out during the course. The new law means that all non-Dutch/EU residents between the ages of 16 and 65, plus those who have lived in the Netherlands for longer (except those who have participated sufficiently in the Dutch educational system or passed their 'naturalisation exam'), have a 'civic integration duty' (*inburgeringsplicht*). Moreover, even specific groups of naturalised citizens, Dutch nationals in other words, are obliged to take the exam, for example those who receive welfare benefits, or those that practise a religious profession. The original proposal to extend the civic integration duty to a much wider group of Dutch nationals, mainly to overseas citizens from the Netherlands Antilles and Aruba, was dropped after severe criticism from the Council of State. Again, although persons who pass their exam within three years may be reimbursed and those who have still not passed after five years may be fined, it is the 'personal responsibility' of individuals to find and choose an organisation that offers an integration course and to pass the exam.

The effect of these measures on the actual integration of immigrants in the Netherlands remains to be seen. With around 60 per cent of both first and second-generation Turkish and Moroccan immigrants seeking their often low-educated spouses in their country of origin (*Jaarrapport Integratie*, 2005, p. 181), there is widespread acceptance in the Netherlands of the idea that without somehow restricting family reunification, underachieving in education and employment of the largest immigrant groups – Turks, Moroccans and increasingly also Antilleans – will continue. Many critics, however, fear that 'draconian measures' will undermine, rather than stimulate, social cohesion in a country where minority groups already suffer from stigmatisation and discrimination. Some even think that the discursive shift makes 'xenophobia socially acceptable to segments of the middle classes that had [hitherto] resisted the seductions of racism' (van Bruinessen, 2006, p. 1). Leo Lucassen (2005, p. 12) points out that it is precisely their adherence to the Islamic faith that makes Turks and Moroccans much more alien, in fact more 'black', than other groups such as the Surinamese.

At the same time, the number of critics who specifically point to the role of Islam as the main source of the failure to integrate a relatively large group of

the population (there are around one million Muslims in the Netherlands) is still fairly limited. Notwithstanding the surprisingly large electoral gains of Geert Wilders' new Freedom party in the November 2006 elections, on a mainly anti-Islam platform, the consensus attitude from the political establishment has been largely to neglect this new political force. Ayaan Hirsi Ali's calls for an Islamic Enlightenment may have generated an at times fierce public debate, yet there are few signs that her more radical approach to the integration *problematique* has found a large following (and her move to Washington was probably greeted with relief at least by some). Which is not to say that the *communis opinio* is more on the side of those, such as Amsterdam mayor Job Cohen, who believe in the potentially emancipating role of religion (Cohen, 2003). Few are as outspoken as Hirsi Ali (2006, p. 15) in her rejection of Cohen's 'muzz-headed, empty political rhetoric', but Cohen's defence of the 'dynamic force of religion' has been criticised for understating the difficulties related to the role of Islam in current Dutch society. A recent study of the majority population and the Muslim minority shows that indeed 'deep conflicts of values' exist in the Netherlands (Sniderman and Hagendoorn, 2007).

Meanwhile the entry into office of a new government of Christian Democrats, Social Democrats and left-leaning Christian Union has meant at least partly a return to an integration policy that is more in line with stereotypical expectations of the Netherlands. 'I want to use a more conciliatory tone in addressing these problems', said the new Minister for Housing, Communities and Integration in one of her first European speeches (Vogelaar, 2007).² A slightly more relaxed immigration policy may be expected of Prime Minister Jan Peter Balkende and his colleagues, although surely no major shifts away from the current restrictive system. The 'regularisation' of around twenty-five thousand rejected asylum applicants who have been living in the Netherlands since the 1990s was the result of hard bargaining between the reluctant Christian Democrats and their two coalition partners. Underlining the government's intention to 'build bridges' between cultures, two junior ministers have dual citizenship, one Dutch-Moroccan and the other Dutch-Turkish. Ironically, however, precisely this 'multicultural' political novelty gave the Freedom party the opportunity to establish its presence as a powerful newcomer in parliament by putting the issue of conflicting loyalties on the agenda. Pushed by this populist opposition, but also driven by its own integration 'Delta Plan', the fourth Balkenende government will continue the integration policy of the previous three – with a slightly softer touch.

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Notes

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- 1 A censored version of the CD is also available as it may be against the law in some countries to be in the possession of films 'with images of this nature'.
- 2 The integration portfolio moved from the Ministry of Justice to the Ministry of Housing, Spatial Planning and Environment.

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Professor Skinner's Visions

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Skinner, Q. (2002) *Visions of Politics, Volume I: Regarding Method*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Skinner, Q. (2002) *Visions of Politics, Volume II: Renaissance Virtues*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Skinner, Q. (2002) *Visions of Politics, Volume III: Hobbes and Civil Science*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

In 1968, at the age of 27, Quentin Skinner presented at the annual meeting of the British Political Studies Association a paper with a distinctly polemical title, 'The Unimportance of the Great Texts'. Subsequently published under the less provocative title 'Meaning and Understanding in the History of Ideas' (1969) this methodological manifesto for the 'Cambridge school' of the 'new history' of political thought provoked equally polemical replies and earned for its author a reputation as an *enfant terrible* that he has never quite lost. Now in his mid-sixties, Skinner – until recently the Regius Professor of Modern History at the University of Cambridge – is no longer an *enfant*; but he remains rather *terrible*, as we shall see.

Professor Skinner has now collected most, but by no means all, of his major methodological and historical essays which the Cambridge University Press has published as *Visions of Politics*. The title calls to mind several things. The first is the origin of our word 'theory', the Greek *theoria*, which means 'vision' or 'sight' (and thence, with Plato, 'insight' or 'seeing with the mind's eye'). The second resonance is with the titles of two books published at mid-century: Mark Schorer's *The Politics of Vision* (1946), a luminous study of William Blake, and Sheldon Wolin's magisterial *Politics and Vision* (1960; revised and enlarged edition 2004), which (along with many other histories of or commentaries on political thought) came in for a drubbing in Skinner's manifesto. But by 'visions' Skinner means something like the first: angles of vision or perspectives on politics. One of these is the republican vision of self-government, represented by such 'civic humanists' as Cicero and subsequently (and quite differently) by Machiavelli and other Renaissance theorists of republicanism. The other is the authoritarian negation of that vision, represented by Thomas Hobbes, civic republicanism's 'greatest philosophical adversary' (I, p. vii).¹