

An analysis of Freedom Party leader Wilders' solution to the Islam problem by Jan Jaap de Ruiter*

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Dutch right-wing politician Geert Wilders of the anti-Islamic Freedom Party shares his vision of Islam in his 2012 book "Marked for Death: Islam's War Against the West and Me." (Photo: EPA, Fabrizio Bensch)
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The claim that Islam is aiming to conquer the whole world, the West in particular, in order to establish Shariah, is being voiced more strongly than ever.

There are activists, intellectuals and politicians who do not miss a single opportunity to frame this claim and spread it all over the world. Islam, they argue, is not a religion but an aggressive ideology whose supporters subscribe to this hidden or not so hidden agenda. Muslims constitute a threat to world peace, to peace in their own countries, to peace in the West. One of the champions of this so-called discourse of Islamization is Dutch Freedom Party leader Geert Wilders.

In his book "Marked for Death: Islam's War Against the West and Me," which appeared in 2012, Mr. Wilders elaborately presents his vision of Islam. Mr. Wilders is Dutch and so am I. I have been following the advance of his Freedom Party in the Dutch political arena and have published extensively on it. As the book is written in English, with the intention, obviously, of reaching an international audience, I decided to react to it in English as well. The resulting pamphlet, called "The Speck in Your Brother's Eye -- The Alleged War of Islam Against the West," recently appeared.

The pamphlet seeks to counter Mr. Wilders' thoughts, analyses them and discusses their possible consequences. Below, I briefly discuss some of my findings under headings that can be found in the pamphlet as well.

Truth

This is what Wilders has to say on truth: "Armed only with our pens, we must defy Islam's axes and knives. We must continue to speak our minds, knowing there is nothing more powerful than the truth. That is why we write our books and speeches, draw our cartoons, and make our movies and documentaries. The truth will set us free." In this quote, Mr. Wilders presents Islam and the truth as opposites, or to once again put it in his own words: "Islam is one of those evil empires and it too will collapse once people begin telling the truth," (pg. 209). For Mr. Wilders there is only one truth, and that is his truth. While everybody is entitled to their own truth, claiming that one's own truth is the only truth there is, or implying that someone else's is not is a risky business. Denying the truth of the other more than once has been the cause of conflicts and even massacres. But to Wilders it is obvious: "We" own the truth and "they" don't.

Culture

Having been presented with the claim that Islam is evil, one begins to wonder what is good, at least in Wilders' opinion. The following quote illustrates his point of view quite clearly: "When you compare the West to any other culture that exists today, it becomes clear that we are the most pluralistic, humane, democratic, and charitable culture on earth," (pg. 31). Specifying his claim, he refers to the "Judean-Christian civilization," (pg. 31). Here we touch on a sensitive subject. While there may be nothing wrong with considering one's own culture good, explicitly claiming that it is the best, better than any other culture, can be highly dangerous and as history has taught us may have dire consequences.

Considering one's own culture superior necessarily implies considering others' inferior. And if people of these inferior cultures are living amongst you, discrimination and racism are just around the corner. In fact Mr. Wilders acknowledges this when in his last chapter, talking about (Muslim) immigrants in the West, he says: "If you subscribe to our laws and values, you are welcome to stay and enjoy all the rights our society guarantees," (pg. 214). But he also presents the consequences if you do not adapt and abide by these laws: "If you commit crimes, act against our laws, or wage jihad, you will be expelled," (pg. 214). While normally, in a democratic state, those who break the law are fined or jailed, immigrants who break the law are to be expelled. Apparently, there are two different judicial systems operating here, one for "us" and one for "them." This is what representatives of the best culture in the world are going to do with people whose culture is inferior.

Ideology

Mr. Wilders does not consider Islam a religion; it is an ideology and an ideology that is thoroughly evil. Or, in his words: "...Islam is not just a religion, as many Americans believe, but primarily a political ideology in the guise of a religion," (p. 25). "The political ideology of Islam is not moderate -- it is a totalitarian cult with global ambitions." The reasons for labeling Islam an ideology are obvious. The status of a religion is higher than that of an ideology. For many people, the term ideology has a negative connotation. Thus if, as Mr. Wilders does, you label Islam as an ideology, you can place it next to other (objectionable) ideologies such as communism and fascism, for instance, as indeed Mr. Wilders predictably does, and thus provide yourself with an extra argument to label Islam, just like the other two ideologies, as evil. They are ideologies that should not be allowed to exist. And as it turns out, the solution to the precarious Islam problem is to get rid of Islam altogether, to arrive at a situation where it no longer exists.

Solution

It then comes as no surprise that in his book's last chapter, titled "How to Turn the Tide," Mr. Wilders presents his solution to the Islam problem: "If Muslims could liberate themselves from the yoke of Islam, if they would stop taking Muhammad as a role model and if they got rid of the hateful Quran, they would be

able to achieve amazing things,” or, in the same vein: “Muslims must defeat Islam,” (pg. 212). The solution is as easy as can be. Muslims just have to renounce Islam. That is all they need to do. It seems so innocent, but imagine if these ideas were to become part of a political program, to be carried out by a political party in power in a given country. It is a “solution” that can only lead to violence and, in the end, to war. No Muslim is ever going to follow this “compelling advice” and give up his religion.

In his book, Mr. Wilders focuses on the shortcomings of the other, accusing the other of being violent by nature, and he uses words that can easily be interpreted as allowing violence to fight the enemy. He acts in exactly the same way as he perceives his opponent does. He sees the speck in his brother's eye but fails to see the log in his own.

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