

How the RN and PVV used European civilizational discourse after the Charlie Hebdo attacks

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MASTER:	International Relations
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SUPERVISOR:	Dr. John-Harmen Valk
SECOND READER:	
STUDENT:	Nicole van Dijk
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Introduction

In 2005 the publication of cartoons of the Prophet Muhammad in a Danish newspaper made for an intense and emotional worldwide debate about secular values and strong religious beliefs. On the one hand, some appealed to the freedom of speech, while on the other, people believed that no depiction of the sacred Prophet should be allowed. The discussion around the issue was framed as an “incommensurable divide between strong religious beliefs and secular values” (Mahmood 2009, 64). The specific debate surrounding the Muhammad cartoons was repeated in 2015 after the terrorist attacks in France in January of that year. Part of the reason for the attacks was the cartoon depiction of the Prophet Muhammad in Charlie Hebdo, a French satirical weekly magazine. In these Muhammed cartoon debates, many right-wing populist parties made use of the ‘Islamic threat’ to posit Europe and Islam as ‘us vs. them’ and fuel animosity against European Muslims (see for example Kaya and Tecmen 2019). In fact, this kind of thinking seems to be part of a larger narrative concerning European civilizational identity, of which modern, liberal and secularist values are the defining features. These values, then, are said to be inherently incompatible with Islam, which is seen as theocratic, backward and conservative. European right-wing populist parties have made ample use of this European civilizational narrative in their discourse and in many cases quite successfully won votes (Haynes 2019, 1-2, 5). Therefore, the rise of populism in the West can be attributed to clever identity politics, like creating a narrative of Europe and the nation people can identify with, together with the introduction and success of new social media.

The argument that new social media increasingly play a role in shaping public debates is at the heart of this thesis as “the media and society have grown together into a mutually indispensable and interdependent entity” (Mazzoleni 2014, 42). Social media have penetrated society very deeply as can be seen in the increasingly higher amount of users and the increasing number of social media platforms that exist. It is said that social media have made it easier for politicians to communicate their message and influence potential voters, hence the success of those parties who utilize social media appropriately. The utility of social media (for politics) has been widely debated in recent years, alongside its democratic potential (see for example: Gerbaudo 2015; Lassen and Brown 2014; Nillsson and Carlsson 2014; Van Kessel and Castelein 2016).

It is no coincidence that social media are particularly suitable for populist rhetoric, as they rose to power more or less at the same time in many instances. Both successes stress the advantages of social media for politicians to communicate their message and influence potential voters, as well as social media's democratic nature. There are several reasons why populism and social media fit together so perfectly, which the thesis will come back to later in this introduction (also argued by for example Bartlett, Birdwell and Littler 2001; Gerbaudo 2015; Mazzoleni 2014).

One can expect a discourse, like the European civilization discourse that was shortly described earlier, to be much more persistent and powerful because social media and society have grown into a 'mutually indispensable and interdependent entity'. A discourse on social media can reach millions of users in their everyday lives without much of a choice. Therefore, this thesis aims to research European civilization discourse, so often used by right-wing populist parties, on the social media of those parties during the Muhammad cartoon debates that followed the 2015 terrorist attacks in France. This thesis will answer the following specific research question: To what end was European civilizational (EC) discourse used on social media by right-wing populist parties in the debates that followed the 2015 Charlie Hebdo attacks?

Right-wing populist parties and their discourse have been analyzed and researched in many other instances (see for example: Brubaker 2017; Kaya and Tecmen 2019; Lähdesmäki 2015; Yilmaz 2011; Yilmaz 2012). However, focusing specifically on populist right-wing discourse on social media in addition to focusing on EC discourse, is a rather new angle. Some publication on populism and social media exist, like *The New Face of Digital Populism* (Bartlett, Birdwell and Littler 2001; other examples are Gerbaudo 2015; Mazzoleni 2014), but these do not focus on discourse. This thesis will contribute to both these pools of literature surrounding (right-wing) populism and discourse, and populism and social media.

Researching how right-wing populist parties used a European civilization discourse on social media in the debates that followed the 2015 Charlie Hebdo attacks in France will be done by looking at Twitter publications of the Rassemblement National (National Rally, RN, formerly known as Front National)¹ in France and the Partij voor de Vrijheid (Party for Freedom, PVV) in the Netherlands. Populist parties are chosen mostly because their rhetoric

¹ The thesis will always name the party Rassemblement National (RN) even though at the time of the attacks it was still Front National (FN).

is particularly well suited for social media. Firstly, social media are platforms on which populist parties can easily and very directly reach 'the people': the silent majority being suppressed by the 'corrupt ruling elite' (Lassen and Brown 2011; Nilsson and Carlsson 2014, 656). Furthermore, all can participate more or less equally on social media and, therefore, they allow the possibility of expression for marginalized groups (Nilsson and Carlsson 2014, 656; based on Lanlois et al. 2009), who for populists are made up of the aforementioned silent majority. However, whether all people in society truly have the same equal access to using social media can be debated (Evans 2013; Nilsson and Carlsson 2014, 667; based on Tucker 2007). Secondly, social media and populism fit together perfectly because populist parties fare well in a social media climate where one can easily critique others.

Uncoincidentally, a second defining feature of populist parties is that they show antagonism towards the 'corrupt ruling elite', which is mostly done by criticizing the elite's policies (Mudde 2004, 543). On social media one can more easily publish unambiguous messages, as compared to traditional media that often aim to be more nuanced (Van Kessel and Castelein 2016, 596). Furthermore, social media allow populist parties to bypass the, in their view, subjective traditional media (Van Kessel and Castelein 2016, 601). Thirdly, social media have the potential to be very interactive, especially compared to traditional media. Social media have a focus on the sensational which will draw in more people through more shares, likes or retweets.² It is often a strategy of populist parties to be non-conformative to show they are separate from the corrupt ruling elite as well as 'normal' and on the side of 'the people', using social media's inclination to focus on the sensational.

Furthermore, populist parties put forward a clearly delineated image of whom constitute the nation. Both the RN and PVV are from states that have had difficulty in dealing with 'controversial' immigrants from Muslim-majority countries, unlike many other European states. Therefore, one can expect the EC discourse to be particularly visible in outings of these right-wing populist parties in the debate that erupted after the attacks. France has many Muslim immigrants, or descendants of Muslim immigrants, living in the country mostly from former colonies, like Algeria. The Netherlands, on the other hand, have a Muslim minority comprising of 'gastarbeiders' (guestworkers) who came to temporarily work in Dutch factories because of personnel shortages. However, most of those who came

² Tweets are posts made on twitter. Retweets are tweets that are shared again by others.

to the Netherlands as ‘gastarbeiders’ never left the country again and came to live in the Netherlands permanently, often flying in their extended families. Even though this happened in the 1960s and 1970s, and it has been three generations, prejudice, and fear of Islam, especially, persist.

There are also other particular individual reasons why the thesis focuses on these specific European right-wing populist parties. The choice for RN stems from the fact that Islam and Muslims are made as scapegoat by RN’s stance to protect national culture and the French language from homogenization, globalization and the influence of the European Union (Kaya and Tecmen 2019, 53; see also Mondon 2014, 308-311). So Islam is used by the RN to define themselves against: Islam is seen as a threat to true French culture and its secular way of life (the French *laïcisme*) (Kaya and Tecmen 2019, 53). Moreover, the attacks happened in France, and, thus, had the biggest impact on France and French society. Therefore, one can expect a larger amount of reactions from politicians, news outlets and ordinary citizens as people feel more directly concerned and threatened.

Other reasons for looking at the PVV include that the party’s main focus is on the perceived threat of Islam (Lähdesmäki 2015, 72; Kaya and Tecmen 2019, 55; Vossen 2011). The party’s leader, Geert Wilders, is known for his unambiguous language against Islam: he even goes as far to call Islam a fascist ideology (DeLandtsheer, Kalkhoven and Broen 2011, 5; based on Volkskrant 2017). Furthermore, Wilders is a very competent and convincing political speaker and many have analyzed his words as he cleverly uses metaphors (e.g. ‘tsunami of Islamization’), hyperboles and his own inventions (e.g. ‘Hollandistan’), among other things (Van Leeuwen 2009, 6-9; Kuitenbrouwer 2010, 96-97). Therefore, it will be interesting to specifically look at his words and the ways in which he is inventive in creating his anti-Islamic, pro-European civilizational discourse. Yet there is another for choosing the PVV: the Netherlands has a relatively large proportion of social media users in comparison to other European states (Jacobs and Spierings 2016, 13-14; Van Kessel and Castelein 2016, 598). Dutch political actors also are increasingly on social media because of this relatively large audience. Therefore, one can expect the PVV to be actively spreading their ideas and rhetoric on social media following the Charlie Hebdo attacks.

This thesis will conclude about these two European populist parties that they use the EC discourse to justify the existence of their parties by either stressing French values (RN) or by antagonizing Muslims in several ways (PVV). However, the parties also differ in to what

end they use the EC discourse. In the case of RN the discourse is used to show indirect as well as direct moral antagonism towards Muslims, to define what Europe stands for and to create a moral panic inciting prejudice against a certain part of the population. In the case of the PVV, on the other hand, the EC discourse is used to create a coherent story corresponding to the main axis of the PVV: Islam as threat to the Netherlands/Europe. Talking pejoratively about Islam and Muslims creates direct (moral) antagonism and a binary of the Dutch/European vs. Islam. The PVV stresses Muslims are violent and 'our opponents' in a war of cultures/civilizations, which creates a moral panic within society. A certain part of the population is demonized and the PVV wants this to become 'normal' to achieve hegemony and eventually be able to introduce more radical measures pertaining Islam.

The abovementioned conclusions will be gotten to by, first, looking at the literature that has been published around the idea of EC discourse. It will connect the themes of the Muhammad cartoon debates with the themes of EC discourse and populism more concretely, building on the connections made in the introduction. In this chapter it will become clear that EC discourse has several features, namely: appealing to western/European values, talking negatively about Muslims and Islam, implying a connection between Muslim or Islam and violence, and talking about a clash/war of cultures/civilizations. The second chapter of this thesis will introduce and further explain the method that will be used for analysis. It will explain what critical discourse analysis is and introduce criteria to test the tweets with. The third and fourth chapter of this thesis are the chapters concerning the case studies. The third will focus on the tweets of RN, while the fourth directs its attention to the tweets of the PVV.

Chapter 1: Literature Review & Theoretical Framework

The Muhammad cartoon debates and European civilizational discourse

The debates that followed the attacks in 2015 echoed the debates that followed the publication of cartoons of Prophet Muhammad in a Danish newspaper in 2005. In both these debates there were two clear sides: those who called the caricature of the Prophet Muhammad blasphemy and those who defended the liberal value of freedom of speech. EC discourse is positioned on the freedom of speech side of the debate, and, therefore, has several features that will be alluded to throughout this chapter. Firstly, it appeals to the values of Western liberal democracies like freedom of speech or secularism. Secondly, EC discourse addresses Islam and its adherents offensively because they do not agree with these progressive Western ideas. Since Islam seems to be incompatible with European values, relations between Europe and Islam are characterized by conflict and violence. Together with the attacks of Muslim extremists since the 2000s this gives reason to label Islam and its adherents as violent, which is a third feature. Lastly, difficult relations between Islam and Europe, together with the labelling of Islam as violent, leads to thinking of a clash of civilizations between the two groups.

These four features will flow from looking at the debate following the attack in more depth, outlining the two sides in more detail and showing the ambiguities involved. As the two sides of the debate are about cultural differences that cannot be easily reconciled, the debate echoes the idea of a 'clash of civilizations'. However, this idea can be criticized on many grounds revealing how the discourse makes a certain historical narrative seem logical or a certain value seem natural. This then allows the thesis to make conclusions about what the discourse is constituted of.

One of the reasons for the Charlie Hebdo was that from 2005 till the terrorist attacks of 2015, but also after this, the satirical newspaper has repeatedly mocked Islam in several ways. Charlie Hebdo is, in fact, known for being very strongly opinionated and publishing secularist, anti-religious and left-wing cartoons, reports and jokes. On 7 January 2015, the

satirical newspaper was attacked: twelve people were killed and another twelve wounded (BBC 2015). These attacks were connected to further attacks on January 8, where two people were shot in a Parisian suburb, and on January 9, when the perpetrators attacked an industrial estate and a kosher supermarket and held several people hostage (BBC 2015). The Charlie Hebdo attacks were officially claimed by Al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula, however, doubt remains as to whether it was not ISIS as one attacker claimed to belong to ISIS.

After the shooting when more became known about the perpetrators as well as the victims more or less the same polemical debate as in 2005 took place. The debate consisted of two opposing poles strongly ingrained with certain moral values, making the debate quite heated. Because one is talking about moral values, many people felt personally attacked and poured all their emotions into it. On the one hand, there were those who called the caricature of the Prophet Muhammad blasphemy. Islam has a strong tradition of aniconism: depiction of the sacred prophet Muhammad is virtually unheard of in Islam. For them, it follows that it is insensitive to make and publish a cartoon depiction of the Prophet Muhammad, but it becomes even more insensitive when one is aware of the fact that Muslims personally identify with Muhammad. Prophet Muhammad is everything you want to be in life as a Muslim: he is the prophet chosen by Allah, thus sacred, and a moral exemplar (Mahmood 2009, 75-76). What seems to be at stake here is indeed different normative conceptions of subject, religion and law, which was also concluded by Saba Mahmood who analyzed the controversy and tried to go beyond the camps of “secular necessity and religious threat” (Mahmood 2009, 65). In the (Protestant) West people make a clear distinction between subject and object while in many other parts of the world, where other religions than Christianity prevail, subject and object are one, just like is the case with prophet Muhammad. Another different normative conception is that in the West religion is viewed and defined more generally as a choice and something private, which is not applicable in the same way to Islam (Mahmood 2009, 71-74).

On the other side of the debate, there were those who saw the cartoon depictions of the Prophet Muhammad as a characteristic act of freedom of expression, especially satirical expression, fundamental to liberal democracies. For them, the insulted reactions of Muslims proves that Muslims are backwards and do not fit into Western society. According to Ferruh Yilmaz, who unlike Mahmood analyzed the result of the controversy rather than the debate itself, the debates have led to an important victory for populist parties. Yilmaz argues that

the Islamophobic discourse of right-wing populist parties has led to a hegemonic intervention (Yilmaz 2011). This is when a certain discourse becomes leading and meaning becomes fixed. The populist right sees society as harmonious and homogeneous which is being threatened by an unknown and incompatible culture. This view has been taken over by all parties, including parties from the left (Yilmaz 2011, 8). Therefore, it has become normal and natural to demonize a certain part of the population, the Muslims, in the cartoon debate through the hegemonic intervention. That the idea that Islam is incompatible with European values has become hegemonic can also be seen in the immigration debate, for example. It has been illustrated that 'cimmigration' (criminalization of immigration)³ has taken place (Maneri 2011; Parkin 2013; Stumpf 2006). The political establishment from left to right has created an image of the migrant as criminal threat because of his/her otherness, resulting in criminalization of immigration.

A clash of civilizations?

The heated polemical debate about the Muhammad cartoons received a lot of attention in the media for a longer period of time. The cartoon controversy received a lot of attention in the academia as well; many books and papers have been published on the Muhammad cartoon controversy by a set of diverse scholars (Hansen 2006; O'Leary 2006; Hull 2009; Hussain 2007; Mahmood 2009; Yilmaz 2011). However, scholars writing on the cartoon controversy were unable to escape, albeit sometimes indirectly, supporting one of the camps (also stated by Yilmaz 2011, 9-12; illustrated by for example Hansen 2006 and Carens 2006). It seemed that both camps kept tightly to their views and no compromise was possible. Because of this polemical, unchanging nature of the debate, it echoes the self-fulfilling prophecy of a 'clash of civilizations' once hypothesized by Samuel Huntington (1996). In the Muhammad cartoon debate the different opinions can be explained as reflecting differences between cultures or civilizations that cannot be simply overcome.

This idea of cultures and/or civilizations clashing developed during the 1990s. After the collapse of the Soviet Union and the brief period of what seemed to be unipolarity and American hegemony, scholars like Huntington and Francis Fukuyama painted a grim picture for the relationship between Islam and Western liberal states. Huntington, building on the

³ Term originally coined by Juliet Stumpf (Stumpf 2006, 378).

work of Bernard Lewis (Lewis 1990), put forward the 'clash of civilizations' theory hypothesizing that conflict in the post-Cold War era would not be economic or ideological, but cultural (Huntington 1993; expanded in Huntington 1996). Therefore, civilizations would clash. Particularly the West and Islam would clash because, according to Huntington, Islamic Extremism is the biggest threat to the West due to their complicated historic relations (Huntington 1993, 31-34). Furthermore, religion would be the main force that mobilizes people, according to Huntington, as religion is the glue that holds civilizations together (Huntington 1996, 63). Fukuyama, although less directly concerned with Islam, hypothesized that no more ideological evolution was possible and that Western liberal democracies would be established all around the world as the best option of government we have (Fukuyama 1992). An often heard criticism to this hypothesis is that it does not take into account the power of cultural identities as counterforce to this universalizing Western way of governing. Huntington and Fukuyama's work together with Benjamin Barber's 'jihad vs. McWorld' (Barber 1995) all reinforced the image that Islam and Muslim society are supposedly incompatible with western values like liberty, democracy, human rights etcetera.

Even though this clash of civilizations idea seems to be very well embedded in the West from debates about banning the hijab to debates about taking in refugees from Muslim majority states, many scholars have questioned the European civilizational narrative that is ever so often juxtaposed with 'Islamic civilization'. For example, Jalal al 'Azm provides critique against the idea that Western liberal values, like secularism, democracy or the freedom of speech seem to be incompatible with Islamic thought. 'Azm argues that it is mostly through American hegemony that these values have come to form "today's compelling and pervasive normative paradigm on all matters pertaining to rights, citizenship, human dignity, democracy, civil society, government accountability and so on" ('Azm 2014, 7). 'Azm also clearly argues why it is unfair to create an 'us vs. them' distinction with, on the one side, the unchanging liberal West, and on the other, the static backward theocratic East. He says the two categories are static, a-historical and exclusive ('Azm 2014, 9). Instead one should think of Western and Islamic values as ever changing social constructions. Moreover, one should think of Islam in the plural (i.e. Islams) since there are many different denominations (e.g. Sunni, Shi'ite and Sufi) and many different individual interpretations.

'Azm similarly thinks that the clash of civilizations theory, by which the EC discourse was inspired, is based on unfair distinctions as well as incorrect generalizations. On the topic he states that Huntington uses the classical orientalist essentialism that Edward Said dismantled in his book *Orientalism* about twenty years earlier ('Azm 2014, 23; Said 1978).

Another critique on the EC discourse comes from Talad Asad who, unlike 'Azm, is more concerned about the content and logic of the discourse rather than the epistemology behind it. Asad asserts there is a discourse of European identity and has critiqued this by laying bare the logic behind it (Asad 2002, 211). To unpack the logic of the discourse Asad looks critically at the narrative of Europe most Europeans recognize themselves in, especially pertaining history. In the EC discourse Europe is not merely seen as a continent, but indeed as a civilization. Asad claims about European civilization that "[...] real Europeans acquire their individual identities from the character of their civilization. Without that civilizational essence, individuals living within Europe are unstable and ambiguous" (Asad 2002, 217). It is for this reason that the discourse insists that there is something the whole civilization of Europe shares, like a certain heritage: the Roman Empire, Christianity, the Enlightenment and/or Industrialization (Asad 2002, 214). It is also precisely those things that comprise the heritage that are seen as unique prestigious achievements of the West that one can be proud of. Exemplary in this case, is how secularism has come to be defined as a cultural achievement that developed out of a critical juncture in history (i.e. the Peace of Westphalia after the European wars of religion) as a famous common narrative goes (Hurd 2008, 29; Juergensmeyer 1994). Or as Calhoun, Juergensmeyer and Van Antwerpen state in their introduction that "a grand narrative involving secularism" is essential to the "spread of modernization" and "the historical path of Euro-American progress" (Calhoun, Juergensmeyer and Van Antwerpen 2011, 6). Secularism is connected to modernity and seen as one of the greatest achievements of Euro-American society. However, there is also the pretense that secularism and other values like liberal democracy are universally applicable. In the case of secularism, Elizabeth S. Hurd has argued against this universalism. She has coined the term 'Judeo-Christian secularism' as according to Hurd secularism has too many of its roots in a Western European context to be universally applicable (Hurd 2004). Secularism was a solution to a several European problems: the church had too much power and European sectarianism led to too many wars (Calhoun, Juergenmeyer and Van

Antwerpen 2011, 7). This is one of the reasons why in recent years scholars have increasingly argued that secularism is a colored worldview like any other and that modern secular nation-states, therefore, fail to understand religion (e.g. Hurd 2004; Calhoun, Juergenmeyer and Van Antwerpen 2011). In the process, modern secular nation states hurt minority religions, like Islam, seemingly incompatible with this value.

To define the European civilization it should also be clear what falls outside it. For this reason European civilizational history has been set off against 'non-Europe' and, specifically, Islam. In this history certain times and spaces are often excluded while others are stressed, for example think of lack of mention, or disinterest in, Muslim Spain or Eastern Europe (Asad 2002, 216). When it comes to Islam it is also interesting that the Holy Wars are put forward as one of the only moments in history in which European civilization met with Islam. This can be illustrated by the work of Bernard Lewis who researches Islam and the West but mainly points at all the conflict between the two, like was the case in the Holy Wars (Lewis 1993, 3-42; Lewis 1990). This account of European history does not look at how many enlightenment thinkers were inspired by Muslim scholars or how Greeks were very much influenced by Egypt etc. It is a very one-sided European account to create a consistent narrative as the victors in which modernity, Christianity and values like secularism are intertwined. Through analyzing history, Asad has laid bare how the EC discourse forms a coherent entity even though certain historical facts are misrepresented.

Right-wing populist parties and their (European) identity politics

In the civilizational narrative of how the West came to achieve 'secularism,' and came to be on top of the moral hierarchy, there is a special role for Islam, namely as 'them' in the 'us vs. them' distinction creating European identity. As mentioned above, the idea of 'secularism' is not innocent, but a carrier of a certain European history with certain Judeo-Christian values. Even though anything not stemming from this specific context would be incompatible and could serve as 'them' in the distinction, in our particular day and age it is Islam that makes most sense. In identity formation it is essential to create a self-image in relation to the world around you. Therefore, in this process of identity formation a logic of difference is employed which results in creation of an 'us vs. them' binary (Laclau and Mouffe 2001). It has been a fact that many European countries have seen an immense

increase in Muslim migrants settling in their country in the last few decades with their peculiar different ways of life. This together with the fear that has been created by Muslim extremists has led many to define Islam and Muslims as scapegoat, as their 'them'. The 'us' in the distinction can also be thought of as an "imagined community", coined by Anderson (Anderson 1983). The nation is an imagined community, a social construction of a certain people who belong together.

However, when it comes to identity formation it should be mentioned that identities are ambiguous and multilayered in nature and one person can hold different kind of identities at any point in time (think of territorial and social identity), which identity is invoked depends on the context (Lähdesmäki 2014, 77; Risse 2003, 76-77).

Those who play the game of identity politics very well, and make ample use of the EC discourse, are European right-wing populist parties. In recent years, the influence of populism and populist parties in Europe has grown immensely and so has the use of the civilizational narrative. Populism, as defined by Cas Mudde is "an ideology that considers society to be ultimately separated into two homogeneous and antagonistic groups, 'the pure people' versus 'the corrupt elite', and which argues that politics should be an expression of the *volonté générale* (general will) of the people"(Mudde 2004, 543). However, as populism is considered a thin-centered ideology it is always combined with another set of ideas and ideals and is a phenomenon observed on both sides of the political left-right spectrum (Mudde 2004, 544; Canovan 2002). A distinctive type of organization, i.e. charismatic leadership, and an exceptional style of communication, i.e. direct communication without intermediaries, are other characteristics of populism (Mudde 2004, 544-545). A populist party, and especially its leader, tries to set itself apart from the ruling elites and represent the average (wo)man who may not be able to understand complex political issues. Of particular importance in populist communication is, therefore, rhetoric. Rhetoric helps construct and mobilize populist parties (Lähdesmäki 2014, 75-76; based on Laclau 2005). A populist rhetoric is often described as depending on "affective, emotive and metaphoric language; polarization; simplifications; stereotypification; vague expressions; perceiving threats, faults and enemies; and it appeals to 'cultural commonplaces' (i.e. shared physical places of more abstract sentimental areas of cultural meaning which need no justification and cannot be rationalized)"(Lähdesmäki 2014, 75-76; partly based on Thévenot

2011). The essence of populist discursive strategies is a 'discourse of the people'. The idea of the people is ambiguous and flexible but any idea involving 'the people' populist parties claim to represent implicitly, or explicitly, constructs the idea of what a nation is constituted of.

Instead of coming with alternatives populist parties tend to stress what they are against. All European right-wing populist parties seem to clearly be against things, for example, they are often anti-globalist, anti-capitalist, anti-elitist, anti-intellectual and anti-European. However, it should be noted that European right-wing populist parties differ in their exact focus, populist right-wing parties in France focus on anti-European Union sentiment in protection of unique French culture (Kaya and Tecmen 2019, 53; see also Mondon 2014, 308-311), while parties in the Netherlands focus more on the perceived threat of Islam (Lähdesmäki 2015, 72). Therefore, anti-Islamic elements of right-wing populist discourse can be stronger in one country than in another. However, Islamophobic elements in European right-wing populist discourse seem to be universal because Islam is such a convenient 'scapegoat' to define itself against. In European right-wing populist discourse, Islam indeed is often 'them' to define 'us' (Lähdesmäki 2014; Kaya and Tecmen 2015; Brubaker 2017).

This negative sentiment concerning Islam also comes forward in the four features of EC discourse. These elements flowed from looking at the critiques issued on the part of EC discourse to see what the discourse takes for granted. The four features are: appealing to values of Western liberal democracies, addressing Islam and its adherents offensively, associating Islam and its adherents with conflict and crime, and thinking of relations between Islam and Europe in terms of a clash of civilizations. These elements will be further elaborated in the next chapter to serve as criteria for the analysis.

Chapter 2: Methodology

Methodology for critically analyzing European civilizational discourse

As was talked about in the first chapter, the EC discourse has become part of European right-wing populist parties' rhetoric. Discourse refers to how language (spoken and written) and visual and verbal images structure the way we think about things and act upon them (Rose 2016, 187; Nead 1988, 4). It provides specific knowledge about how the world is shaped and understood and makes this specific perspective seem natural. Hence, discourse disciplines subjects into thinking certain things or doing certain things (Rose 2016, 189; based on Foucault 1977 and Foucault 1979). Consequently, discursive practices are often connected to relations of power and the struggle over power in a society because discursive practices are ideologically shaped and allow the subject to do certain things, but also not do others (Fairclough 1995). For this reason, the most interesting cases of discourse analysis focus on power abuse and the resulting injustice and inequality and is named 'critical discourse analysis' in the literature (Van Dijk 1993, 252). A normal discourse analysis would look at and analyze what people say from a linguistic perspective, but a critical discourse analysis also looks at who is saying it, for what purpose, to whom and in which context. In this way, it also analyzes the power structures that are shaping the discourse. Discourse does not only have power in influencing the kinds of actions available to other people, but it may also influence their minds (Van Dijk 1993, 254).

A European civilization discourse, then, is a discourse that takes for granted whom Europe belongs to and what Europe stands for. It influences the way in which we think about non-Europe and particularly things like immigration, religions other than Christianity and Judaism, political systems other than liberal democracies etc. The discourse puts forward a particular understanding of European identity and a particular understanding of what falls outside of it. Everyone can ascribe a certain meaning to what it means to be European. It can be the sharing of a certain heritage or can be thought of as being part of the EU. It is true that it remains a bit vague what this European identity is constituted of exactly and that this may mean other things to other people. Tuuli Lähdesmäki argues that European identity is in

essence an ambiguous concept, but that this makes it a useful rhetorical tool for (populist) politicians (Lähdesmäki 2014, 83).

Discourse, defined in political theory by Laclau and Mouffe, has a similar meaning to the more cultural definition described above and stands for creating a web of meaning within a particular domain (Laclau and Mouffe 2001). Trying to fix a meaning within a particular domain involves power. A certain meaning has to become 'hegemonic', ruling out all other meanings, which happens through a political relationship of power that occurs as an articulation within political discourse (Laclau 1990). However, before a certain meaning becomes leading, there is a struggle between discourses for hegemony which creates a 'floating signifier' (Laclau 1990, 70-71; Laclau 2005, 133). This means that the meaning of a certain something is not yet fixed and several meanings can be ascribed to it. An example of a floating signifier is 'democracy' as it is open for different political definition and discourses (also mentioned by Nilsson and Carlsson 2014, 659). There are different antagonistic discourses trying to fix the meaning. Think of indirect democracy and referendums, for instance. European identity seems to be another one of those 'floating signifiers' since many people ascribe different meanings to European identity.

However, interestingly, elsewhere it has been argued that right-wing populist parties have carried out a hegemonic intervention in the immigration debate, which would mean meaning has been fixed for European identity (Yilmaz 2011; Yilmaz 2012). Since the 1980s European populist right-wing parties have intervened in the immigration debate and used an exclusionary discourse based on culture that has become widely used as Yilmaz argues (Yilmaz 2012 368-370, 375). This culturalization of discourse by the right-wing populist parties has made Muslim immigrants the scapegoat to serve as their 'them' in their 'us vs. them' as also described in the previous chapter (Yilmaz 2012 368-370, 375). Therefore, the intervention helps in defining 'us', the Europeans, as well.

What is so worrying about this shift is that we clearly see that immigration, culture and religion have become central issues for all mainstream parties, also for left-wing and more progressive parties (Yilmaz 2012, 376). Many debates surrounding Islam and Islamic practices such as the Muhammed cartoons, the 9/11 terrorist attacks and the hijab and burka bans, are used as 'moral panics'. During a moral panic, a certain section of the population is said to behave unacceptably and is therefore seen as a threat to the well-being, basic values, and interests of society as a whole (Yilmaz 2011, 16; Goode and Ben-

Yehuda 1994, 31). A moral panic has as function to demonize a certain part of the population, which is done in the case of right-wing populist discourse by demonizing Islam and Muslim immigrants during these debates surrounding Islam and Islamic practices. By consistently creating moral panics and demonizing Islamic society, the populist right has created carried out a hegemonic intervention according to Yılmaz (Yılmaz 2011, 8-14): a certain commonsensical vision of Islam and its adherents as different and dangerous. In the process they have defined 'us', the Europeans, as the exact opposite of anything Islamic.

The EC discourse will be analyzed through the method of critical discourse analysis described above as a qualitative data analysis. The thesis will look at tweets of the PVV and RN between 7 January and 7 February 2015 when all details about the victims, perpetrators and preparations were known. Then, the tweets will be qualitatively analyzed according to the criteria set up later in this chapter. These criteria are based on information from the first chapter as well as discourse analysis theory described above. The results will ultimately provide an answer to the research question to what end right-wing populist parties used EC discourse in the debates that followed the 2015 Charlie Hebdo attacks.

The analysis will first and foremost look at the party leaders and give these relatively more weight.⁴ The choice for attributing more weight to the Twitter publications of the party leaders is twofold. First of all, as said, populist parties depend very much on their charismatic leaders, more so than with ordinary parties. Therefore, it make sense to look at those central figures of the party. Secondly, the choice for looking at the party leaders is practical as the PVV as a party does not have a Twitter account and the RN account has relatively few followers.

As a second part of the analysis of tweets of the two populist parties, the thesis will look at secondary members of the PVV and RN. The choice which member to analyze was based on looking at members with the highest functions within the party (across the multiple layers of government), the ones with highest amount of democratic votes in elections or being the longest serving members of the party. The selected members of the party are relatively important and, therefore, are expected to be active on Twitter and also use the EC discourse. Furthermore, using tweets from secondary members allows for more

⁴ Geert Wilders' account: @geertwilderspvv. Marine le Pen's account: @MLP_officiel.

data to be analyzed. The selection of secondary members for the PVV is relatively bigger because tweets per member are fewer for members of the PVV. More members were thus selected to make the two cases more comparable.

For the RN the following members were selected, next to Marine le Pen: Nicolas Bay and Florian Philippot.⁵ Bay was selected because he was member of the FNJ (Front national de la Jeunesse) from a young age and because he was the face for the RN campaigns for the regional elections in Normandy in 2015 (Le point, n.d.). Philippot was chosen for his high-ranking functions within the party: he is vice-president of the party since 2012 and in the European Parliament since 2014 (France culture, n.d.).

For the PVV the following members were selected next to Geert Wilders⁶: Fleur Agema, Martin Bosma, Marjolein Faber, Alexander van Hattem, Machiel de Graaf and Marcel de Graaff.⁷ Agema and Bosma, both in the Tweede Kamer, have been with the party since its birth in 2006 and are, therefore, relatively important (De Vries and Visser 2012). Furthermore, Bosma has been described as the ‘inventor’ of the ideology of the PVV since he is a very competent speaker and has written quite some of Wilders’ speeches since 2006 (Korteweg 2015). Faber and Van Hattem are in the Eerste Kamer (Dutch Senate). Next to being in the Eerste Kamer, Faber and Van Hattem have several other functions within the party. Faber is chairman of the PVV fraction of one of the Eastern provinces of the Netherlands and Van Hattem is member of the Provinciale Staten (States-Provincial). Also of importance for this selection was the fact that Faber has had bad news coverage questioning her integrity a couple of times but still remains an important long lasting member of the PVV and that Van Hattem was very much loved by the public as he was very low on the list during elections but still ended up in the Eerste Kamer (Meyer 2015).

Another selected member, Machiel de Graaf, was in the Eerste Kamer for the PVV as well, but is now serving in the Tweede Kamer (Volkskrant 2012). He also used to be part of the city council of The Hague for the PVV.

The last member that was selected, Marcel de Graaff, has been one of the main members of the European Parliament for the PVV.

⁵ Their Twitter accounts: @NicolasBay_ and @f_philippot.

⁶ Their Twitter accounts: @FleurAgemaPVV, @Martinbosma_PVV, @pvvfaber, @AWJAVanHattem, @GraafdeMachiel and @MJRLdeGraaff.

⁷ The names of Machiel de Graaf and Marcel de Graaff will be written in full to avoid confusion

As said, the tweets of the above mentioned members between 7 January and 7 February 2015 will be analyzed on to what extent they fulfill several criteria. These tweets can easily be found through using the Twitter Advanced Search option.⁸ The tweets that were used in the analysis section can be found in the Appendix in the original language⁹ and in the order that they were discussed. Even though the translations were carried out with utmost care, translated tweets can obtain a slightly different meaning or slightly different connotations for the reader. Furthermore it should be taken into account that French tweets were selected by a non-native speaker, which is slightly limiting because one can miss certain meanings or misinterpret leading to (non-)selection.

A further limitation occurs in the time frame. Later in 2015 in both countries there would be regional elections. This means that both parties are concerned about winning votes more so than in years without elections. This influences how active the populist parties are on Twitter and could possibly also influence what criteria they fulfill most.

The tweets will be analyzed on four criteria. Even though certain (discursive) functions are attributed per criterion theoretically, these may overlap in practice. The four criteria are:

1. *Appeal to Western and/or European values like freedom of speech, freedom of expression, secularism, liberalism, modernity, democracy.*

EC discourse puts forward a certain idea of what European identity is. Part of this identity are certain values. The values mentioned here were the ones that came forward by the first chapter's research into the Muhammad cartoon debates and its critics. They follow from the fact that EC discourse is situated on the side of defending freedom of speech and secularism. Generally these values are connected to a broader narrative concerning modernity and understood as universal values to which the whole world eventually has to comply. It reflects the secularism as cultural achievement narrative said to be of paramount importance for modernization and showpiece of Euro-American progress (Hurd 2008, 29; Juergensmeyer 1994; Calhoun, Juergensmeyer and Van Antwerpen 2011, 6). In this narrative Euro-American progress has led to the adoption of liberalism, of democracies, of secularism,

⁸ <https://twitter.com/search-advanced?lang=en>

⁹ All tweets were carefully translated by me, always taking into account context as much as possible. However, the appendix only contains tweets without direct external links or videos.

and has made these states modern.

However, as indicated in this chapter, European identity can be seen as a floating signifier and whether all would appeal to this exact narrative and these exact values to the same extent is questionable. If most of the tweets fulfill this criterion it means that the discourse has not been successful in achieving hegemony. If the discourse was hegemonic it would be common sense what European civilizational identity stands for.

This criterion, then, is used to the end of trying to achieve hegemony. If populist parties are consistent in their appeal to certain values, people may come to accept that these values are what Europe stands for. Next to this, this specific criterion serves to stress the uniqueness of Western values and shows indirect moral antagonism to those who do not agree with these values.

2. *Say something negative about Islam or Islamic values. For example, it may be called backward, conservative, barbaric, or theocratic.*

As European identity is squared with values such as unconditional freedom of speech or liberal democracy, it disciplines people into thinking of people or countries not living up to these values in a negative light. As became clear from the research into the Muhammad cartoon debates in the previous chapter Muslims would call the cartoons blasphemy and indeed would not fully embrace a value like freedom of speech. Even though European identity is a floating signifier and different meanings can be ascribed to it, it is clear there is no place for Islam in all these different imaginations because of a perceived clash in values. When the main axis of non-Europe is constituted by Islam and Muslims are seen as 'threat' from within as well as without European nation-states, one can see the 'us vs. them' binary at play. The binary is especially prevalent in the rhetoric of populist parties since they tend to stress what they are against instead of coming up with alternatives and since they have a clearly delineated image of who belongs to the nation. Therefore, populist parties use this criterion to bring across what they are against and to define who belongs to the nation/ who 'the people' are. Furthermore, using this value they show direct moral antagonism.

3. *Imply a connection between Muslims, Muslim immigration or Islam, and conflict, crime, violence or security threats.*

Since Islam seems to be incompatible with progressive European values, relations between Europe and Islam are said to be characterized by conflict and violence (Asad 2002; Lewis 1990; Lewis 1993; Huntington 1993). Of course, the EC discourse would not label Europe as violent, but its main antagonist. Contributing to defining Muslims or Islam as violent are the Charlie Hebdo attacks and many other attacks that were carried out by Muslim extremists since the 2000s.

As Yılmaz has argued the populist right has carried out a hegemonic intervention in the cartoon debate of 2005 (Yılmaz 2011) and has done the same in the immigration debate (Yılmaz 2012). Both debates have served as moral panics for the populist right to achieve their hegemony. Especially through their intervention in the immigration debate they have managed to make associations between Muslim immigration and crime common sense, resulting in crimmigration (Maneri 2011; Parkin 2013; Stumpf 2006).

So by associating Muslims with crime and violence, the European right-wing populist parties cause panic within society to achieve hegemony. However, through the panic and the resulting hegemony, they are also able to introduce certain measures that may first have been unthinkable. By fitting into this criterion they also help install a persistent racist prejudice against Muslims.

4. *Talk about a clash, or war, of cultures, or civilizations.*

EC discourse shapes our understanding of the world into two antagonistic groups: the West and the Rest/the East. The Muhammad cartoon debates as well as EC discourse have proven to be set up against this idea of clashing civilizations of Huntington (Huntington 1993; expanded in Huntington 1996). Populist rhetoric depends on these kinds of polarizations, simplifications and perceived threats, faults and enemies (Lähdesmäki 2014, 75-65; partly based on Thévenot 2011). Therefore, one can expect the populist parties to use this clash of civilizations idea in the aftermath of the Charlie Hebdo attacks.

Just like the previous criterion if many of the tweets fulfill this criterion extensively, it serves to create a moral panic. Thinking there is a war of civilizations, or anything of that kind, causes panic and demonizes a certain part of the population to be able to maybe achieve hegemony. War terminology is so convenient because it allows politicians to make clear distinctions between 'good and bad' and between 'aggressor and victim' (Van Leeuwen

2009, 9)¹⁰. Furthermore, war-language justifies introducing radical measures for which there would be no need while at peace, while at the same time inciting certain emotions (Lammerts & Verhagen 1994) (Van Leeuwen 2009, 9).

¹⁰ Officially talking about war metaphors

Thesis Chapter 3: Case study RN

The French Revolution, the French Republic and national unity

In this chapter it will be tested to what extent RN's tweets fulfill the criteria outlined in the previous chapter to see to what end the party uses EC discourse. Interestingly, Marine le Pen, the face of the RN, holds the record for tweeting most during the period following the Charlie Hebdo attacks.¹¹ The fact that she tweeted 371 times is because she is the charismatic leader of a populist party and because she tweeted many quotes from official interviews and conferences. Her tweets together with some tweets from other members turn out to fulfill mostly the first and third criteria. This means that RN uses the EC discourse to show indirect as well as direct moral antagonism, to define what Europe stands for and to create a moral panic inciting prejudice against a certain part of the population. RN has a tendency to stress French values like secularism and 'liberté, égalité et fraternité' in their tweets. This tendency to stress French values and appeal to them not only shows indirect moral antagonism, it also justifies the existence of the RN.

Furthermore, RN draws clear connections between immigration, Islam, communitarianism and terrorism. In fact, they draw a logic of cause and effect. Again this corresponds to the party's main aim to protect national culture and the French language from foreign influences and, therefore, justifies the party's existence. Moreover, it serves as a moral panic demonizing a certain part of the population. By associating Muslims with crime and violence, the party causes panic within society and through this tries to win support for some of their radical policies. All this will be concluded by shortly analyzing the amount and content of the tweets applicable to each criterion.

Appeal to Western and/or European values like freedom of speech, freedom of press, secularism, liberalism, modernity, democracy

Le Pen refers to French and/or European values and ideas plenty of times in her tweets stressing that universal European values stand above any other value. Interestingly,

¹¹ Tweets per member: Marine le Pen 371, Nicolas Bay 116, and Florian Philippot 147.

her support for these values is strongest when she creatively addresses them in three instances. First of all, this happens when Le Pen tweets about the fact that Charlie Hebdo has also satirically depicted RN. On the same day as the attacks she tweeted: “Charlie Hebdo has fought against @FN_officiel many times, but that’s what democracy is” and “Democracy is allowing those who disagree with you to speak.” It becomes clear from these tweets that ‘democracy’ and ‘freedom of speech’ are very important to her and her party exactly because it means you can say anything and critique anyone, including their party RN. Le Pen is able to express her unconditional support for freedom of speech even when it is supposedly at her own expense, what the attackers supposedly were unable to do. This shows her indirect moral antagonism quite strongly.

Second, Le Pen’s support for the freedom of speech also comes forward particularly powerfully from an issue surrounding the labeling of the attackers. Le Pen is concerned about the fact that mainstream political parties do not want to talk about ‘Islamic fundamentalism’ or call the attackers ‘Islamic’, but want to label them as terrorists (of Islamic state). The mainstream political parties want to use this label as they find the issues politically sensitive and do not want to insult, hurt or antagonize Muslims. About this issue she tweeted: “Naming things, is to say: it’s about an attack carried out by Islamic fundamentalists here.” Because one cannot name the attackers Islamic fundamentalists she states: “The freedom of expression in France is unquestionably an actual issue today.” In her eyes, the political elite knows the truth about the Muslims attackers but fear saying the wrong thing or hurting a particular community. Therefore, they are not freely expressing themselves as Le Pen claims she does, they are just trying to be politically correct. Le Pen presents her party as the only one in the political classes that supports true freedom of speech by critiquing the ruling elite on not doing so. This is illustrative of the general populist antagonism towards the ruling elite as well as (indirect) moral antagonism towards Muslims and Islam.

Third, a creative way in which RN, but also French society, showed they were on the side of freedom of speech was through saying ‘they were Charlie’ or using the hashtag (#jesuischarlie). Several members of RN proclaimed that ‘they were Charlie’ or critiqued the parody hashtag #jesuiskouachi¹² (I am Kouachi). With this they wanted to show support for

¹² The brothers Chérif and Saïd Kouachi were the ones that attacked Charlie Hebdo

Charlie Hebdo and mourn for the victims of the attacks. However, because of the slogan's popularity, it came to mean much more than this. It also meant that one could not express oneself in a different way, that one had a certain indirect prejudice against Muslims and that one adhered to the values of the French state. This follows from a short research into the phrase 'Je suis Charlie'. Firstly, people who questioned this phrase or used other ways of expressing their grief were looked on suspiciously (Kiwam 2016, 235; Giglietto and Lee 2017). Reasons for different expressions were: going against mainstream polemical conceptualization or critiquing Charlie Hebdo on not applying the same standard of freedom of expression in the past concerning allegedly anti-Semitic satire (Giglietto and Lee 2017, 5, 12). Secondly, it has been argued that the expression 'Je suis Charlie' contains a certain prejudice against Muslims partly because of the fact that one could not express oneself differently. Especially Muslims were expected to use the phrase 'Je suis Charlie' because they were thought to always be in some way sympathetic towards the 'Muslim' attackers (Guénif-Souilamas, Hajjat and Mohammed 2015). As such, the phrase is a manifestation of long-held fears about the Muslim 'enemy within' which has been illustrated by Emmanuel Todd. In his book he points to the unconscious dimension that motivated people to take part in the solidarity marches, namely, conservatism, domination and inegalitarian values (Todd 2015). During the marches there was an absence of the teenagers from the banlieus¹³ as well as the hard-working citizens from the countryside (Todd 2015, 19-20). Therefore, 'Je suis Charlie' became associated with the more socially dominant classes (Todd 2015, 12-20). Thirdly, 'Je suis Charlie' became associated with being truly French. The prime Minister himself made clear that saying the phrase 'Je suis Charlie' was adhering to the values of the French Republic (Kiwam 2016, 235-236). Therefore, the state was very serious about all people having to proclaim 'Je suis Charlie' to show there was national unity on the topic. In fact, the state went as far as launching a school campaign because some students refused to say 'Je suis Charlie' for various reasons (Kiwam 2016, 235-236; Fassin 2015).

There are also other instances where Le Pen more directly addresses values like freedom of speech, democracy and laïcisme as belonging to France. However, since they are sometimes somewhat vague and little substance is added beyond a statement they appear

¹³ Name for the suburbs of French cities where cheaper living is available for those who work in the city. Banlieus are often inhabited by citizens with foreign roots and/or lower income, more so than the city centers.

less strong. Furthermore, having to say what France or Europe stands for means there is no consensus on the topic; it has not become common sense. For this reason it shows that several discourses are trying to become leading in defining identity, illustrative of European identity being a floating signifier.

Le Pen argues that the specific French way of life in addition to specific French values were attacked by tweeting: “The French have understood it was France that was aimed at, that *our way of life and our values were attacked.*” She is vague about what those values are here, but with the context of the attacks one can guess it is about democracy, freedom of speech, which were mentioned earlier, but also laïcisme.

Sometimes she is a bit clearer about those values, but mentions several at a time. For example, in an article for the New York Times which Le Pen shared on Twitter she writes: “We, the French, are strongly attached to our laïcité¹⁴, to our sovereignty, to our independence, to our values. The world knows that when France is attacked, it’s freedom that’s being undermined” (Le Pen 2015). Indeed, Le Pen posits here that being French is being attached to laïcisme, sovereignty, independence and ‘values’. One of these further values would be freedom. France is squared with freedom and, according to Le Pen, internationally associated with freedom.

RN member Philippot also shows an appeal to French values albeit slightly different ones, contributing to the wide array of values being appealed at, and, therefore, the idea that what France and/or Europe stand for is floating. For instance he tweeted: “We have to summon the ambassadors of the countries that let our flag burn without intervening. Our colors are our values.” The French flag is commonly associated with the French Revolution and its colors came to represent liberté (blue), égalité (white) and fraternité (red).¹⁵ Therefore, he sees the burning of the flag as symbolically attacking France and its values.

RN and its members do not only appeal to French values, however. They have also more clearly appealed to European ones. When Le Pen goes to a conference in Oxford for a speech at Oxford University she highlights European values and cross-cultural ties. She has

¹⁴ Usually the terms laïcisme and secularism are not used interchangeably (for illustration see Hurd 2004; Hurd 2008) because they stand for slightly different things. Laïcité has more emphasis on the separation of church and state, while secularism also refers to the gradual loss of relevance of religion in which religion, thus, influences politics (Baubérot 2008; Hurd 2008, 26). Therefore, this thesis keeps the original terms ‘laïcité’ and ‘laïcisme’. Laïcité often translates more to ‘of a secular nature’ or ‘secularity’ while laïcisme translates to ‘secularism’.

¹⁵ ‘Liberté, égalité et fraternité’ is the French national motto meaning ‘liberty, equality and fraternity’

tweeted many quotes from the conference, as well as a transcript of her speech. “One of the tragedies of our Western society, is that we forget our essential values. Freedom being one of the first ones” is one of those tweets. She is clearly appealing to values that are shared between the United Kingdom (UK) and France. She tries to historically prove this using the Western values as cultural achievement narrative: “France and the United Kingdom are the children of liberty. In fact, our two nations were built on these principles and have fought to defend them throughout their history. They constitute the corner stone of your Habeas Corpus of 1679¹⁶ and introduced the republican motto of France ‘liberté, égalité, fraternité’ just like the first article of the Declaration of Right of Man and the Citizen: Men are born and remain free and equal in rights” (Le Pen 2015). She tries to show that the UK and France adhere to more or less the same values and that these developed around the same time historically to become engrained as fundamental values. She ends her speech with appraisal of shared European values: “Long live the free and independent European nations” (Le Pen 2015).

However, it should be noted, just like was the case when the values were more directly addressed but remained vague, having to say what the shared values between the two states are means that these values are not completely commonly accepted to stand for European identity. Moreover, it shows indirect moral antagonism to those who do not agree or live up to those values, just like the creative examples given earlier.

Say something negative about Islam or Islamic values. For example, it may be called backward, conservative, barbaric, or theocratic.

Le Pen is also involved in the discourse by portraying Islam and Islamic values negatively, although to a lesser extent than the previous criterion. Portraying Islam and Islamic values negatively happens first and foremost through the association of Muslims with failure to assimilate. By doing this she defines who belongs to the nation through creating an ‘us vs. them’ binary, in which Muslims form a threat to ‘us’, showing direct moral antagonism towards Muslims and Islam. For example, she tweets: “In its wisdom, Antiquity had summed up this rule of common sense: When in Rome, do as the Romans do.” So when

¹⁶ Important statute in English constitutional history that tried to secure Liberty of the Subject and prevent unlawful imprisonment.

in France do as the French do. Here she illustrates the opinion that France belongs to the French and that French identity should not change because of immigration, which is basically also the main tenant of the party.

Le Pen blames communitarianism of the Muslim immigrant community for the attacks which can be illustrated by tweets like: “Mass immigration is an accelerator of communitarianism, and communitarianism is the breeding-ground for fundamentalism” and “we should go and find what nurtures fundamentalism: communitarianism, the collapse of laïcité.” In Le Pen’s list of causations mass immigration leads to assimilation problems which then results in communitarianism and fundamentalism. Le Pen thinks that because people are unable to assimilate they stay within their own communities and then will never succeed to assimilate because they do not get into contact with true French culture.

That Le Pen mostly refers to Muslims when talking about failed assimilation becomes even clearer in the following tweets: “#Mass immigration, especially from Muslim majority countries, has a tendency to reinforce assimilation problems” and “Assimilation is out of order due to too much immigration, coming mostly from the Maghreb and sub-Saharan countries.” Le Pen associates communitarianism with the Islamic community in France and views them negatively as being unable to assimilate to French culture, which, in her view, has led to the attacks. She shows direct moral antagonism towards Muslims immigrants and tries to convince people that Muslims do not belong to France.

RN member Nicolas Bay also takes part in the assimilation discussion by tweeting: “77,335 foreigners have been naturalized in 2014. How many among them have really assimilated? #immigration.” Even though Bay does not address Muslims directly, in the context of the Charlie Hebdo attacks, and RN’s opinion described above, it is clear that he refers to the attackers who were unable to assimilate, and , therefore, to the Muslim community in France. So he wonders how many out of the Muslim community who were naturalized have truly assimilated to French culture. Therefore, Le Pen argues that French nationality should be earned: “I think that the French nationality should not be acquired automatically, it’s inherited or earned” because “The Kouachi brothers benefited from acquiring French nationality automatically. We should abolish this right.”

Next to portraying Muslims negatively when it comes to assimilation, RN uses offensive terms to describe Muslims or Islam to show their antagonism. For example Bay

says in a video he shared on Twitter: “For me it’s about paying homage to the victims of the madmen of Allah who committed those horrible attacks last week” and “I was nonetheless angry. Angry about the Islamic barbarity.” Muslims serve as ‘them’ in the ‘us vs. them’ binary, indicative of moral antagonism. Illustrative in this case is the following tweet for its ‘either/or’ choice: “Say no to Islamic barbarism and yes to the French republic.”

Another way in which members of RN pejoratively talk about Muslims and Islam, arguably in a very strong manner, is by calling Islam a totalitarian ideology from the Middle Ages: “The #terrorism that we face is in service of a totalitarian and medieval ideology.” This is a clear portrayal of moral antagonism by pointing to Western progressive idea against ‘medieval’ ‘Islamic’ ones.

Imply a connection between Muslims, Muslim immigration or Islam more generally, and crime, violence or security threats.

Other ways in which Muslims and Islam are portrayed badly is in the association of Muslims and/or Islam with crime, violence and security threats. By causing panic within society through this association the party tries to win support for radical measures, while at the same time trying to achieve hegemony.

Linking Muslims and/or Islam with crime and violence happens, for instance, by stating that what is behind the terrorist attacks is Islamic fundamentalism: “There’s an ideology behind terrorism: Islamic fundamentalism.” Islamic fundamentalism, responsible for terrorism, is then again linked to immigration: “It’s illusionary and dangerous to think that there’s no link between immigration and the development of radical Islam.” This link with immigration shows how RN draws a logic of cause and consequence: immigration leads to non-assimilation to communitarianism and eventually to Islamic fundamentalism. Therefore, immigration should be halted according to the party. This is a specific policy the party tries to win support for by connecting immigration with crime and violence, causing panic within society.

Le Pen looks for an explanation of the terrorist attacks to immigration, communitarianism and Islam. The terrorist attacks were allowed to happen because of bad policies of the ruling elite. Therefore, it is unthinkable that there are other sociological or psychological factors that may have influenced the attackers, according to the RN. This was illustrated by the labelling issue but was also more directly addressed by Le Pen in the

following tweet: “The generally accepted excuse of social difficulties do not explain #terrorism.” Just like different ways of expressing grief and solidarity than ‘Je suis Charlie’ were not accepted, different analyses than the ones focusing on normative evaluations were not accepted either (Guénif-Souilamas, Hajjat and Mohammed 2015).

A big role is played by the banlieus in the RN’s logic of cause and effect as this is where much of the (Muslim) communitarianism takes place and this is the kind of neighbourhood the attackers lived in. Through a stigmatization of the banlieus, RN then shows further crime associations. For example, Le Pen tweeted: “Today it’s not Bin Laden who does something, it’s the scum of the banlieu.” Therefore, she proposes that the French state should do more to control the banlieus. Le Pen says: “When are we going to search for weapons in the banlieus?” and “We have left certain neighbourhoods to the laws of fundamentalists.” Stigmatizing the banlieus in this manner allows her to propose more radical measures, which may win support if people believe her associations to be true. The policy Le Pen introduces is a special police unit: “We should create an intervention brigade, connected to the police, to disarm the banlieus.” She is pointing out that supposedly a lot of criminal activities are taking place in these neighbourhoods and people possess weapons at a grand scale.

Talk about a clash, or war, of cultures, or civilizations.

When the world is divided into two antagonistic groups and one group is associated with crime and violence, it is only a short step towards thinking of this against the backdrop of a ‘clash of civilization’ or a ‘war of cultures’. However, tweets of the members of RN do only fulfill this criterion to a small extent. Indirectly, there is war terminology but when Le Pen directly addresses ‘a clash of civilizations’ she states she is determined to prevent it, which also means that it has not yet started.

War terminology is for example apparent from tweets from shortly after the attacks: “I think the complete nation is unified in their sorrow and in their sentiment that France has been attacked” and “It’s the Islamists that have declared war on France.” Likewise RN member Bay tweets: “The only true national unity is the one of the French people facing the Islamic fundamentalists that have declared war on them.” However, it is not just a war of societies, but also a war of values: “These attackers were the result of Islamic

fundamentalism, which is leading a war against everything that France represents."

Being at war and eradicating fundamentalism can only be done when there is an army. For this reason, "[...] the government must immediately renounce from removing 7500 army jobs per year." Le Pen wants to increase the Army as well as their budget, just like Philippot who tweeted: "The army and security guards do not deserve a decline of staff and resources a little bit less rapid than foreseen but a substantial increase." The ruling elite is seen as taking bad policy decisions concerning this topic. The ruling elite does not want to label the attackers as Islamic fundamentalists, and consequently they do not see the true danger, according to Le Pen.

Part of RN's policy instead would be to go into the banlieus to fight Islamic terrorism, which is one of the radical measures they hope to introduce next to increasing the army by using the above described war terminology. Earlier quoted tweets have shown that Le Pen stigmatizes the banlieus as the neighborhoods where Islamic fundamentalism and communitarianism bode well. Therefore, she wants to do something about it, like the brigade introduced earlier, but goes even further. She tweets: "We demand the creation of an anti-terrorist brigade, depending on the army, to reestablish order in the banlieus." Apparently there is a lot of chaos in the banlieus that need fighting for which she wants to create a special anti-terrorist army force.

It is interesting that Le Pen is involved in talking about the attacks and Muslims in terms of conflict and war while when she directly addresses the topic says she wants to prevent a true clash of civilizations: "I fight against the possibility of the hypothesis of a clash of civilizations that some wish for" and "We have to do anything in France, in the UK and in Europe, to avoid a clash of civilizations to strike our continent." Le Pen talks about a clash of civilizations but does not want it, she wants to avoid it. This also means that it is not yet truly happening.

In conclusion, an analysis of RN's makes clear that their tweets are most clearly concerned with the first and third criteria: appealing to European values and associating Muslims with crime. This means that RN uses EC discourse to show indirect as well as direct moral antagonism, to define what Europe stands for and to create a moral panic inciting prejudice against a certain part of the population. RN has a tendency to stress French values

like secularism and 'liberté, égalité et fraternité' in their tweets. This tendency to stress French values and appeal to them not only shows indirect moral antagonism, it also justifies the *raison d'être* of the RN.

RN also draws clear connections between immigration, Islam, communitarianism and terrorism. In fact, they draw a logic of cause and effect. Again this corresponds to the party's main aim to protect national culture and the French language from foreign influences and, therefore, justifies the party's existence. Moreover, it serves as a moral panic demonizing a certain part of the population. By associating Muslims with crime and violence, the party causes panic within society and through this tries to win support for some of their radical policies.

Chapter 4: Case study PVV

Can a religion be at war?: PVV and its strong focus on a ‘war of civilizations’

In this chapter it will be tested to what extent the PVV’s tweets fulfill the criteria outlined in the methodology chapter to see to what end the party uses EC discourse in the debate following the attack. Interestingly, from tweets of members of the PVV it becomes very clear that Geert Wilders, the party leader, is the most important within the party illustrating the point that populist parties depend very much on their charismatic leaders. This cannot only be seen in number of tweets that were published by each member¹⁷, but also in amounts of likes and retweets, which is not even speaking about the amount of followers of the accounts.

The tweets of Wilders together with some tweets from the other clearly secondary members turn out to fulfill mostly the second, third and fourth criteria. This means that the PVV uses the EC discourse to show direct moral antagonism, to try to create a moral panic to achieve hegemony, and to be able to introduce more radical measures. Furthermore, the PVV tries to justify the existence of the party as the main focus of the party is the perceived threat of Islam (Lähdesmäki 2015, 72; Kaya and Tecmen 2019, 55; Vossen 2011).

While used to a smaller extent, the tweets fulfilling the first criterion do prove that European identity in the Netherlands is a floating signifier as the values remain vague or many are addressed. All criteria will be discussed in turn, to eventually come to these conclusions.

Appeal to Western and/or European values like freedom of speech, freedom of press, secularism, liberalism, modernity, democracy.

In the days following the Charlie Hebdo attacks, one can observe EC discourse in action. One of the poles of the debate rests on supporting Charlie Hebdo and standing up to defend the freedom of expression, which is the side the PVV is on. Through mentioning

¹⁷ Geert Wilders: 99. Fleur Agema: 9. Martin Bosma: 53. Marjolein Faber: 6. Alexander van Hattem: 21. Machiel de Graaf: 39. Marcel de Graaff: 25.

these values the PVV shows indirect moral antagonism. As different values are appealed to at different times it shows how European identity is a floating signifier and appealing to the above mentioned values may help in this part of the discourse achieving hegemony as for example the attacks can be used as moral panics.

Standing up to defend freedom (of expression) is mentioned various times, for example, on January 8, 2015 Wilders published a video on Twitter in response to the Charlie Hebdo attacks, which was shared by several PVV members, like Van Hattem. Wilders talks about how “our freedom is under fire” and that “[T]omorrow should be a day that is better than today. A day with less Islam. A day in which we win back our freedom” (Wilders 2015b). Wilders is stating that through the terrorist attacks our freedom is being threatened. He remains vague about what exactly ‘our freedom’ is, but it is clearly ‘ours’ and should be won back, which also meets the war of cultures, or civilizations, criterion and, therefore, clearly shows (indirect) moral antagonism towards Muslims and Islam.

In other tweets Wilders similarly appeals to Western and/or European values. His tweet only reads “Enough is enough”, but he includes a link to a short article written by him. In this article he says the following: “We should no longer show any respect for an ideology that rejects our fundamental values. The only way to defend our democratic values and fundamental freedoms is to start the de-Islamization of our societies” (Wilders 2015a). Again, Wilders remains vague about what those fundamental values and democratic values are, but in context of the Charlie Hebdo attacks one can expect he is talking about freedom of speech and secularism. There seems to be an expectation that the listener knows what he is talking about and fills in these contextual elements him or herself, illustrating the way in which discourse works. It may even be proof that European identity is no longer a floating signifier and that what it means to be European has been made common sense by a hegemonic intervention.

However, in other instances, Wilders, and also other party members, are clearer about Dutch and/or European values illustrating the opposite. The values the PVV members are talking about are “[...] based on Christianity, humanism and Judaism” as Wilders asserts in an interview with Newsweek, which is shared by him via Twitter (Ross 2015). He furthermore states that a culture based on Christianity, humanism and Judaism is “[...] a better culture. We don't settle things with violence” to draw a, in his eyes just, comparison between cultures to prove that ‘our culture’ is better in comparison to Islam. That ‘our

culture' also includes the specific value of secularism becomes clear in a tweet from PVV member Machiel de Graaf sometime later. He tweets: "You can give your free language classes in mosques in S-Arabia, Achmed! Over there they don't have this annoying separation of state/mosque, so bye!" in reaction to a news item about this. Although it is not directly related to the Charlie Hebdo attacks, it demonstrates that the idea of secularism is appealed to by the PVV. It shows indirect moral antagonism towards Muslims and/or Islam because as Machiel de Graaf mentions, Muslims are supposedly unable to live up to this value, even though this remains a point of discussion as can be read in the first chapter. Furthermore, that Europe has values based on Christianity, humanism and Judaism, that Europeans do not settle things with violence in their more progressive culture and that Europe is secular, is a pretty broad array of values that are being directly addressed. Therefore, EU identity is still 'floating'. Vagueness of values can also be interpreted as being open to multiple interpretations because what EU stands for is not yet hegemonic.

Freedom of expression also comes forward in tweets of other members, in addition to general freedom. Fleur Agema tweeted "Long live the freedom of expression. Or not?" in reaction to the news that Pegida (Patriotische Europäer gegen die Islamisierung des Abendlandes, Patriotic Europeans against the Islamisation of the Occident) is not allowed to demonstrate. Pegida wanted to show their support of Charlie Hebdo and their cartoons. They were eventually allowed to demonstrate a few days later, probably because many people and politicians called out that it should be allowed in the context of freedom of expression, just like Agema did. Likewise, Machiel de Graaf tweeted "Newspapers scatter sand and salt. In the dull eyes of all those 'Charlies' and the open wound of Freedom.¹⁸" He is referring to the fact that the general press does not want to republish the Charlie Hebdo cartoons, which Van Hattem has also commented on. Van Hattem tweeted: "Not all Charlies are the same" together with a link to an article that states that one subjugates oneself to the terror by not daring to republish those images. In his eyes those media who do not republish cartoons of Charlie Hebdo 'are not truly Charlie' and not true supporters of freedom (of expression). All these tweets antagonize the ruling elite and Muslims in society by republishing some of the offensive cartoons and wanting to let the Pegida demonstrations take place.

¹⁸ Includes two proverbs that mean 'to mislead someone' and 'to make things worse' in Dutch, but as these are spread over two sentences the tweet was directly translated.

Of course, many of the PVV members have tweeted that 'they are Charlie' by which they wanted to express grief and solidarity with the victims of the satirical newspaper Charlie Hebdo. This was another way in which PVV members appealed to Western/European values. In France saying 'you were Charlie' also became associated with the French state and French values. However, in the Netherlands, the hashtag #JeSuisCharlie, or proclaiming 'you were Charlie' in a different way, did not have the same baggage as in France. This is due to the fact the attacks did not happen in the Netherlands and that the state was not concerned about all people needing to proclaim they are Charlie. The prime minister did not proclaim national unity, nor did he propose an educational campaign. However, saying 'Je suis Charlie' was still normative and put one on one side of the debate. This becomes most clear in tweets of Bosma and Faber who both use the hashtag to mock others in order to prove they 'are the only ones truly Charlie'. Bosma, for example, uses "#jesuishypocrite" (I am hypocrite) to critique a mayor who reported Wilders to the police for going too far instead of defending freedom of speech. Just like with the RN, this more creative indirect ways bring forward a stronger stance on the freedom of speech value. For this reason it also shows stronger indirect moral antagonism to those who do not agree with this value.

Say something negative about Islam or Islamic values. For example, it may be called backward, conservative, barbaric, or theocratic.

Wilders is also involved in the discourse by portraying Islam and Islamic values negatively. He clearly portrays direct (moral) antagonism by creating an 'us vs. them' binary in which Islam and Muslims are seen as threatening. For this reason they are defined as not belonging to the nation. The binary and antagonism are particularly strong when the PVV combines elements of this, the third and fourth criteria.

On January 10, 2015 he tweeted "Bad examples make followers. #nomoreislam" to make his antagonistic stance clear. Even though the tweet itself is rather vague, he has accompanied it with an image of Muhammad made by Bosch Fawstin. The image is very dark, and Muhammad is made to look evil through this darkness, through the angle of his eyebrows and through having no actual eyes but just black spots. With this image in mind it becomes clear that he means Muhammad as the bad example and is afraid that more will start following this evil figure, leading to more attacks like Charlie Hebdo. He portrays

Muhammad and, therefore, Islam badly, and wants to stop Islam because according to him, Muhammad and Islam inspire all the terrorists.

Another case in point when it comes to this antagonism: “Unbelievable. Instead of closing mosques, we are building more of these monstrosities. The Islam does not belong to the Netherlands. #nomoreislam”. Wilders thinks there is something about Islam and its followers that does not fit in the Netherlands, for which reason ‘it should be stopped’. In other tweets he equally strongly argues that Islam does not belong to the Netherlands. For instance, he tweets that “A vote for D66¹⁹ is a vote for more EU, more open borders, more Islam and more cuts. D66 = the demise of the Netherlands.” The Islam, among other things, is equalized with the demise of the Netherlands and is, therefore, dangerous. He antagonizes and demonizes Muslims.

Islam was not only talked about negatively by Wilders but also by several other members of the PVV. For example, Marcel de Graaff tweets “De-islamization Now!” while retweeting an image that says “[...] Islam is an intolerant, totalitarian religious fanaticism that teaches subjugation, conversion or genocide of other religious groups and ethnicities.” Islam is made out to be intolerant, totalitarian and fanatic. Through this he puts Islam and its values in a bad light and shows antagonism towards Islam. Furthermore, in between the lines he says that there is no place for Islam in the Netherlands because of this.

Particularly strong in the tweets of other PVV members falling under this criterion is a tweet of Machiel de Graaf. He retweets “The attacks on Charlie Hebdo were very well prepared” and adds to this: “That’s right. In the seventh century”. The PVV member makes a connection between the seventh century and the Charlie Hebdo attacks. Since for him the attacks were carried out by Muslims who follow Muhammad, he associates today’s Muslims with the seventh century, which was when Muhammad supposedly lived. With this tweet one can see once again the association of Islam and its followers with crime and violence, but also more directly the assertion that Muslims are backwards because they do exactly as their Prophet did, or what he said to do, in the seventh century. Here the PVV clearly positions Western values above Islamic ones and creates an ‘us vs. them’ binary in which Islam is a threat.

The party’s strongest tweets when it comes to saying something negative about Islam

¹⁹ Referring to the social-liberal political party Democraten ‘66 (Democrats ‘66)

and Islamic values are the ones in which Wilders associates Islam with crime or violence. These tweets will be more elaborately discussed in the next section of analysis which is specifically focused on the tweets that imply a connection between Muslims, Muslim immigration or Islam and crime, violence or security threats.

Imply a connection between Muslims, Muslim immigration or Islam more generally, and crime, violence or security threats.

Many of the tweets of Wilders and other party members fulfill this criterion. They imply a connection between Muslims, crime and immigration to create panic within society. Through this panic they hope to achieve hegemony, be able to introduce certain radical measures, as well as to convince people to have a prejudice against Muslims.

In the video Wilders published after the attacks that was mentioned before, he also meets the criterion of implying a connection between Muslims and violence. He, for instance, says: “No one can deny the truth. It’s Islam that inspires the murderers every time. It’s Muhammad, the Qur’an. That’s the problem and nothing else” (Wilders 2015b). Wilders sees Islam as a fascist ideology which was pointed at before. According to him it is indeed Islam, Muhammad and the Qur’an that inspire the terrorists, of which he tries to convince everyone. He connects Islam to crime and sees Islam as being the main cause for the terrorists to carry out the attacks rather than any other sociological or psychological factors. This position also came forward in a tweet of member Machiel de Graaf: “Not social²⁰ deprivation. It’s the Islam.” Defining Islam as the problem of almost anything justifies the raison d’être of the party as the party is mainly focused on the perceived threat of Islam. Furthermore, defining Muslims as violent murderers may convince panicked people that this association is true and that something radical must be done.

Saying that ‘murderers are inspired by Islam’ did not go far enough for the PVV, however. His association of Islam with crime becomes even clearer when Wilders states: “Not all Muslims are terrorists, but about all terrorists are Muslim. Since 2011 with Islamic State even clearer.” He clearly associates terrorism with the Islam and to substantiate these claims he even goes as far as to take certain parts of Islam out of context that supposedly prove Islam’s violent nature. He tweets: “Koran 47:4: When ye meet the unbelievers, smite at their necks and cause a bloodbath among them.” Wilders tweets a line from the Qur’an

²⁰ In the original Dutch tweet ‘social’ was written almost phonetically to make those who claim this seem silly

out of context that for him proves that Islam is violent and hostile towards non-believers. To the 'silent majority' populist parties are said to represent this may come forward as very convincing. In this way the party may become successful in installing among its followers a belief that Islam is violent, that is, a hegemonic intervention. Furthermore, it allows the party to win support for more radical measures like a hijab ban or a stop on building new mosques.

Another tweet mentioning a certain Islamic concept comes across as equally antagonizing and convincing. Wilders tweets: "Never forget about TAQQIYA" together with a link to more information about what taqqiya means. Taqqiya is, according to the site Wilders provides, the idea that a Muslim is allowed to lie under the circumstance that it would advance the cause of Islam (The Religion Of Peace, n.d.). In this conspiracy theory of Wilders taqqiya means that Muslims in Europe lie to non-believers to gain their trust, but eventually want to defeat them. Terrorist attacks, would in line with what Wilders thinks, be a good example of this.

Other members associated Islam with crime and violence less directly. Faber defines Islam as violent and in the process creates a very clear 'us vs. them' distinction when she tweets: "And you just keep on shouting #islam is #peace. Bunch of foxes.²¹ Persecution of Christians is increasing worldwide" together with a link to a news article. Squaring the persecution of Christians with Islam not being peaceful is another way of saying Islam is violent and, at least, partly responsible for those Christian deaths.

Another PVV-member, Machiel de Graaf on the topic of Islam and violence tweets: "Speaking Dutch. Don't ask the Muslim who killed his daughter for being 'too Western', because he will cut your throat." In these tweets one can note two ways in which Machiel De Graaf thinks Muslims are violent: Muslims would kill their daughters and Muslims would kill you if you ask them to speak the language of the country they have migrated to. He describes a supposedly everyday situation and, therefore, is very successful in creating a sense of panic within society to be able to introduce certain measures and maybe achieve hegemony. All in all the PVV very convincingly draws associations between Muslims, crime and immigration, which may help in trying to make these associations common sense.

²¹ Original in Dutch was jackal which symbolically stands for someone who fights others in a mean, cowardly way

Talk about a clash, or war, of cultures, or civilizations.

When Islam and its followers are seen as violent and associated with crime and security threats, it is no big step towards thinking there is a war of cultures, or civilizations. Thinking there is a clash between Europe and Islam allows the PVV to create a moral panic and, thus, demonize the Muslim minority within the country, and to achieve hegemony. Furthermore, a sense of panic among the population may help in gaining more support for radical measures.

Interestingly, one of the very first tweets about the attacks, other than spreading of the news, is the following: “When will it finally occur to Rutte²² and other Western heads of government: it is war.” That this is the very first thing Wilders says about the attacks is quite illustrative as in almost every tweet following that he repeats the theme of war. For example, he writes that “terrorists were able to murder their opponents” (Wilders 2015a) as if there is indeed a war between Muslims and Westerners or Europeans. The earlier mentioned “our freedom is under fire” (Wilders 2015b) is another example. ‘We’ and our values are being attacked by Muslims, according to Wilders. In an article Wilders shares of Algemeen Dagblad, which is an interview with him, he furthermore states: “And we need the army. [...] Our soldiers should secure stations and shopping centers here. The ihadis can go wherever they like. They have declared war on us and we do nothing. They laugh at us” (Groenendijk and Van Soest 2015). Wilders is clearly convinced that there is a war between ‘them’, the jihadis or Muslims, and ‘us’, the Dutch or Westerners.

Wilders tries to convince people that the West is indeed at war with Islam, that the attacks were a battle won by the Muslims, but that now the West, the Netherlands, should do something to ‘win back their freedom’. He wants the Dutch government to take certain measures following the attack to securitize Dutch public spaces. Furthermore, he talks about deislamizing the country, setting jihadis out of the country, not accepting immigration from Muslim states and closing borders more generally (Wilders 2015b).

As the above illustrates, the war terminology Wilders uses enables him to divide the world into ‘good and evil’ and ‘victim and aggressor’. This allows the PVV to introduce radical measures for which there would be no reason while at peace because it creates a certain

²² Referring to Mark Rutte, prime minister of the Netherlands in 2015

emotional panicked response within society.

Secondary members of the PVV also tweeted about 'the war', like Machiel de Graaf who tweeted: "*The West is at war* and should *de-islamize* [...]." Marcel de Graaff likewise showed war associations in his tweet by quoting a member of the Dutch resistance during the Second World War: "A people that yield to tyrants, will lose more than body and good, then the lights will also fade. #CharlieHebdo #islam." In this case, Muslims are tyrants who got to power violently and for which we should not yield. In other words, we should start resisting Muslims, as, according to the PVV, we are at war with Islam. This creates a sense of urgency for the introduction of more radical measures like stepping out of the EU to control the Dutch borders again.

In conclusion, the PVV's tweets mostly fulfill the criteria of portraying Muslims badly, of associating Muslims and/or Islam with violence and of talking about a clash/war of cultures/civilizations. PVV members describe Muslims negatively all the time in association with violence as well as a clash of civilizations, which give extra substance and convincing power to the 'clash of civilizations' narrative. In this way the PVV tries to justify the existence of the party as the main focus of the party is the perceived threat of Islam and to achieve hegemony so people will be convinced of their truth. Furthermore, it allows the PVV to introduce new radical measures pertaining Islam through the panic that is created by the association of Muslims with violence and war.

What the analysis of the tweets of the PVV also proves is that European identity in the Netherlands is still floating. This is the case because either a wide array of values are addressed or the party remains vague about those values. Therefore, European identity remains open to multiple interpretations.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this thesis sought to answer the research question: to what end was EC discourse used on social media by right-wing populist parties in the debates that followed the 2015 Charlie Hebdo attacks? It has become clear throughout the last chapters that RN and PVV use the EC discourse to the end of self-perpetuation. RN has a tendency to stress French or European values, which justifies the existence of the RN as the RN's main aim is to protect national culture and the French language from homogenization, globalization and the influence of the European Union. The PVV's main focus is on the threat that is formed by Islam. Therefore, the party's tweets fit the last three criteria best. These criteria talk about Islam pejoratively, define Islam as violent and state there is a clash/war of cultures/civilizations.

However, both parties also have different foci which results in both parties fitting into different criteria, and, therefore, using the discourse to different ends. Tweets of member of RN mostly fulfill the criteria of 'appealing to French or European values' and 'associating Islam with violence and Muslims with crime'. Next to justifying the party's *raison d'être*, the tweets fulfilling mostly the first criteria also have as consequence that it is used to show indirect moral antagonism towards Muslims. When a certain value like unconditional freedom of speech is appealed to, it follows that indirect moral antagonism is shown to those who cannot live up to this value. Furthermore, the disparateness in values, as well as the fact that these values need to be fully addressed, shows that European identity in France remains a floating signifier. Sometimes France is defined to be above all connected to 'freedom' while in other cases this is 'liberté, égalité, et fraternité' or 'laïcisme'. Sometimes appealing to French and/or European values happens very indirectly like when stating 'our way of life and our values were attacked'. Therefore, it follows that European identity remains a floating signifier.

RN also very consistently and convincingly draws a logic of cause and consequence that implies a connection between Muslims, Muslims immigration or Islam, and conflict, crime, violence, or security threats. For the RN immigration, especially from Muslim majority countries, leads to communitarianism, to Islamic fundamentalism and eventually to terrorism. Again this corresponds to the party's main aim and justifies the party's existence.

Moreover, it serves as a moral panic demonizing a certain part of the population, the Muslim (immigrants). By associating Muslims with crime and violence, the party causes panic within society and through this tries to win support for some of their radical policies, like sending a special army force into the banlieus or selectively stopping immigration from Muslim majority countries.

Tweets of the PVV, on the other hand, mostly fulfill the criteria of 'saying something negative about Islam', 'implying a connecting between Muslims and violence' and 'talking about a clash/war of cultures/civilizations'. These three criteria form a coherent story corresponding to the main axis of the PVV: Islam as threat to the Netherlands/Europe. Talking pejoratively about Islam and Muslims creates direct (moral) antagonism and a binary of the Dutch/European vs. Islam. In this way they define who belongs to the nation and who does not. Several tweets falling under the criteria of 'saying something negative about Islam' even directly state that Islam does not belong to the Netherlands and that Islam should disappear from the Netherlands.

Muslims are further talked about negatively very strongly when the PVV associates Islam/Muslims with violence. When Islamic suras and concepts are quoted that supposedly prove the violent nature of the Islamic faith as well as its believers, the party is clearly and convincingly trying to get its followers to believe the link is true, rather than other social or psychological factors.

Muslims as violent, together with the association of Muslims as being the opponents in a war of cultures/civilizations, creates a moral panic within society. A certain part of the population is demonized and the PVV wants this to become 'normal' to achieve hegemony and eventually be able to introduce more radical measures pertaining Islam like banning the hijab or stepping out of the EU so the Netherlands can control its own borders again.

These conclusions were gotten by through the set-up of certain criteria that followed from the literature review, theoretical framework and methodology. The first chapter connected the themes of the Muhammad cartoon debates with the themes of EC discourse and populism more concretely, to advance the theory that EC discourse has several features. These features are: appealing to Western/European values like freedom of speech, saying something negative about Muslims or Islam, implying a connection between Muslims or Islam with violence and talking about a clash/war of cultures/civilizations. These were then

put together with methodologies from critical discourse analysis to form criteria that would make it possible to answer the research question.

By researching how European right-wing populist parties used EC discourse in their tweets following the 2015 Charlie Hebdo attacks, this thesis has contributed to the literature surrounding populism and discourse as well as populism and social media. Further research could look at other European right-wing populist parties and to what end they use EC discourse or how it is applied in other contexts where there is naturally less antagonism.

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Appendix

Tweets of the RN that were used:



Marine Le Pen [Verified account](#) @MLP_officiel 7 Jan 2015

"Charlie Hebdo a beaucoup combattu le @FN_officiel mais c'est cela la démocratie." [#France2](#)

40 replies 320 retweets 185 likes



Marine Le Pen [Verified account](#) @MLP_officiel 7 Jan 2015

"La démocratie, c'est permettre la parole à ceux qui sont en désaccord avec soi." [#France2](#)

23 replies 265 retweets 165 likes



Marine Le Pen [Verified account](#) @MLP_officiel 7 Jan 2015

"Nommer les choses, c'est dire : il s'agit là d'un attentat commis par des fundamentalistes islamistes." [#France2](#)

29 replies 259 retweets 147 likes



Marine Le Pen [Verified account](#) @MLP_officiel 12 Jan 2015

"La liberté d'expression en France est aujourd'hui incontestablement une vraie question." [#itélé](#)

15 replies 117 retweets 77 likes



Marine Le Pen [Verified account](#) @MLP_officiel 12 Jan 2015

"Les Français ont compris que c'était la France qui était visée, que notre mode de vie et nos valeurs étaient attaqués." [#itélé](#)

17 replies 220 retweets 123 likes



Marine Le Pen [Verified account](#) @MLP_officiel 16 Jan 2015

"Nous alertons depuis des années sur les atteintes au principe français sacré de la laïcité." [#ConfMLP](#)

12 replies 62 retweets 34 likes



Florian Philippot [Verified account](#) @f_philippot 17 Jan 2015

Il faut convoquer les ambassadeurs des pays qui ont laissé sans réagir notre drapeau national être brûlé ! Nos couleurs sont nos valeurs.

55 replies 270 retweets 108 likes



Marine Le Pen [Verified account](#) @MLP_officiel 5 Feb 2015

"L'un des drames de nos sociétés occidentales, c'est l'oubli de nos valeurs essentielles. La liberté est la première d'entre elles." [#Oxford](#)

9 replies 84 retweets 47 likes



Marine Le Pen [Verified account](#) @MLP_officiel 5 Feb 2015

"À [#Paris](#), capitale de l'esprit de 1789, berceau des Lumières, un attentat effroyable nous a rappelé la fragilité de nos idéaux." [#Oxford](#)

4 replies 44 retweets 24 likes



Marine Le Pen [Verified account](#) @MLP_officiel 5 Feb 2015

"Vive l'Europe des nations libres et indépendantes !" [#Oxford](#)

25 replies 166 retweets 106 likes



Marine Le Pen [Verified account](#) @MLP_officiel 5 Feb 2015

"Dans sa sagesse, l'Antiquité avait résumé cette règle de bon sens : « A Rome, fais comme les Romains ! »" [#Oxford](#)

21 replies 143 retweets 68 likes



Marine Le Pen [Verified account](#) @MLP_officiel 18 Jan 2015

"L'immigration massive est un accélérateur du communautarisme, et le communautarisme est le terreau du fondamentalisme." [@franceinter](#)

18 replies 128 retweets 67 likes



Marine Le Pen [Verified account](#) @MLP_officiel 12 Jan 2015

"Il va falloir aller chercher ce qui nourrit le fondamentalisme : le communautarisme, l'effondrement de la laïcité." [#itélé](#)

29 replies 115 retweets 55 likes



Marine Le Pen [Verified account](#) @MLP_officiel 16 Jan 2015

"L'[#immigration](#) de masse, notamment depuis des pays de culture musulmane, a eu tendance à renforcer les problèmes d'assimilation." [#ConfMLP](#)

6 replies 78 retweets 48 likes



Marine Le Pen [Verified account](#) @MLP_officiel 5 Feb 2015

"L'assimilation est en panne du fait d'un trop grand nombre d'immigrés, venus principalement du Maghreb et d'Afrique subsaharienne." [#Oxford](#)

17 replies 73 retweets 45 likes



Nicolas Bay [Verified account](#) @NicolasBay_ 15 Jan 2015

77 335 étrangers ont été naturalisés en 2014. Combien d'entre eux sont réellement assimilés ? [#immigration](#)

8 replies 59 retweets 12 likes



Marine Le Pen [Verified account](#) @MLP_officiel 16 Jan 2015

"Je pense que la nationalité française ne doit pas être acquise de façon automatique, elle s'hérite ou se mérite." [#19hRuthElkrief](#)

109 replies 488 retweets 336 likes



Marine Le Pen [Verified account](#) @MLP_officiel 18 Jan 2015

"Les frères Kouachi ont bénéficié de l'acquisition automatique de la nationalité française. Il faut supprimer le droit du sol." [@franceinter](#)

37 replies 311 retweets 144 likes



Marine Le Pen [Verified account](#) @MLP_officiel 5 Feb 2015

"Le [#terrorism](#) que nous affrontons est au service d'une idéologie totalitaire et moyenâgeuse : le fondamentalisme islamiste." [#Oxford](#)

1 reply 84 retweets 35 likes



Marine Le Pen [Verified account](#) @MLP_officiel 11 Jan 2015

"Derrière le terrorisme, il y a une idéologie : le fondamentalisme islamiste." [#E1matin](#)

19 replies 117 retweets 62 likes



Marine Le Pen [Verified account](#) @MLP_officiel 16 Jan 2015

"Il est illusoire et dangereux de penser qu'il n'y a pas de lien entre l'[#immigration](#) et le développement de l'islamisme radical." [#ConfMLP](#)

18 replies 163 retweets 79 likes



Marine Le Pen [Verified account](#) @MLP_officiel 16 Jan 2015

"Les islamistes venus de [#Libye](#) et de [#Syrie](#), suite à la déstabilisation de ces territoires, représentent un problème crucial." [#ConfMLP](#)

7 replies 65 retweets 46 likes



Nicolas Bay [Verified account](#) @NicolasBay_ 21 Jan 2015

Valls ignore que l'immigration massive que nous subissons depuis 30 ans a tout à voir avec l'implantation de l'islam radical. [#ConfValls](#)

20 replies 169 retweets 41 likes



Marine Le Pen [Verified account](#) @MLP_officiel 16 Jan 2015

"Ce n'est aujourd'hui plus Ben Laden qui agit, mais des racailles de banlieue." [#ConfMLP](#)

46 replies 209 retweets 118 likes



Marine Le Pen [Verified account](#) @MLP_officiel 12 Jan 2015

"Quand va-t-on chercher les armes dans les banlieues ?" [#itélé](#)

59 replies 316 retweets 133 likes



Marine Le Pen [Verified account](#) @MLP_officiel 16 Jan 2015

"On a abandonné des quartiers à la loi des fondamentalistes." [#19hRuthElkrief](#)

11 replies 118 retweets 79 likes



Marine Le Pen [Verified account](#) @MLP_officiel 16 Jan 2015

"Il faut créer une brigade d'intervention, liée à la gendarmerie, pour désarmer les banlieues." [#19hRuthElkrief](#)

37 replies 202 retweets 124 likes



Marine Le Pen [Verified account](#) @MLP_officiel 16 Jan 2015

"L'excuse communément avancée des difficultés sociales n'explique pas le [#terrorisme](#). Je connais peu de terroristes agriculteurs." [#ConfMLP](#)

64 replies 349 retweets 147 likes



Marine Le Pen [Verified account](#) @MLP_officiel 7 Jan 2015

"Je crois que l'ensemble de la nation est uni dans la douleur et dans le sentiment que la France est attaquée." [#France2](#)

17 replies 195 retweets 131 likes



Marine Le Pen [Verified account](#) @MLP_officiel 7 Jan 2015

"Ce sont les islamistes qui ont déclaré la guerre à la France." [#France2](#)

209 replies 894 retweets 461 likes



Marine Le Pen [Verified account](#) @MLP_officiel 7 Jan 2015

"La France doit être en guerre contre le fondamentalisme islamiste." [#France2](#)

46 replies 282 retweets 184 likes



Marine Le Pen [Verified account](#) @MLP_officiel 12 Jan 2015

"Il faut éradiquer le fondamentalisme dans notre pays, sinon il se métastasera sur notre territoire." [#itélé](#)

29 replies 165 retweets 82 likes



Marine Le Pen [Verified account](#) @MLP_officiel 25 Jan 2015

"Ces attentats sont la conséquence du fondamentalisme islamiste, qui mène une guerre contre tout ce que représente la France." [@RTLFrance](#)

41 replies 153 retweets 86 likes



Marine Le Pen [Verified account](#) @MLP_officiel 12 Jan 2015

Au vu de la menace terroriste, le gouvernement doit immédiatement renoncer à la suppression de 7.500 postes par an dans l'Armée ! MLP

81 replies 561 retweets 274 likes



Florian Philippot [Verified account](#) @f_philippot 21 Jan 2015

L'armée et la sécurité n'attendent pas une baisse un peu moins rapide que prévu des effectifs et moyens mais une augmentation conséquente !

7 replies 95 retweets 37 likes



Marine Le Pen [Verified account](#) @MLP_officiel 16 Jan 2015

"Nous demandons la création d'une brigade anti-terroriste, dépendant de l'armée, pour aller rétablir l'ordre dans les banlieues." [#ConfMLP](#)

24 replies 217 retweets 107 likes



Marine Le Pen [Verified account](#) @MLP_officiel 16 Jan 2015

"Je lutte contre l'éventualité, l'hypothèse d'un choc des civilisations que certains souhaitent." [#ConfMLP](#)

23 replies 89 retweets 54 likes



Marine Le Pen [Verified account](#) @MLP_officiel 5 Feb 2015

"Il faut tout faire en France, au Royaume-Uni et en Europe pour éviter un choc des civilisations qui terrasserait notre continent." [#Oxford](#)

5 replies 63 retweets 36 likes

Tweets of the PVV that were used:



Geert Wilders [Geverifieerd account](#) @geertwilderspvt 7 jan. 2015

ENOUGH IS ENOUGH: geertwilders.nl/index.php/94-e.....

56 antwoorden 170 retweets 107 vind-ik-leuks



Machiel de Graaf [NL Verified account](#) @GraafdeMachiel 19 Jan 2015

Gratis taalles in moskee geef je maar in S-Arabië, Achmed! Daar geen vervelende scheiding Staat/moskee, dus doe! powned.tv/nieuws/binnenl.....

2 replies 19 retweets 3 likes



Fleur Agema @FleurAgemaPVV 11 Jan 2015

"@wierdduk: Van Duitse MinJus "mag" Pegida morgen niet demonstreren: t-online.de/nachrichten/de..." Leve De Vrijheid V Meningsuiting. Of niet?

15 replies 31 retweets 4 likes



Machiel de Graaf [NL Verified account](#) @GraafdeMachiel 10 Jan 2015

Kranten strooien volop zand en zout. In de doffe ogen van alle 'Charlies' en de open wond van de Vrijheid. Uitzondering: Prof. Smalhout.

4 replies 3 retweets 0 likes



Alexander van Hattem @AWJAvanHattem 8 Jan 2015

De ene Charlie is de andere niet cult.thepostonline.nl/column/de-ene..... via @TPOCult

0 replies 0 retweets 0 likes



Martin Bosma @Martinbosma_pvv 7 Jan 2015

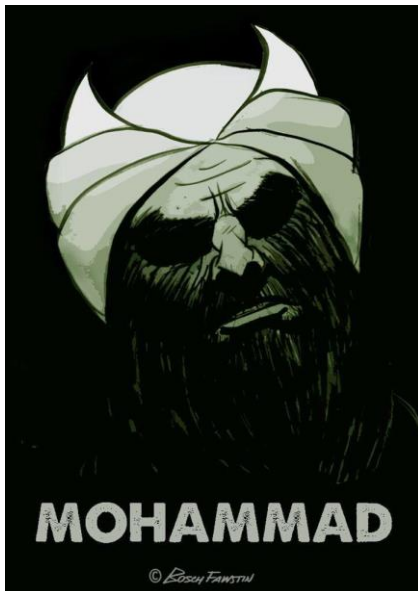
[#jesuishypocrite](#) Burgemeesters die aangifte deden tegen Wilders nu pro vrije mening

16 replies 96 retweets 21 likes



Geert Wilders [Geverifieerd account](#) @geertwilderspvv 10 jan. 2015

Slecht voorbeeld doet volgen. [#nomoreislam](#)



80 antwoorden 72 retweets 53 vind-ik-leuks



Geert Wilders [Geverifieerd account](#) @geertwilderspvv 5 feb. 2015

Ongelooflijk. Ipv moskeeën te sluiten komen er nieuwe wangedrochten bij. De islam hoort niet bij NL. [#nomoreislam](#)



Geert Wilders [Geverifieerd account](#) @geertwilderspvv 1 feb. 2015

Een stem op D66 is een stem voor meer EU, meer open grenzen, meer islam en meer bezuinigingen. D66 = ondergang van NL



Marcel de Graaff @MJRLdeGraaff 8 Jan 2015

De-islamization Now! RT [#islam](#)

Why are 25 countries 90-100% Muslim?

Afghanistan 99% Muslim	Mauritania 99.99% Muslim
Algeria 98.2% Muslim	Morocco 99% Muslim
Azerbaijan 93.4% Muslim	Niger 90% Muslim
Bangladesh 90.4% Muslim	Palestine 99% Muslim
Djibouti 94% Muslim	Pakistan 97% Muslim
Egypt 94.7% Muslim	Saudi Arabia 100% Muslim
Gambia 90% Muslim	Senegal 94% Muslim
Iran 99.7% Muslim	Somalia 99.9% Muslim
Iraq 97% Muslim	Syria 90% Muslim
Jordan 95% Muslim	Tajikistan 97% Muslim
Libya 97% Muslim	Turkey 99% Muslim
Maldives 100% Muslim	Tunisia 98% Muslim
Mali 90% Muslim	Yemen 99% Muslim

Because Islam is an intolerant, totalitarian religious fanaticism that teaches subjugation, conversion or genocide of other religious groups and ethnicities.

"About sixty-one percent of the contents of the Koran are found to speak ill of the unbelievers or call for their violent conquest; at best only 2.6 percent of the verses of the Koran are noted to show goodwill toward humanity. About seventy-five percent of Muhammad's biography (Sira) consists of jihad waged on unbelievers." –Dr. Moorthy Muthuswamy

3 replies 8 retweets 3 likes



Machiel de Graaf [NL Verified account](#) @GraafdeMachiel 7 Jan 2015

RT [@DiederikSmit](#) "De aanslag op Charlie Hebdo was zeer goed voorbereid." Klopt. In de zevende eeuw.

0 replies 7 retweets 2 likes



Machiel de Graaf [NL Verified account](#) @GraafdeMachiel 2 Feb 2015

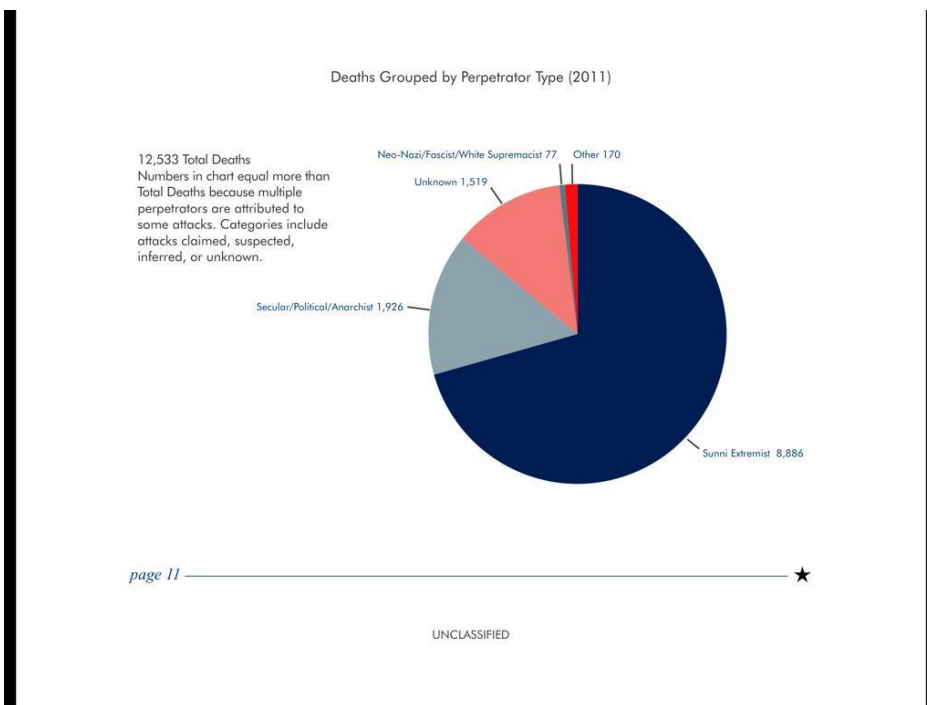
Linksmensen, uw aandacht aub!: m.nieuwsblad.be/cnt/dmf2015020..... Niks soosjale achterstand. Het is de islam. Die software hè, die software....

2 replies 10 retweets 1 like



Geert Wilders [Geverifieerd account](#) @geertwilderspvv 16 jan. 2015

Niet alle moslims zijn terroristen, maar zo ongeveer alle terroristen wel moslim. Sinds 2011 met ISIS nog duidelijker



84 antwoorden223 retweets91 vind-ik-leuks



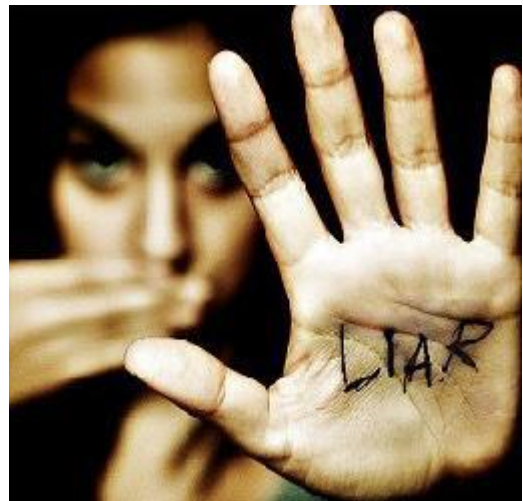
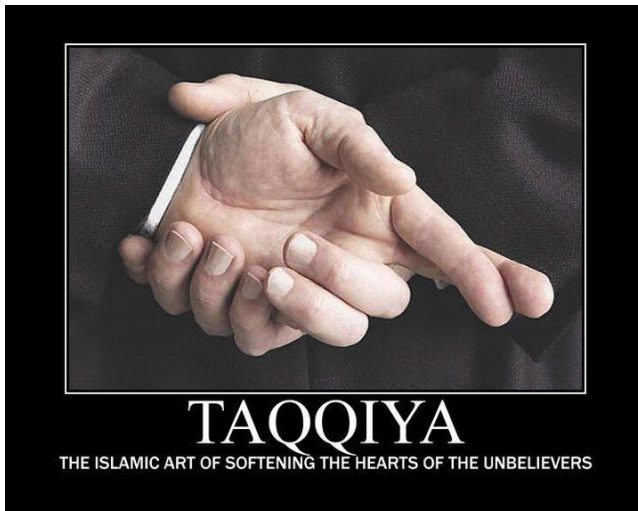
Geert Wilders [Geverifieerd account](#) @geertwilderspvv 24 jan. 2015

Koran 47:4: "When ye meet the unbelievers, smite at their necks and cause a bloodbath among them"



Geert Wilders [Geverifieerd account](#) @geertwilderspvv 31 jan. 2015

Never forget about TAQQIYA. thereligionofpeace.com/quran/011-taqi...



30 antwoorden89 retweets35 vind-ik-leuks



Marjolein Faber @pvmfaber 7 Jan 2015

En maar blijven roepen [#islam](#) is [#vrede](#). Stelletje halzen. Vervolging christenen neemt wereldwijd toe [nos.nl/artikel/201206.....](http://nos.nl/artikel/201206...)

2 replies12 retweets2 likes



Machiel de Graaf [LVerified account](#) @GraafdeMachiel 4 Feb 2015

NL spreken. Vraag 't niet aan de moslim die z'n dochter doodde vanwege 'te Westers', want dan ligt je hals open: bit.ly/1EFth95

3 replies19 retweets2 likes



Geert Wilders [Geverifieerd account](#) @geertwilderspvv 7 jan. 2015

Wanneer dringt het eindelijk door bij Rutte en andere westerse regeringsleiders: het is oorlog.

Twaalf doden bij aanval op satirisch tijdschrift Parijs

TERREURDAAD OP REDACTIE



LIVEBLOG Bij een zware terreuraanslag in het centrum van Parijs zijn woensdag twaalf doden gevallen. Gemaskerde mannen openden het vuur bij het hoofdkantoor van het satirische tijdschrift Charlie Hebdo. Vier mensen raakten zwaargewond.

181 antwoorden534 retweets205 vind-ik-leuks



Machiel de Graaf [NL Verified account](#) @GraafdeMachiel 7 Jan 2015

The West is at war and should de-islamize: bit.ly/11rhokK #GeertWilders #partyforfreedom #CharlieHebdo #freedomofspeech #islam

0 replies6 retweets3 likes



Marcel de Graaff @MJRLdeGraaff 7 Jan 2015

"Een volk dat voor tirannen zwicht, zal meer dan lijf en goed verliezen, dan dooft het licht."

[#CharlieHebdo](#) [#islam](#)

4 replies 7 retweets 4 likes