

# Murder of theo van gogh

[Sociology](#), [Violence](#)



Theo Van Gogh was a controversial and eccentric filmmaker who was murdered on November 2, 2004 by Mohammed Bouyeri, an Islamic terrorist (Buruma). In “ Murder in Amsterdam”, Ian Buruma uses this incident to exemplify factors which contribute to cultural tension in Liberal Europe, and, more specifically, Dutch society. Ian Buruma poses cultural identity issues, failure to provide infrastructure for successful integration, and the failure of multiculturalism as factors which threaten the social fabric of Dutch society in the early 21st century. The history of Dutch colonialism, as well as the varying experiences of Dutch people under Nazi occupation contribute to rhetoric which shapes the discussion of these modern issues.

Buruma portrays cultural identity conflicts as a force which threatens the fabric of Dutch society. When discussing identity, Buruma suggests overtones of a moral debate between two competing theories of moral absolutism, one religious, and the other secular. Second generation immigrants struggle to identify with either the sentimental religion of their parents, or The Enlightenment values adopted by many conservative Europeans. In Buruma’s opinion, this lack of one’s identity can be dangerous as, “ To prove their existence, to themselves and the world, people sometimes join great revolutionary causes, or embark on a mission to spread the word of God,” (Buruma 140). This vacillation between competing identities could be a factor in pushing one into extremism. On the other hand, Conservatives have tended to return back to Enlightenment values of secularism to cope with the failures of liberal multiculturalism, and the perceived loss of a strong European identity. This coping mechanism is, in Ian Buruma’s view, unhelpful as secularism is still an assertion of absolute

truth which fails to provide cultural common ground with second generation immigrants who are searching for a cultural identity (Buruma 34). The cultural alienation of many second-generation immigrants is perhaps compounded by the fact that Moroccan immigrants “lack the kinds of institutional support that give the Turkish immigrants a sense of belonging,” (Buruma 22).

In Buruma’s opinion, Cultural tension was also the result of inadequate infrastructure for integrating second wave Moroccan and Turkish immigrants and their children into Dutch society (Buruma 22). Ayaan Hirsi Ali, an immigrant from Kenya seeking to escape an arranged marriage wasn’t given an opportunity to learn the native language of her new homeland, “Instead of allowing her to take Dutch language classes, they wanted to get her jobs for which she was unsuited, jobs that required no language ability but a large tolerance for boredom,” (Buruma 160). The lack of infrastructure to integrate language created frustrations for native Dutch, when their neighbors suddenly didn’t share a language. “When masses of Moroccan and Turkish families were dumped in our neighborhood. They had no idea how to behave in our society,” Ayaan Hirsi Ali said, “The worst, really, is that we don’t speak the same language. You know, when your ceiling leaks and you can’t tell the neighbor upstairs to turn off their tap. People get irritated,” (Buruma 149). This illustrates the Dutch’s failure to facilitate social cohesion for immigrants. Another infrastructure problem for immigrants manifests itself in European welfare states. Buruma writes: “Europeans are proud of their welfare states, but they were not designed to absorb large numbers of immigrants,” (Buruma 203). Buruma also asserts that welfare states can

have the unfortunate side effect of undermining an immigrant's motivation to become more involved in Dutch society, if government subsidies are more lucrative than some jobs. For this reason, the "harsher system" (Buruma 203) of the US could be more effective at integrating large numbers of immigrants.

Buruma argues that, in the eyes of the Dutch, World War II was a spot of national shame due to NSBers collaborating with the Nazis, and many citizens turning a blind eye to the Nazi's actions. The role of the Dutch in World War II wasn't entirely bad, and there were still acts of heroism. However, never being "wholly good nor wholly bad," (Buruma 79) has caused the war to linger, vexing public memory, and influencing discourse. Buruma argues that "current affairs keep on taking on the colors of the past," (Buruma 96). In addition to their WWII's frequent reference in the area of politics, Buruma also alludes to its prominence in pop culture, sport, and the public eye (Buruma 261). Buruma's explanation of Ayaan Hirsi Ali's viewpoint betrays the effect of the second World War on the discussion of current issues:

"She was neither a xenophobe nor opposed to immigrants (how could she be?). But she had called the Dutch cowards, like those people during the war who looked away while their neighbors were being deported. She had lamented their weakness in not standing up to the Islamist threat," (Buruma 264). The use of references of WWII largely seems to favor those opposed to multiculturalism, who can play on the public's guilt for not doing something.

The Dutch colonial presence in Guiana resulted in waves of Surinamese immigrants (Buruma 19). The thousands of Surinamese who came in 1972 with the second wave of immigration overwhelmed Dutch society and contributed to economic and social problems in the Netherlands (Buruma 20). Dutch colonialism is important in this respect, because its aftermath led to the mass immigration contributed to the cultural tensions of the 21st century.

To conclude, cultural identity issues, failure to provide infrastructure for successful integration, and the failure of multiculturalism are forces that threaten the social fabric of Dutch society in the early 21st century, according to Buruma. In addition, the history of Dutch colonialism, as well as the varying experiences of Dutch people under Nazi occupation contribute to rhetoric which shapes the discourse and public opinion surrounding these issues. Though the murder of Theo Van Gogh, Buruma brings to light a multitude of factors which threaten to tear apart the fabric of Dutch society.