

Headlines:

- **Islam Might be Dressed up as a Religion - Geert Wilders**
- **Why do so many Americans Believe that Islam is a Political Ideology, not a Religion?**
- **As US Aid and Influence Shrinks in Pakistan, China Steps In**

Details:

Islam might be Dressed up as a Religion - Geert Wilders

The Netherlands votes in just over a week. Dutch politicians have intensified their campaigns ahead of next Wednesday's (March 15) general election. Three quarters of voters have yet to decide who to vote for. Conservative Dutch Prime Minister Mark Rutte's People's Party for Freedom and Democracy (VVD) is performing very well in opinion polls. "We are now number one in the polls, but we still have the Freedom Party just behind us, Geert Wilders, so there is still a big risk that he could come out number one, so I think that it would be very bad news. I will fight very hard for my party to get out first," said Rutte. Geert Wilders, from the anti-Islam, anti-EU Party for Freedom (PVV), wants to leave the EU and quit the eurozone. Wilders wants to close the borders to all refugees, shut down mosques and ban the Koran. "The Koran really, for instance if you look at anti-Semitism, the Koran has more anti-Semitism in it than Mein Kampf, the book of another totalitarian violent ideology," Wilders told Euronews. "So rather I would have no Koran at all as we in Holland at least have outlawed Mein Kampf as well." "I believe that the Koran and the Islam more especially might be dressed up as a religion," added Wilders. "It has a holy book, it has a temple. It has Imams. But in reality, it is not so much a religion but an ideology." Wilders continued: "Young children in Holland — at the end of the day you want to integrate, want to get Dutch friends, have a normal life in the society — should not be able to go to an Islamic school and grow up and be educated with intolerance, with hate and with violence. I believe that the constitutional rights would not even have to be granted to something that is not a religion but an ideology." Polls indicate Wilders' Party for Freedom will double its seats in parliament to between 29 and 35 seats. About five percent of the Netherlands population is Muslim. The Dutch were renowned for multicultural tolerance, but immigration has taken centre stage in the campaigning. "Personally I am not very afraid for myself, but I am afraid for others though, because the hatred he [Wilders] spreads can make people blind and make people not listen to each other and it divides people," said Dutch Muslim Dounia Jari. Paradoxically, many Dutch voters are in favor of populism in these times of economic wellbeing. But an austerity campaign under Rutte hit middle- and lower-income Dutch much harder than the rich. [Source: Euronews]

Anti-neoliberalism and Islamophobia are providing much of the impetus behind populist movements across Europe. After Brexit could Dexit be next? One thing is certain, many Dutch people share Wilder's views, and overtime these views will give rise to a dominant political ideology, which will fuel Dutch hyper-nationalism.

Why do so many Americans Believe that Islam is a Political Ideology, not a Religion?

For many Americans, last week's executive order on immigration was a clear case of religious discrimination since it singles out Muslim-majority countries and gives preferential treatment to non-Muslim refugees from those countries. Google Islam, religion and politics, and it's easy to find websites like PoliticalIslam.com, which claims to use "statistical methods" to prove that "Islam is far more of a political system than a religion." The argument travels outside the Internet fringe of conspiracy theories. "When we discuss 'Islam,' it should be assumed that we are talking about both a religion and a political-social ideology," former assistant U.S. Attorney Andrew C. McCarthy wrote in the *National Review* in 2015. "Islam is not even a religion; it is a political system that uses a deity to advance its agenda of global conquest," said John Bennett, a Republican lawmaker in the Oklahoma state legislature, in 2014. A thoughtful, educated evangelical pastor recently told me that he thinks "religious liberty just needs to be protected for all belief systems, but there also needs to be clarity as to if Islam is fully a religion, or if it's really a political movement disguised as a religion." The growing popularity of this idea speaks to a profound disconnect in American conversations about faith — and it offers a way that many self-proclaimed advocates of religious liberty might defend discriminatory policies against Muslims. Wajahat Ali, a writer, attorney, and the lead author of "Fear, Inc.," a report on American Islamophobia, traces the idea's recent surge to anti-Islam activists David Yerushalmi and Frank Gaffney. In 2010, Gaffney's Center for Security Policy published a report, "Shariah: The Threat to America," arguing that Muslim religious law, or sharia, was actually a dangerous political ideology that a cabal of Muslims hoped to impose on the United States. "Though it certainly has spiritual elements, it would be a mistake to think of shariah as a 'religious' code in the Western sense," the report argued. It also suggested banning "immigration of those who adhere to shariah ... as was previously done with adherents to the seditious ideology of communism." The idea of Islam as a political ideology fits well with our particular political moment. Since the fall of communism, some Western intellectuals, most notably the late Harvard political scientist Samuel Huntington, have argued that the next great global struggle will be between Western civilization and Islamic civilization. "The ideology that is against the U.S. or the American values used to be communism, and now it's Islam. And it cannot be Islam as a religion. It has to be Islam as a political ideology," said Jocelyne Cesari, a professor at the University of Birmingham in Britain. [Source: Washington Post]

For several decades, the West wanted everyone to believe that Islam was just like Christianity—a mere religion. Today, after witnessing the global Islamic resurgence, American thinkers want to define Islam as it should be portrayed—a political ideology. However, their motives are different. The want to galvanize the American populace to prepare for a long-lasting war against Islam.

As US Aid and Influence Shrinks in Pakistan, China Steps In

As the Trump administration plots its policy toward a key partner, it will find Pakistan being drawn deeper into Beijing's embrace and its promise of \$46 billion in energy, infrastructure and industry investments by 2030. The money could transform the Muslim nation's economy. Washington, by contrast, is losing faith in how much its largesse can

influence Pakistan. Many frustrated U.S. policymakers see Pakistan as a terrorist haven that some \$30 billion in security and economic assistance since the 9/11 attacks has failed to fix. But an American retreat could have broad implications for its ability to maintain stability in a regional powder keg of extremism, weak governance and various potential conflicts. U.S. assistance to Pakistan has been declining since 2011 when American commandos killed Osama bin Laden inside Pakistan, straining relations. And as the U.S. troop presence in neighboring Afghanistan has shrunk, Pakistan has become a lower priority. Aid could decline further as President Donald Trump proposes drastic cuts to diplomacy and foreign aid budgets. China is also concerned about militancy in Pakistan, particularly by ethnic Uighur groups that have reportedly sought refuge in the Pakistan-Afghanistan border region and forged links with al-Qaida and the Taliban. But above all, China sees strategic and economic opportunities in Pakistan. The unlikely alliance is a critical part of China's ambitious "One Belt, One Road" project to link markets in Asia and Europe. Pakistan's offer of access to the Indian Ocean could reduce China's reliance on the chokepoint of the Malacca Strait in Southeast Asia for oil imports from the Mideast, and help spur development in China's land-locked far west. Chinese private investors are planning \$35 billion in energy generation and transmission projects, he said. Some 10,000 megawatts of power is slated to come online by 2018. That can hugely boost the country's generation capacity of just 22,000 megawatts. Chinese loans also will fund more than \$10 billion in roads, rail and facilities at a deep sea port. While Trump hasn't outlined any Pakistan approach, Congress is laying down markers. Last year, lawmakers blocked U.S. funding for sales of F-16 fighter jets to Pakistan and for this year are withholding \$400 million in coalition support funds until the U.S. defense secretary certifies that Pakistan has taken action on a Taliban faction long favored by the nation's military and intelligence services. On the economic front, U.S. assistance has failed to leave a "footprint" like China's investment, said Ishrat Hussain, a former Pakistani central bank governor. Hussain said the benefits of China's investment will take at least a couple of years to be felt but could end power outages that have crippled industry and establish road and rail links to spur the nation's neglected western flank. He urged America to focus on fostering science and technology in Pakistan. [Source: ABC News]

Pakistan is in the midst of a struggle between two great powers fighting for the future of Eurasia. Rather than being used as a pawn, Pakistan can easily turn the tables via the re-establishment of Khilafah Rashida.