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Lucardie, Paul; Voerman, G.

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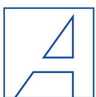
Exposing the Demagogues

Right-wing and National Populist Parties in Europe

Karsten Grabow and Florian Hartleb (Eds.)



Exposing the Demagogues

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Karsten Grabow and Florian Hartleb (Eds.)

Konrad Adenauer Stiftung

CES CENTRE FOR EUROPEAN STUDIES

Centre for European Studies
Rue du commerce 20
B-1000 Brussels

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Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung e.V
Klingelhöferstraße 23
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Foreword

The European financial and—partly stemming from this—fiscal crisis is the most severe economic crisis to have occurred since the 1920s. As with every crisis of such dimensions, it has created insecurity and doubt about the existing political systems and institutional arrangements. These concerns are being exploited by nationalistic parties and the virulent media, and are solely focused on the national political arena. National self-interest and prejudices against European neighbours and fellow European citizens are increasing: southern Europeans are portrayed as averse to work and unwilling to reform, northern Europeans as lacking solidarity. Abusive comparisons with Fascism have even been made.

The boost to populist parties and the receptivity of the public to their messages have been facilitated by the current crisis. The magnitude of the electoral gains that populist parties have been able to acquire due to their anti-European slogans and programmes is surprising and worrying. They succeed by delivering apparently straightforward solutions, which are often derived from national interest, to what are actually complex political problems—solutions that have persuasive power amongst a broad audience. This kind of nationalist and anti-European rhetoric endangers not only economic prosperity, but also democracy.

The current study on populism, *Exposing the Demagogues: Right-wing and National Populist Parties in Europe,* by the Centre for European Studies (CES) and the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung (KAS) has been published just in time. The editors, Karsten Grabow and Florian Hartleb, have combined detailed case studies from Western and Eastern European countries with in-depth transnational comparative analyses. They have succeeded in painting a picture of the recent success of populist parties throughout Europe's political landscape by displaying their facilitating and inhibiting factors.

The study also acts as a warning that we must not waver in our commitment to a strong European Union, the world's most successful community of peace and freedom. We must not forget that the EU transformed opponents and enemies into partners and friends in a very short period of time. If we leave the floor to Europe's populist parties—such as Jean-Marie Le Pen's National Front or Geert Wilder's Party for Freedom—they will happily sacrifice everything we have achieved over the last few decades for their own political profit.

The CES–KAS study makes a valuable contribution to explaining this danger; the title *Exposing the Demagogues* is well chosen. As the individual chapters of the study demonstrate, the populists' anti-European propaganda is receiving more and more support from European citizens. Populists' characterisation of European politics as elitist and bureaucratic; their disapproval of any further steps towards European integration; and their dissatisfaction with financial solidarity transfers, which have most benefited the crisis-ridden states in the south of Europe—all of these factors have prompted electoral success for populists in many European states. Populist parties exploit a pre-existing lack of confidence that is increasingly causing European citizens to turn away from European politics and the political system. By doing this, the parties are intensifying the crisis with their populist views and rhetoric.

This complex of problems is aggravated by the lack of a truly transnational European public space where current problems can be discussed in an appropriate European context. The media in particular must move the focus of their attention away from the national political arena towards the European one. As long as politicians and the media focus mainly on the national level, it will be easy for populists, such as Le Pen, to sustain this disruptive, and ultimately destructive, form of politics.

The growing number of anti-European parties and their increasing electoral successes are worrying from a political point of view. They pose a threat to national Christian Democratic and conservative parties and to the European People's Party, which is highly committed to European integration. We must not encourage those who, in the face of current challenges, consider the European idea detrimental. We must tackle the populists on their own ground by exposing their slogans as nationalist propaganda and their programmes as unfeasible and even damaging if implemented on a European level. The examples of Sweden and Poland show us that the best way to beat the populist parties is through successful policymaking by the mainstream parties.

It is of equal importance that we increase our efforts to better explain generic policies and to regain the trust of Europe's citizens. We must better illustrate the measures we have chosen in response to the financial and fiscal crisis, and our achievements thus far. We must emphasise that a sustainable and enduring solution can only be reached through *more* Europe. In this regard we have to make it clear that Europe is much more than just a community of purpose.

If we do not succeed in this matter, all the achievements which we have accomplished in the course of European integration, and which today we take for granted, will be endangered at some point in the future. Such an outcome would also pose a threat to the peace of the European continent.

As Jean-Claude Juncker once said: ‘Those who doubt Europe and those who despair of Europe should visit Europe’s military cemeteries. There is no other place where one could get a better, more touching and more powerful feeling for what Europeans can bring about for the worst if they work against each other.’

Elmar Brok MEP

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Preface

After the failure of Timo Soini, party chair of The (True) Finns, in the Finnish presidential elections of January 2012, or the moderate losses of the Danish People's Party in the Danish parliamentary election of November 2011, one could be forgiven for thinking that Europe's right-wing populists were in decline. But even if we take into consideration the setback of the Dutch Party for Freedom in the most recent parliamentary election of September 2012, it is clear that Europe's right-wing populists are far from being marginalised. In some countries they have even become the largest or second-largest parties, as in Switzerland and Norway. Marine Le Pen's National Front gained an impressive 17.9% of the votes cast in the French presidential election of April 2012. Although she failed to get into the second round of the election, her result was even better than that of her father 10 years previously. And a few weeks later, the National Front came close to breaking its 1997 record by winning almost 14% of the vote and two seats in the French parliament—making it the third-largest party in France.

Right-wing populists have become firmly established as relevant and serious political players, who exercise significant political influence, both on their country's politics and at the European level. What is remarkable is that the right-wing populists have recalibrated their propaganda, moving away from xenophobia to some extent and towards pronounced Euroscepticism, and that this recalibration has turned out to be quite successful. Whether in the Finnish parliamentary election of April 2011, the French elections of 2012 or even in the Netherlands, if we consider the reasons for this early election, criticism of 'distant' EU practices in general, and of further European integration in particular; open aversion to further financial transfers for crisis-shaken economies; and prejudice against 'too much power in Brussels' have brought the populists considerable electoral support.

For all actors involved in EU politics these signs should be taken seriously. They clearly point to a growing distance between the EU superstructures and modes of policymaking on the one hand, and the expectations and concerns of a growing proportion of voters in EU Member States on the other. As two political think tanks either directly involved in EU politics or deeply committed in the idea of European integration, the Centre for European Studies and the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung have decided, not

Geert Wilders and the Party for Freedom in the Netherlands: A Political Entrepreneur in the Polder

Paul Lucardie and Gerrit Voerman

INTRODUCTION

Pillarisation may have prevented the rise of populist movements in the Netherlands, at least until the end of the twentieth century. After all, pillarisation (*verzuiling* in Dutch) implies that the population is divided and organised along ideological and religious lines. Catholics attend Catholic schools and universities, join Catholic trade unions, read Catholic newspapers and magazines, listen to Catholic radio, watch Catholic television and vote for a Catholic party, while Calvinists and Social Democrats do the same (*mutatis mutandis*). So the notion of a homogeneous people, which constitutes a defining characteristic of any populist movement, does not make sense in a pillarised society. Dutch Catholics tended to identify with their Catholic elite, much more than with other segments of the Dutch people. So did the Calvinists and the Social Democrats. Occasionally Dutch politicians used populist rhetoric, but even when they pretended to appeal to the Dutch people at large, they had in mind their own pillar. Attempts by dissident or maverick politicians to mobilise people from different pillars for a populist movement did occur, but were short-lived and not very successful (Lucardie and Voerman 2012, 21–36).

Towards the end of the twentieth century, pillars disintegrated. As a result of secularisation, individualisation, increasing mobility and the development of the mass media, individuals identified less and less with a religious or ideological pillar. The ties between the pillarised organisations weakened. Catholic universities, newspapers and broadcasting associations no longer

supported the Catholic party, while the Catholic trade unions merged with the Social Democrats' unions. In 1980, the Catholic party merged with the two main Protestant parties into the Christian Democratic Party (Christen Democratisch Appel, CDA). Increasing numbers of Catholics and Protestants no longer voted automatically for a religious party but switched to the Social Democrats (Partij van de Arbeid, PvdA) or the conservative liberal party (Volkspartij voor Vrijheid en Democratie, VVD).

At the same time, the ideological differences between the major parties seemed to diminish. The Christian Democrats reduced their emphasis on the ideals of a corporatist economy and of a Christian society with Christian morals, while the Social Democrats relinquished their ambitions for a planned economy and came to accept the market version. Thus the political elites as well as the Dutch people became more homogeneous, creating a potential for populist movements (Thomassen 2000, 206–9).

In the 1990s the potential was realised to only a modest extent by a number of parties. In 1994 an ethnocentric nationalist party with populist demands for direct democracy—named Centre Democrats in order to avoid any associations with the extreme right—obtained three seats in the Tweede Kamer, the lower house of parliament, but disintegrated rapidly and disappeared from the scene in 1998 (Lucardie and Voerman 2012, 31–2; Lucardie 1998). In 1994 the Socialist Party (Socialistische Partij, SP) entered parliament with two seats; it had been founded in 1971 as the Communist Party of the Netherlands (Marxist–Leninist) but gradually shed its Maoism, Leninism and Marxism and shifted towards a left-wing Social Democracy, while retaining its populist appeal to the people and its critique of the political elite in the Netherlands (Lucardie and Voerman 2012, 37–69; Voerman 2011; Voerman 2012). It would grow rather rapidly, mobilising more voters as well as registering more members. Yet this party will not concern us here, as it is definitely not a right-wing or a national populist party.

At about the same time, local parties emerged in several Dutch cities that articulated a populist critique of the political elite as pursuing selfish ambitions and realising grand urban renewal projects without consideration for the interests of the people and the quality of life (*leefbaarheid*) in the community. In 1999 the leaders of two of these local parties decided to set up a national party, called Leefbaar Nederland (Liveable Netherlands), with a populist platform (Lucardie and Voerman 2012, 71–82). Two years later,

the party elected a rather peculiar political leader, with the name of Pim (originally Wilhelmus) Fortuyn.

Fortuyn was peculiar because of his exuberant, theatrical personality, his whims, his almost exhibitionistic homosexuality and his maverick political past. He started as a Marxist, joined the PvdA in 1973 but left it in 1989 and had flirted with VVD and CDA without joining either party. As a professional public speaker and columnist for a weekly magazine, he had criticised the political establishment as well as multiculturalism in the Netherlands and warned against creeping Islamisation. Multiculturalism had been a taboo topic in Dutch politics until that point. When the leader of the Centre Democrats called for abolition of the multicultural society without clarifying what he meant he was condemned in court for racial discrimination, and he and his party were boycotted in parliament.

When Fortuyn refused to tone down his criticism of the 'backward' Islamic culture and argued for the abolition of the ban on discrimination in the constitution, the leadership of Leefbaar Nederland expelled him. In February 2002 he founded his own party, the List Pim Fortuyn (Lijst Pim Fortuyn, LPF). The party's primary goal was to return power to the people through direct election of public officials, as well as a radical reform of public administration.[1] This relatively moderate populism was combined with moderate nationalism and economic as well as cultural liberalism—and a bit of Islamophobia (Lucardi and Voerman 2012, 102–15; Lucardie 2008, 158–60). With his charismatic and theatrical personality, Fortuyn received substantial media attention and managed to break through the taboo surrounding nationalism and Islamophobia. He paid a price. On 6 May 2002, he was assassinated by a leftist animal-rights activist. Nine days later, his party won 17% of the popular vote and became the second-largest party in parliament, with 26 out of 150 seats. It proved to be a pyrrhic victory. The party joined a government coalition with CDA and VVD which collapsed within three months because of a rapidly escalating conflict between two of its ministers that polarised and paralysed the parliamentary group as well as the party leadership. Expelled from the government, the party failed to close ranks. By 2006, it had lost all credibility as well as its parliamentary seats. A year later it disbanded.

1 According to Fortuyn, municipalities should gain more power at the expense of central government, and public services like schools and hospitals should become smaller, less bureaucratic and more transparent, in short, more accountable to elected politicians (Fortuyn 2002, 133–51, 183–6).

Yet populism did not die with Fortuyn and his party. Many supporters of the LPF switched in 2006 to a new party, founded the same year by an independent member of parliament who had deserted the VVD in 2004. Geert Wilders was a very different person than Fortuyn—less extraverted and less exuberant, far from exhibitionistic—but he shared many of his ideas and recognised that Fortuyn prepared the ground for him (Buijt 2012). Initially he was more of a conservative Liberal with modest populist and nationalist tendencies, but gradually his populism became stronger while his liberalism receded into the background (Vossen 2011). In 2006 his Party for Freedom (Partij voor de Vrijheid, PVV) entered parliament with nine seats. It obtained four seats in the European Parliament in 2009.[2] The PVV took part in very few municipal elections; in 2010 it participated only in The Hague and Almere, a commuter town near Amsterdam, where, however, it became the largest party. In the parliamentary election of 2010 the party won almost 16% of the popular vote and 24 seats. Subsequently, it signed a 'toleration agreement' with CDA and VVD, which formed a minority government. The PVV supported the government in many but not all cases. The financial and economic crisis made cooperation increasingly difficult, however, as the PVV refused to agree to cutbacks in welfare, pensions or health care and refused to bow to the diktat of Brussels. In April 2012 the government resigned. In the provincial elections of 2011 its share of the vote had gone down to 12%; in the general elections of 12 September 2012 it declined to 10%. The loss of nine seats can be attributed to the role of the party in the crisis (avoiding responsibility), but possibly also to growing internal troubles (see below) and the radicalisation of some of its positions, specifically its strong rejection of the European Union.

ELECTORATE

The electorate of the PVV was concentrated to some extent in peripheral areas in the south-west, south-east and north-east of the Netherlands and in the commuter towns around Rotterdam and Amsterdam, though in the capital city itself fewer than 5% voted for the party in 2006 and 9% in 2010. The electorate was predominantly secular. Three-quarters of the voters in 2006 did not belong to any religious denomination, which is more than

2 When the Netherlands acquired an additional seat, it was assigned to the PVV but the candidate who occupied it was expelled from the party for drunken driving so the party continued to have four seats.

average.[3] It was also more urban or suburban and young and male than average, while the income and educational level were a little below average.

In 2010 the electorate had expanded, mainly at the expense of PvdA and SP, but its composition had hardly changed (Schmeets 2011, 226–8). Dissatisfaction was probably a key motive for voting for the PVV. Compared with other voters in 2010, PVV supporters were the least satisfied with government policy over the previous three years and with the way that Dutch democracy operated. They had less confidence in political parties, parliament and government, they were the most cynical about politicians and had the least confidence in their own political influence and effectiveness. As to be expected, their political views tied in fairly closely with the PVV programme. They felt that immigrants needed to integrate, that the number of refugees admitted should be minimised and that Muslims should not be let in at all. They also believed that the government should take a tougher stance on crime, that the Netherlands spends too much money on development aid, that European unification had gone much too far and that Turkey should not join the European Union. PVV voters adopted the most extreme conservative or right-wing positions on all these issues, but differed less from other parties on other issues. On gay marriage, pensions, nuclear power plants, home mortgage-interest deductions and tax cuts, PVV voters did not differ significantly from the average voter. In a classic left-versus-right issue like income distribution, they occupied a moderate left position, fairly close to that of the PvdA voters. Wilders's winning formula of a combination between socio-economically left-wing views and socioculturally right-wing ideas had indeed succeeded, at least in 2010. In 2012 the PVV lost more than a third of its electorate. Many voters may have returned to the VVD and the SP.[4]

PROGRAMME, TOPICS, MOBILISATION STRATEGIES

The ideology of the PVV can be considered a blend of nationalism, anti-Islamism, populism, conservatism and liberalism. The liberal elements became weaker over time, while nationalism, anti-Islamism and populism became stronger.

3 The data were provided by Dr Henk van der Kolk (University of Twente). See also the Appendix in K. Aarts et al. (2007, 275–82.).

4 At the time of writing, exact data were not available.

When he was a Member of Parliament for the VVD, Wilders criticised the welfare state and Dutch corporatism from a classical liberal perspective (Fennema 2010, 39–47). He did not seem very happy with the 'purple' coalition between his party and the PvdA and the left-wing liberal party Democrats 66 (Democraten 66, D66). In 2004 he and another MP wrote a pamphlet advocating a right-wing turn for his party, giving priority to issues such as fighting Islamic terrorism, increasing punishment for serious crimes, deregulation and a reduction of foreign aid (Fennema 2010, 81–2). The party leadership was irritated by the pamphlet and asked Wilders to withdraw it. When he refused, a break with the party became inevitable. In the first election platform of the PVV, liberal and conservative issues such as tax reduction, crime and security came before immigration and democratic reforms. The party wanted to reduce government subsidies and cut the size of the civil service, yet hire more policemen, nurses and teachers. It favoured liberalisation in the environmental sector, but not with respect to immigration policies (PVV 2006, 407–10). The PVV also proved liberal with respect to moral issues like gay rights or euthanasia, even if these did not figure in party platforms. After 2006, the liberal elements in the ideology of the PVV receded into the background, though they did not disappear altogether. The party remained conservative in its position on crime and punishment. In the socio-economic realm, however, it no longer strove for liberal reforms but opted for 'unqualified defense of the welfare state' and a 'social Netherlands', without reduction of pensions or social security, without rent increases and without cutbacks in health care (PVV 2012, 22–5). On these issues the PVV seemed to take almost Social Democratic positions, but perhaps 'Social Conservative' (in the sense that the PVV is radically opposed to welfare reforms) would be a better label.

Even if social policies gained importance for the PVV, its core business became more and more the struggle against mass immigration, Islam and European integration. Islamisation and European integration undermined the independence of the Netherlands, Wilders argued in his first publication after the break with the VVD (Wilders 2005, 103–4). Given his concern with national independence, it seems justified to call him a nationalist, though he preferred the term 'patriot', as he associated nationalism with destruction and hatred (Schwarz 2007). Here we use 'nationalism' in a more neutral sense, as an ideology that centres on the independence and identity of the nation, not necessarily on conquest or domination of other nations. Independence was undermined by two not unrelated trends, according to Wilders: Islamisation and the development of a European superstate. Mass immigration and multiculturalist policies had contributed

to the growing influence of Muslims in Dutch society and elsewhere in Europe. European integration encouraged multiculturalism and migration.

Wilders's ideologue, the political scientest Martin Bosma (2010, 291-303), suggested that the left-wing elites in Europe felt a lot of sympathy for Islamic values. Perhaps the elites were also concerned about Islamic terrorism and a shortage of oil in the future and hoped to stave off these threats by pacifying Islamic minorities in their countries (Niemöller 2007, 34). Islam was not a religion but a political ideology in the eyes of the PVV, in many ways similar to fascism. It did not need the support of a majority of the population in order to win power, Bosma argued. History shows that fanatical minorities can capture power even against the will of the majority (Bosma 2010, 321). The Koran was a 'fascist book' that should be banned (Wilders 2007), Islamic schools should be closed, no more mosques should be built and immigration from Islamic countries should stop. Immigration from non-Islamic countries should not be encouraged either, especially migrant workers from Eastern Europe. Immigrants who committed a crime, who lost their job or who failed to adapt to Dutch culture should be expelled. Even immigrants who behaved well would not be entitled to social security for the first 10 years of their stay. Dutch language and history should get more attention in school.

In 2012 the PVV even called for a return to the guilder and an exit from the EU (PVV 2012, 17). The party centered its election campaign in 2012 on this issue, while the Islamisation issue receded somewhat into the background. The title of the election manifesto was rather revealing: 'Their Brussels, Our Netherlands!' (Hún Brussel, óns Nederland). And in a curious redefinition of the term 'nationalism' the party explained that while 'other parties opt for Islam or EU-nationalism, we opt for the Netherlands' (PVV 2012, 7). The PVV demanded that the bureaucrats in Brussels stop interfering with immigration, environmental protection, employment and financial policies in the Netherlands.

Nationalism was linked to populism. The progressive and cosmopolitan elites were fostering immigration and Islamisation, against the will of innocent people. 'The Left is in power', according to Bosma (2010, 319), and 'Leftists control the civil service, the arts, the media, the unions, the judiciary, the universities, and they distribute the millions and the jobs in the subsidy network of the left . . . That elite has been in power for 40 years already, almost everywhere in society'.[5]

5 All quotations have been translated by the authors.

Whereas the leftist elite encouraged mass immigration, Bosma (2010, 329) claims that 'the Dutch people has always opposed vehemently mass immigration, Islam and the multicultural project'. The people also disagree with the climate theories of Al Gore, the European superstate, foreign aid, art subsidies and mild punishments for criminals (PVV 2010, 317). Only the people could stop these dangerous trends and save the country, in the eyes of the PVV. 'Only the goodness and toughness of our citizens could cause a reversal of the trend. In history, it was always the ordinary people who took up arms when they were let down by the elites' (Bosma 2010, 325). Therefore, the people should receive more power, the power to veto legislation through a referendum and to elect a prime minister. Members of the Hoge Raad, the Supreme Court, should also be elected by the people (PVV 2012, 29–33).

To sum up, the PVV has become increasingly nationalist and populist since its foundation, while liberal ideas have faded away or receded into the background and given way to a certain type of social conservatism with respect to the welfare state, as well as crime and justice issues. The shift may be explained at least to some extent in terms of electoral strategy. In an interview, Wilders stated: 'We have a cultural-conservative profile, but we managed to break into the [electorate of the] left. They have not patented issues like health care, social security or labour market policies' (Staal and Staps 2011). This strategy worked, at least in 2010.

Of the new voters that the party managed to win in that year, almost a third seemed to come from the left, from people who had previously voted for PvdA or SP (Lucardie and Voerman 2012, 177). They tended to be less educated and less well-to-do than average. They may have been the losers of modernisation, but the data are not specific enough to warrant this conclusion.

INTRA-PARTY DYNAMICS

Groep Wilders (Wilders Group) was the official name of the new one-man party in the Dutch lower house of parliament. In November 2004 Wilders had also established the foundation Stichting Groep Wilders to enable him to collect money and hire staff. Wilders took his time setting up the new party in a bid to avoid the mistakes of his predecessor Pim Fortuyn. Fortuyn had whipped up a party organisation almost overnight, but it soon fell apart as a result of internal conflicts. Efforts to build the movement

got slowly underway in March 2005, when Wilders launched a website, published a manifesto and began recruiting parliamentary candidates. The new PVV was launched in February 2006.

In organisational terms the PVV was not actually a party as it had only two formal members: the natural person Wilders and the legal person, Stichting Groep Wilders. Wilders, who was and still is under constant security protection, was also the only member of the foundation's executive board. This was to prevent the names and addresses of other board members being traced through the Chamber of Commerce (Bosma 2010, 26). The party thus consisted of Wilders and Wilders, a remarkable legal construction by which the party was obliged to dance to Wilders's tune. Party platforms were drafted only by Wilders and candidates for elections were appointed by Wilders alone.

The PVV did not recruit any members, initially for fear of infiltration by right-wing extremists and troublemakers, but later also for ideological reasons. Wilders's ideologue Bosma argued that a virtual or network party without members would only be accountable to the Dutch voter, not to an 'odd, non-elected intermediate layer' of party activists that called the shots within the party organisation (Bosma 2010, 30–1). According to Bosma, party activists would try to keep at bay any new ideas arising within society and would be concerned primarily with their own power: the structure of a member-based party has a disruptive effect on democracy. In his view the PVV was the first modern party of the Netherlands, much more democratic than the old member-based parties. 'A memberless party means adding elements of direct democracy to indirect (representative) democracy' (Bosma 2010, 215).

While the decision to form a virtual party was dictated initially by practical considerations, if it were up to Bosma the model would be retained on principle. He predicted that the PVV was the model of the future. Rather than an association, the PVV should in fact become a foundation, which would require no members at all. The only problem was that the Electoral Act did not allow this if the PVV wished to contest elections under its own name. This antipathy towards political parties on the part of Wilders, and especially Bosma, seems to be characteristic of all populists, although few go so far as to reject any form of member-based organisation.

The PVV did in fact recruit informal members, if we also include staff, volunteers and parliamentary candidates. This was no easy matter, however, because of the anticipated risks to their personal security and possible consequences for their public careers. From the spring of 2005, Wilders had been receiving and questioning prospective parliamentary candidates at a highly secret address. Those who proved suitable then received political training. In August 2006 Wilders presented 19 candidates: 4 women and 15 men. In political terms they were amateurs rather than politicians or party activists; only three had any political experience at the local or provincial level.

From 2006 to 2010 Wilders succeeded in keeping the ranks closed; if there were any internal conflicts, almost none of it got out. Two MPs became embroiled in scandals, but Wilders did not expel them and managed to limit the political damage. Party discipline was very strict. However, after the early general elections of June 2010 the number of MPs increased from 9 to 24. Several candidates on the list turned out to be of dubious repute; some withdrew, others entered parliament and retained their seats. Wilders did not expel them from the party, perhaps also because he needed all his MPs to help the minority cabinet to a majority in the lower house of parliament.

In the meantime the PVV had also contested the European elections of June 2009 and the municipal elections of March 2010 in The Hague and Almere. In each case the candidate lists were headed by an MP. Via his confidants, Wilders was able to control nominations as well as candidates' activities in the European Parliament and the two city councils. Initially the PVV leader himself continued to hold a city council seat in The Hague, but that soon proved to take up too much of his time. Alongside the problem of finding suitable candidates, the fear of losing control had probably influenced his decision to contest the local elections in just these two cities.

The PVV also needed to be represented in the upper house of parliament or Senate if it wanted to be able to support the minority cabinet there, too. Because the upper house is indirectly chosen by the members of the provincial legislatures (*Provinciale Staten*) the PVV fielded candidates in all 12 provinces in the provincial elections of March 2011. The party won 69 seats, which was enough for 10 seats in the Senate. It maintained discipline and unity in the Senate, but failed to do so in the provincial legislatures; within a year, nine members had seceded from the party. Similar problems

occurred at the local level, in the city councils of Almere and The Hague, and in the European Parliament, where one of the five members elected in 2009 was expelled after causing an accident while driving under the influence of alcohol.

Wilders had hoped to avoid problems of this kind, not just through a stringent selection process, but also through a tight hierarchical organisation in which newly elected members of legislatures were directed and controlled by more experienced MPs, in other words, close cronies of the party leader with a track record of loyalty. The formula did not work as expected, however. In practice, the dual roles took up too much time and energy, and a number of MPs soon withdrew from city councils and provincial legislatures. Thus the hierarchical model did not function as well as was hoped and there were complaints in the provinces about a lack of direction.

The parliamentary group was led by Wilders, its formal Chairman; his confidant Bosma, who was the Party Secretary and in charge of discipline; and Vice-President Fleur Agema, who was responsible for contacts, albeit very limited, with the media. Wilders wielded a great deal of power, especially as all MPs, those who entered parliament in 2006 and those who did so in 2010, knew that they owed their seat mainly to Wilders's popularity. Yet even here, the unity proved fragile. In the spring of 2010 Hero Brinkman, a former policeman whom Wilders had relegated to a lower ranking on the candidate list for the general elections in June, launched a public attack on Wilders's leadership. Brinkman said that the PVV was built too much around one man and would face major difficulties if Wilders were to drop out. Brinkman also called for greater transparency within the party and for the enrolment of members as well as for the establishment of a youth organisation (Brinkman 2012). Brinkman met with little support and the parliamentary party rejected his proposals in autumn 2010. Following his defeat, Brinkman continued as a party MP until March 2012, when a website launched by the PVV prompted him to quit. The website encouraged citizens to report complaints about Central and Eastern European immigrants in the Netherlands. Brinkman said that there had been no consultation at all within the party about this initiative, which sparked a lot of controversy in both the Netherlands and the European Union (Jongejan 2012). He founded a new party, Democratic Political Turning Point (Democratisch Politiek Keerpunt, DPK) which obtained only 0.1% of the vote in September 2012 and no seats. In the

summer of 2012 three other MP's left the PVV for different reasons. Two of them had been controversial and would probably not be nominated by Wilders again. They voiced strong criticisms about the erratic leadership, lack of transparency and opportunism within the PVV, which may have contributed to its electoral loss in September 2012.

Party finances

Like other parties in parliament, the PVV's parliamentary group receives government funds to support the group's activities, which must be spent only on staff and secretarial assistance. In 2011, the amount totalled nearly four million euros. Groups in other representative bodies also got financial support, in varying degrees. As a party, the PVV is ineligible for other public funding because of its decision not to enrol members. The lack of members also means that the party has no contribution revenues. As a result, it is completely dependent on donations from at home and abroad. Wilders has always refused to make any disclosures on this matter. Donations are channelled through a foundation, Friends of the PVV, so there is no legal duty of disclosure. According to some observers, the party receives large sums of money from conservative organisations and individuals in the US and perhaps Israel, but without hard evidence, reports of this kind remain speculative.[6]

EFFECTS ON THE PARTY SYSTEM

In the 2006 general elections, most PVV voters came either directly or indirectly from the List Pim Fortuyn (more than 30% had voted for Fortuyn's LPF in 2003), and to a lesser extent from the VVD, the CDA, the PvdA and the SP, whereas more than 20% had not voted in 2003 (van der Kolk, Aarts and Rosema 2007, 224–5). In 2010 the PVV also attracted many voters from the left who had voted for the PvdA or the SP in 2006. This group also won them five additional seats. They took about three seats from the Christian Democrats, but only one from the Liberals—on balance, since voters switched not only from the Liberals to the PVV, but often the other way round as well. In 2012 the PVV lost more than one-third of its electorate. Almost half of the defectors seem to have switched to the VVD, some returned to the PvdA or SP, while others stayed at home.

6 Some sources have reported on the PVV's finances, for example Botje (2009, 10); Geurtsen and Geels (2010); and Meeus and Valk (2010, 11–15).

Since Fortuyn, all Dutch parties have adapted their policies on immigration and integration to some extent. The VVD practically ignored the issue in 2006, but took up fairly strong conservative positions in 2010 and 2012, which may have been a reaction to the rise of the PVV. In 2010 it negotiated, with the CDA, an agreement with the PVV. The latter promised to support the government in four main areas: immigration, security, care for the elderly and financial policy. Immigration and security policies should become tougher, it was agreed, and care for the elderly should be improved rather than reduced. The three parties also agreed to disagree about Islam. CDA and VVD regarded it as a religion, whereas the PVV considered it a political ideology.

This construction of a minority government officially supported by a third party was unique in Dutch history. It was controversial, especially among Christian Democrats. The membership of the VVD seemed almost unanimously in favour of the agreement, and delighted that a party member would become prime minister for the first time since the party was founded in 1948.

The party congress of the CDA approved the agreement in October 2010, but only after intense and often emotional debate. About one-third of the 4,000 members present voted against it, among them several former party leaders and former ministers. The two MPs who had opposed the agreement accepted the verdict of the party congress and gave up their opposition (Ten Hooven 2010, 106–8). The party leadership did not want to forego the chance to take part in government. Perhaps it cherished hope that the PVV would become more moderate in the process or would disintegrate, the way the LPF had done when involved in a coalition in 2002. Moreover, the VVD put some pressure on the Christian Democrats, after it had explored but rejected a coalition with PvdA, D66 and the Green Left. Yet when Wilders decided in April 2012 to end his support of the government, Christian Democrats and Liberals announced they would never cooperate with him again. Within the CDA, participation in the minority coalition supported by the PVV led to more soul-searching debates and might have contributed to its substantial electoral loss in 2012 (Ten Hooven 2012). With its radical anti-European position the PVV seemed fairly isolated in the Dutch party system by 2012, even if more moderate anti-European sentiments are expressed also by other parties like the SP and the Party for the Animals (Partij voor de Dieren). The VVD had again taken over some positions of the PVV in its election manifesto, for instance the demand that immigrants should not be allowed social security or welfare during the first 10 years of their stay in the Netherlands (VVD 2012, 49).

Wilders has succeeded in polarising political debates, however. His ordinary and rude language—calling a minister raving mad (*knettergek*) and telling the prime minister to behave himself (*doe normaal man!*)—have attracted media attention and may have contributed to a change in political culture (see also Kuitenbrouwer 2010; De Bruijn 2010). Dutch politicians used to be quite formal and polite to each other in parliamentary debates. During the past decade, Dutch politics has become more lively, at times even rough. The overall impact of the PVV is difficult to measure, however. It would seem exaggerated to conclude that Dutch politics as a whole has become more populist, if we use populism in the ideological sense and not as a rhetorical style. In fact, one could even argue that populism in the strict sense has lost importance, as direct democracy, referenda and direct election of mayors or prime ministers are no longer on the agenda. Nationalism, however, has probably become stronger both with respect to European integration and with respect to immigration and Islam. Extreme nationalist and neo-Nazi groups do not seem to have benefited from this. Since 2000 they have become smaller and less effective than they were before (Lucardie, Voerman and Wielenga 2011, 258–60). As far as we know, there have been no contacts between them and the PVV.

OUTLOOK

After a series of impressive electoral victories, the PVV experienced a substantial loss in 2012. At the same time, the cohesion of its informal party organisation was weakened by internal dissidence and secessions in municipal councils, provincial legislatures and the Tweede Kamer. Wilders's prestige as leader has suffered a serious blow, even if his leadership cannot be challenged given the authoritarian structure of the party. Sarah de Lange and David Art (2011, 1230, 1244) might have been too optimistic when they emphasised the cohesive and disciplined character of the parliamentary group and the institutionalisation of the party. Even so, it would be premature to forecast its demise in the foreseeable future. The example of the Austrian Freedom Party in the past decade suggests that a national populist party can survive participation in government, secessions and even the death of its leader. Moreover, the PVV might have learned from its unsuccessful support for a minority government and its poor management of internal tensions. It might offer an effective opposition to the coalition of VVD and PvdA that was formed in November 2012. The Liberal–Labour government intends to carry out fairly drastic budget cuts as well as reforms of the housing and labour market, which may alienate

substantial numbers of voters. Opinion polls in December 2012 suggest that the PVV was already recovering most of its losses, while support for the VVD (and to a lesser extent for the PvdA) was diminishing rapidly (Politieke Barometer 2012).

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