The Sun Will Shine Again:

On Populist Contagion of New and Establishment Parties in the Dutch National Elections of the 21st Century

by

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Author's Declaration

I hereby declare that I am the sole author of this thesis. This is a true copy of the thesis, including any required final revisions, as accepted by my examiners.

I understand that my thesis may be made electronically available to the public.

Abstract

Twenty-one years after the murder on Pim Fortuyn, the right-wing populist Freedom Party (*Partij voor de Vrijheid*; PVV) won a plurality in the 2023 Dutch national election after long-term PM Mark Rutte announced that he would not run for re-election. This study serves as a contribution to Rooduijn's 'A Populist *Zeitgeist?*' study (2014), looking into the spread of right-wing populist rhetoric throughout the Dutch party system since 2002. More specifically, this study looks at the contagion of populist rhetoric on the three establishment ('winner') parties (PvdA, VVD, CDA) and three new but successful ('savior') parties, compared to two well-known populist parties (LPF, PVV). This content analysis study uses a blend between Hawkins' (2009) wholistic grading rubric and Rooduijn *et al.* (2014) paragraph-level coding in order to assess the amount and type of populist rhetoric in the selected party manifestos of the 2002, 2010, and 2023 election years. The qualitative discourse methods used shows that, in line with Rooduijn and colleague's (2014) findings, that there still is no change in the absence of a populist *Zeitgeist*. The significance of these findings is in the enrichment of the understanding of Dutch populism after the PVV's electoral win in 2023.

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This thesis would not have been possible without the patience and support of many good people. First and foremost, the patience of Dr. Anna Esselment, who has helped me refine this project to its current state. I would like to thank Dr. Anna Drake, Dr. Andrea Perrella, and Dr. Alana Cattapan for their time and useful comments. I am thankful to Dr. Matthijs Rooduijn for providing me with the codebook. Furthermore, I am also grateful to Julie Dabrusin, MP, and specifically William Zapata and Marta Popyk for their support during grad school.

Most of all, I want to thank my loving partner, Ezrah van Mierlo Amezcua, and his brother, Esteban Amezcua, for cheering me up and on while the going was rough. They remind me that *if you want to go far, go together*. Second, I will forever be indebted to Tim Leonard and Alexi Helligar, without whom I may have never found the spark that led me towards, into, and through grad school. I am also grateful for my mother who was the first to fight for me when the colour of my skin denied to abilities of my mind. The lockdown-era political discussions with my brother, Bryan '*Eestbound*' van Mierlo, have helped temper my views and guided my theorizing, thank you.

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I could not have done this alone.

Land Acknowledgement[1]

On April 21, 1613, the Tawagonshi Treaty, also known as the Two Row Wampum, or *Gaswéñdah*, was made between the Mohawk (Haudenosaunee) and the Dutch. Based on the principles of brotherhood, friendship, and peace – forever. As a Dutch immigrant to this country, I seek to uphold this 400-year-old treaty; to continue this right relationship.

I find spiritual solace at the coast of Niigaani-gichigami, the Leading Sea that is Lake Ontario. I often find relaxation in the Riverdale flood beds of *waasayishkodenayosh*, the Wonscotonach or Don River. Besides, I live and work on the *ishpadinaa*, the high hill that roots Toronto. Bordered on the other end by Gabekanaang-ziibi, the Little Thundering Waters of the Humber River. My home is amongst these places.

Furthermore, Toronto is covered under Treaty #13 and the Williams Treaties. It is the traditional territories of many First Peoples, including the Mississaugas of the Credit, the Anishnaabe, the Chippewa, the Haudenosaunee, and the Wendat peoples. This territory also is part of 'the Dish with One Spoon' wampum, a Treaty made by said nations, where they entered into an agreement to protect the land and water and responsibly care for its resources in harmony together.

These nations continue to experience ongoing colonization and displacement – where land acknowledgements are offered in place of land itself. And although I rejoice to see and hearing the Anishinaabemowin names return. Indigenous Peoples the world over continue to face colonization, displacement, and genocide.

My alma mater, the University of Waterloo, is primarily built on the traditional territory of the Attawandaron, Anishinaabeg, and Haudenosaunee peoples. Its main campus is situated within the Haldimand Tract, land belonging to the Six Nations which includes the six miles on each side of the Grand River. The University ought to financially compensate the Six Nations of the use of their land.

I also seek to remember those who came here involuntarily, particularly those brought to these lands as a result of the trans-Atlantic slave trade and slavery. In the way my ancestors were shipped to the Caribbean islands and American mainland, by the Dutch Crown and Dutch merchants. And in doing so they displaced and replaced the Arawak and Carib societies native to those places.

By being on this land, we are all responsible for upholding its treaties. Treaty agreements were made to last as long as "the sun shines, the grass grows, and rivers flow."

Kevin van Mierlo
2024, August 13.

[1] Based on the Land Acknowledgement given by the 519 (N.D).

Dedication

To my sweetest love, Ezrah, for always standing by me.

Para mi corazón basta tu pecho,
Para mi libertad bastan tus alas.

[For my heart your chest is enough,
for my freedom my wings are enough.]

To my birthplace, divided in the spirit of our times.

Luctor et Emergo.

[I Struggle and Overcome.]

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Statement of Positionality

I recognize that while I strive to write this graduate thesis with scholarly impartiality, this is not always possible. As such, it is of importance to note that I have been a paying member of the Dutch political party *GroenLinks*. Furthermore, I worked for a Liberal Party of Canada Member of Parliament for a year and a half between completing my graduate courses and writing graduate thesis.

This thesis is not written to favour one party or another, nor is it to mock or otherwise belittle any member, voter, or adherent of any of the political parties discussed. No aspect of this document is in any way commissioned or written for any other purpose but that of my personal and academic curiosity.

The research for this thesis has pointed me towards the understanding that, thanks to neoliberal policies, the establishment parties have forsaken the working classes in favour of big capital on the right and identity politics on the left. The shedding of ideological feathers in favour of the Third Way will continue to haunt our politics until our establishment realizes how to make people-centred policies again. Until then, iconoclasts will continue to break our marbled halls and ivory towers.

Any and all views and errors within this document are my own.

Kevin van Mierlo
2024, November 7.

Populism is a protest against forced economy, debt, and privation to the producer; and peace, plenty, happiness, and prosperity to the non-producer.

Nelson A. Dunning, 1891

Today the politics of the radical right is the politics of frustration – the sour impotence of those who find themselves unable to understand, let alone command, the complex mass society that is the polity today.

Dr. Daniel Bell, 1964

Populism is the weed which grows in the gap between the promise and the experience of democracy.

[Het populisme is het onkruid dat groeit in de kloof tussen de belofte en de werkelijkheid van de democratie.]

Prof. Dr. M. van Rossem, 2011

1 | Introduction

Populism is a nebulous term at best. It is too often thrown around to mean 'loud and unlikable' or 'the only real voice' depending on whether one is a respective opponent or supporter (Müller, 2015, pp. 80-1; Moffit & Tormey, 2013, p 382; Schwörer, 2021). It is seen as threatening democracy or as the (only) remedy for a liberal techno-bureaucracy which has become too far removed from 'the people', leading 'the people' no choice but to 'take back control'. Political actors or their followers rarely self-identify as populists, but they do make populist claims such as government institutions being too controlling and too far removed from the people they are supposed to serve (Müller, *ibid.*; Arendt, 1964, 1973; Lilly, 2013; Brubaker, 2017, fn. 37; see Caramani, 2017). While politicians make these claims as though they are anchored to democratic ends, the populist literature tends to see this approach as a destabilising threat to democracy (Moffit & Tormey, ibid.).

Distinctions between left- and right-wing populist movements, parties, and policies remain mostly unaccounted for in popular media and the regular conversations that it informs. As Müller (2015, pp. 80-1) puts it: "We seem to be facing a conceptual cacophony: almost anything can be called populist, and populism can be both a friend and a foe of democracy. Or so it seems." This study will both concisely define right-wing populism and ground it in a case study, namely the Kingdom of the Netherlands.

Problematique

The purpose of this study to extend the understanding of Dutch populism and their rhetoric into 2024, where presently the Minister-President (or Prime Minister in Canada) Dick Schoof and his cabinet have been sworn in as the most right-wing executive to date.

This research thus serves as a building block for future Dutch populism studies. The thesis contributes to the fields of political science generally, and populism studies specifically, by analysing whether the Dutch political establishment is still, by and large, immune to the populist appeal. It does so by extending Rooduijn's assessment of the *Zeitgeist* by moving beyond 2014 to 2023.

The world has continued developing towards an autocratic-populist mode of governance. The year 2016 saw both Brexit in the UK and the election of Donald Trump in the United States, two nations with which the Netherlands has close cultural ties. The 2020 COVID-19 pandemic witnessed the return of police patrolled curfews (Rijksoverheid [Government of the Netherlands], N.D; Henley, 2021, Jan 25; Jan 26; Feb 16), a first since Second World War. The government's irregular applying and lifting[2] of the lockdown was met with popular violence, called *de Avondklokrellen*[3] (Dutch Curfew Riots; CBC, Jan 26) where, amongst other property, grocery stores and apothecaries were ransacked and burned down. Adding to this was the Child Benefit Scandal in 2021[4] (Henley, 2021, Jan 24; Heikkilä, 2022, March 29) where especially people with an immigrant background or a non-Western sounding name were targeted by the Dutch Tax Office for fraud. The Dutch government for the first time publicly admitted to institutional racism (NOS; 2021, January 15). This led to a great number of people losing their jobs, and over 1,100 children were

[2] Government website cites 14 instances where a national curfew was mandates. Dutch provinces do not hold any powers to mandate curfews, as the Netherlands is a unitary parliamentary state.

[3] Non-violent protests against the curfews were common, however on January 24, 2021, Amsterdam, and Eindhoven (two major cities) erupted in illegal violent protest after which many cities followed by the January 26th: Alkmaar, Amersfoort, Den Bosch, Gouda, Haarlem, Hoorn, Veenendaal, and Zwolle (Henley, Jan 26; NOS, 2021 January 24; January 26; Parool, 2021 January 25), over 180 people were arrested.

[4] Where on "25 May 2022, the Dutch government publicly admitted for the first time that institutional racism in part of the Dutch Tax and Customs Administration was the root cause of the Dutch childcare benefit scandal. This scandal led to the resignation of the Dutch government in 2021" (European Parliament, 2022; cf. NOS, 2021a).

taken from their homes (NL Times, 2021, October 19). Three years later, some families still struggle towards family reunification.

Since Rutte-III's term was expiring and national election already scheduled for March 2021, the scandal only resulted in the resignation of Rutte-III. The 2021 election resulted in the Rutte's VVD (People's Party)[5] gaining a seat, and with a plurality of the vote the right to form government again. Forming Rutte-IV[6] took a record breaking 299 days and it fell within a year of being formed; the 2023 national election was called, Mark Rutte stepped down a VVD leader, and the PVV won a plurality.

Voters in the Netherlands are not unfamiliar with populist sentiment emanating from their politicians. The first mainstreaming of Dutch populism occurred in the early 2000s with Pim Fortuyn and his party Lijst Pim Fortuyn (LPF). Fortuyn was a gay, former social scientist professor who, after professing disillusionment with the Labour party (PvdA), decided to start his own party. His critical and iconoclastic views of previous governments and Dutch multiculturalism gained him infamy. The failures he saw were the effects of the previous pillarization,[7] which had a negative impact on the integration of immigrant communities. However, especially under Labour rule, this was a by-and-large taboo topic. Nine days before the 2002 election, Fortuyn was assassinated by a Dutch leftist environmental extremist, Volkert van de Graaf, who claims that Fortuyn's strong Islamophobic views were his cause for action. There are still conspiracies alive that argue that "the bullet came from the Left"

[5] Full names and translations are in Chapter 4.

[6] Adding to the public instability was that during the short Rutte-IV term, Dutch farmers protested the governments' contradictorily agricultural policies by blockading highways, barricading The Hague's Binnenhof (Dutch parliament building, meaning Inner Courtyard), and hanging the flag upside down.

[7] A Dutch social system where each group, Protestants, Catholics, Socialists, Liberals, and effectively immigrant communities, each were encouraged to create their own socio-logistical networks. Which they did through news outlets, leisure clubs, unions, hospitals, etc.

(NU.nl; 2024, May 6) and that the vested powers colluded towards Fortuyn's untimely death (Van Buuren, 2013). Many argue that the Freedom Party (PVV) has continued to fill the populist right niche left by Fortuyn and his LPF.

All these events leave me to conclude that the already present components of populist sentiment[8] would come together in the Dutch public consciousness, and as such reflect in electoral rhetoric of all the major parties; and if not found there, then certainly amidst the new parties. Rooduijn's (2014) paper concludes that establishment parties display little to no populist rhetoric. However, the 2023 election led Geert Wilders' PVV to an electoral victory. This most recent election is very significant, given that Mark Rutte, the longest sitting PM ever, chose to step down after his cabinet collapsed over refugee family reunification policy discussions. Rutte himself, after the fall of his first cabinet in 2010, swore never to collaborate with the PVV again. His successor[9], demissionair Minister of Justice and Security Dilan Yeşilgöz, however, lifted this *cordon sanitair*[10], which arguably cleared Wilders' pathway towards his electoral win.

Research Question

To find out how populist rhetoric has, if at all, spread in the Dutch party system this thesis will investigate following research question: **How has populists' rhetoric developed between the 2002-2023 elections, and is this populist rhetoric contagious within the Dutch party system?** Preference for 'contagion' over 'impact' is because the complexity of

[8] Also referred to as Pathological Normalcy (Mudde, 2010); see Chapter 2.II.

[9] Although VVD-MP Sophie Hermans is currently acting leader in Yeşilgöz' stead, given the latter's position as demissionair minister until the next cabinet is sworn in. Yeşilgöz does lead her party in the currently ongoing coalition talks with PVV, NSC, and BBB parties.

[10] This term is used in Dutch politics where a protective measured are officially instated against a dangerous influence, like a party, or ideology more generally (Van den Berg, 2017, March 3).

politics means that causality is difficult to prove, particularly within the scope of a master's thesis. Counter-contagion, furthermore, would be shown if a party actively acts anti-populist in the data assessed. In order to adequately answer this question, the following sub-questions need to be asked:

1. *Which parties are included in the study, and why? Who are the 'establishment ' actors, and which other parties are relevant to this study?*
2. *How has populist rhetoric impacted the overall party system; meaning, (how) does the contagion show itself in what I call 'savior' party?*
3. *Which populist phrases, if any, do we see establishment parties employing?*

In order to best understand these developments, I separate the timeframe into three sections, based on two longstanding prime ministerial reigns as well as the most recent election. The first, starting in 2002, is the Balkenende period (named after CDA Minister President Jan-Peter Balkenende), followed by the Rutte government in 2010, and then the newly minted Schoof period (as of July 2024). Each of these three periods started with a coalition which included a populist party – LPF in 2002, and PVV in both 2010 and 2024.

It is furthermore important that this research looks at two distinct types of parties. The 'Winners' are the three big tent mainstream parties (PvdA, CDA, VVD) and as of the 2023 national election also the PVV. The 'Saviors' are new parties no older than one election cycle which has gained sudden coalition-potential in the Lower House.

Thesis Structure

This graduate thesis will reassess whether the Netherlands may yet be experiencing a populist *Zeitgeist* (Rooduijn, *et al.*, 2014; Mudde, 2004; for 'populist wave' see Mudde, 2017) in 2023. Chapter 2 will first examine what constitutes right wing populism. Chapter 3

will then be able to investigate **how populists' rhetoric has developed between the 2002-2023 elections and what is its impact of the Dutch party system?** Chapter 4 will briefly address the Dutch political and electoral context to familiarize readers with the system.

Whether rhetorical contagion can be found in the comparison of 21st century election periods' data will be analysed in Chapter 5. This study will blend two methods, as will be described in more detail in Chapter 3: Hawkins' (2009) holist grading rubric and Rooduijn's (2014) paragraph-based codebook. Together the party platforms will be analyzed to assess whether they contain populist language. Both methods are found in Appendix I & II. Finally, Chapter 6 will conclude the matter and answer the research questions and hypotheses. For now, it suffices to say that both Rooduijn's dissertation and subsequent 2014 paper point out that, at that time, there were no grounds to assert that the people of the country of the Netherlands were in the grip of a populist *Zeitgeist* (Rooduijn, *et al.*, 2014, p. 569). He concludes this on the basis that, in a coalition seeking political system like the Netherlands, populist rhetoric may be toned down in order to maintain coalition potential. Furthermore, the 2010 unusual supply and demand coalition between the newly elected PM Mark Rutte's VVD and the (former VVD-MP) right wing populist leader Geert Wilders' PVV, quickly fell apart after Wilders stepped away from the arrangement, triggering an election.

2 | Populism Reviewed

This chapter will deliberate on the meaning of populism and its core components, in order to build an understanding of populism rhetoric and its repertoire. Given the focus on Dutch electoral party politics, a detailed understanding of this 'populist speak' is vital in uncovering whether the larger Dutch party ecosystem is now echoing or co-opting said repertoire. In academia, as in day-to-day life, populism is a contested term (Hawkins & Kaltwasser, 2018, p. 3; Rooduijn, 2019, p 362). On the whole, the literature on populism categorises it as a political praxis, which revolves around a split society of two groups: an overreaching and corrupt(ing) elite group whose self-interests overrule the and negatively impact the 'good' and 'common people' (Mudde, 2004).

Right-wing populism sees 'the people' as homogeneous and the elite as forcing pluralist and supranationalist ideas onto them (Rooduijn, 2014). Left-wing populism supposes a pluralistic and heterogeneous composition of 'the people', who are exploited by the often-foreign[11] capitalist-imperialist elites (Mouffe, 2018). Populists claim to affirm and act in name of popular sovereignty, capitalizing on popular grievances. populist leaders may seek to incite a 'rapture' (Laclau, 2005) where the institutional system is to be overthrown. Proclaiming a crisis or otherwise igniting the vertical tensions between the people and the elite leads to the appropriation of the symbols of power. Populist leaders claim to be the mouthpiece of the *vox populi* (Mudde, 2004); "the will and voice of the people as the nation as a whole" (Miller-Idriss, 2019, p. 19).

[11] This is mainly the case in South America, where the populist-left argue against American overreach. In Europe the focus more directly a class-struggle, where the elite steer the nation/Union into a direction that is not in the interest of workers.

A horizontal polarity (Brubaker, 2017; 2020), where marginalized groups are rhetorically placed into opposition with 'the people', adds another layer to the populist repertoire. This xenophobic scapegoating is also seen in other non-populist right-wing politics. However, it becomes populist when the elite (the vertical opposition) are blamed for unfairly prioritizing the well-being of 'the other' over 'the people'. Who the "unfairly privileged at the expense of common people" (Brubaker, 2017, p. 367) are depends, but is based on their sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, religion, ethnicity, or ability.

Finally, populism acts as an ideology in as far as it sets out a 'fundamental order of existence' that motivates voters into political action. However, Mudde (2004, 2007, 2010) sees it as a 'thin' ideology in that the populists' worldview lacks adequate exposition and is low on policy specifics. Hawkins (2009) argues that populism "has a subconscious quality that manifests itself primarily in the language of those who hold it" (p. 1045). The language used is emotive and straightforward, such as Donald Trump's "Build the wall!", Nigel Farage's "Let's get Brexit done", and Geert Wilders' "Do you want more or less Moroccans?!". Political actors who adhere to populist tendencies also provide equally simple and 'common sense' solutions to what are viewed by others as complex challenges.

Worldview

At its core, populism holds a morally dualistic worldview. In line with Mudde, Hawkins (2009) describes this as Manichean, where there is a clear and antagonistic opposition between the people and the elite. This dualism arises from a rhetorical monism,

which allows no fence-sitting.[12] This black-and-white style of speaking creates a false dilemma; a fallacy easily employed to foster in-group/out-group thinking and can, in rare cases, even incite violence. The binary nature of populist rhetoric can also lead to the weakening of key democratic institutions –such as the judiciary, the independent press, or even the legislative branch (Miller-Idris, 2019)– in order to 'root out' the opposing evil. This in turn may lead to illiberal and authoritarian leaders.[13]

People-Centrism[14]

As the name denotes, the central tenet of populism is 'the people' whose collective voice is not to be ignored and ought to be *the* directing voice at the table. Populist leaders present themselves as the embodied voice of the people, not "the vanguard of the proletariat, but as the *vox populi*" states Mudde (2004, pp. 549-50). This applies Rousseau's 1762 *volonté générale*, or general will (*ibid.*; Thrasher, 2021). In applying a pseudo-majoritarian worldview (Brubaker, 2017, p. 365), populists are diametrically opposed to a ruling-minority elite. Therefore, the meaning of 'the people' will be discussed in this section.

Although Laclau (2005) says 'the people' is an empty signifier, the linguist Reisigl (2022, pp. 548-9) counters this by saying that 'the people' is only thin-centred (Mudde, 2004)

[12] E.g., the US President George W. Bush after the 2001 attack on the World Trade Centre in New York –"Either you are with us, or you are with the terrorists" (2001, September 20).

[13] Certain autocratic-leaning movements will seek to offer alternative social structures by creation of schools, and even propose own coinage. Which occurred in the Netherlands via the proposition of the radical-right FVD, calling for "Forumland,"(NOS, 2022) which would include an in-group currency, a dating-app and their own school, one of which - the Renaissance Elementary School (Versteegh, 2022) - opened in 2022.

[14] "The 19th century peasant uprising by the Russian Narodniki (narod = people) has been called the first 'populist' movement, but […] its name is usually attributed to the supporters of the People's Party. Established in the United States [during the so-called Gilded Age]14 in 1893, its aim was to return political power to the people, the common man, through direct legislation in referenda and popular initiatives" (Bos & Brant, 2012, p. 705).

in so far as populism is context dependant. Reisigl proposed five different interpretations to what substance of 'the people' could mean:

> *1. The people as nation [or ethnos] (in a culturalist sense) is especially linked with right-wing populism or national populism;*
>
> *2. The people as political sovereign or demos is linked with a type of populism most likely to be compatible with democracy.*
>
> *3. The people as class (in a socio-economic sense);*
>
> > *a. The people as pleps, i.e., as the "downtrodden", "'exploited', 'forgotten', 'looked-down-upon', 'second-class citizens in their countries'", primarily connects to left-wing populism;*
> >
> > *b. The people as the "common people" with their "common sense" as the central guiding principle for political consciousness and action, particularly links with right-wing populism; (Ct. Ibid., pp. 552-3, emphasis in original).*

In his *Politolinguistic Approach to Populism,* Reisigl (2022) delineates that the discrete social group or community that 'the people' makes up is imagined and cannot be counted in any real demographic way. This rhetoric community is appealed to either as an abstract figure of speech or it implies the people who are receptive to the suggestion of a close relationship between speaker and receiver (*ibid*.).

My thesis is primarily interested in language used by political leaders and party platforms that understand 'the people' both as common and as ethnos/nation (Reisigl, *ibid.,* p. 549). However, the more seats a populist party wins, the easier it may be to claim 'the people' as the demos, giving the party more credence. It is important to note that as Schraff & Pontusson (2023, also see Gidron & Hall, 2017 & 2019; Herzfelf, 2019; Saucer, 2020) point out, the populist voter base to whom the populist parties speak directly, are not the "poorest and most precarious segment of the electorate" (p. 4) or proletariat; the target demographic is the strong middle-class that has been portrayed as the backbone of modern liberal society. This middle-class, then, self-identifies as having fallen from grace and blames 'the other', along with the globalist elitist forces that enable them. Most notably these are although not

exclusively the now-cliché 'white working-class men'. Who are, or so the populist-right argues, being watered down or all together erased to bring about a nebulous elite-driven multicultural global agenda. This demographic, and others who also fall within the wider disenfranchised working-class, are sharply attuned to "honor, respect, and recognition" (Brubaker 2017, p. 363; see Hochschild 2016) which they see as unjustly taken from them. In the case of Dutch farmers, their sector rose in protest since the Dutch and EU governments' agendas pushed for agglomeration and automation on the former hand and green-conservation policies in case of the latter, binding the sector in confusion through contradicting mandates.

Anti-Elitism

Whereas all democratic political leaders appeal to a general popular will or the people of their respective nations, populist leaders differentiate their rhetoric by calling on the *vox populi* in opposition to an immoral enemy (Hawkins, 2009; Rooduijn & Pauwels, 2011; Block & Negrine, 2017; Rooduijn, 2014; Brubakker, 2017). This evil minority group differs in nature depending on the political biases of the populist actor in question. Left-wing populists in formerly colonized states such as South America (but also to a lesser pronounced degree in Europe) see the global financial elite as a nefarious group, whose big-money politics tramples the lives of the lower and working classes (Krouwel & van Prooijen, 2021). Whereas right-wing populist actors in North American and Europe focus on (upper) middle-class needs and see a supposed globalist conspiracy against the nation-state and the sovereignty of its people (*ibid*.). They also voice the fear of this social class may lose, or feels to have lost, their affluence and status.

The elite are not just seen as evil. Other descriptors are rich, powerful, well-connected, (over-)educated, and institutionally empowered; they are also seen as disconnected, insulated from economic hardship, self-serving, corrupt(ing), and condescending towards 'common' values and habits (Brubaker, 2017, p. 363). Their disconnect from everyday troubles which the vast majority of a country's population must endure, makes these elite unfit to rule. Moreover, their institutional empowerment and interconnectedness into the general (transnational) economy leads to a perception of self-serving class-solidarity over the backs of the common people.

The paradox of wellbeing by Rooduijn & Burgoon (2018) poses that populist voting – and thus the supply of such parties– increases when personal financial misfortune increases even while the nation *writ large* seems to grow financially (p. 1720; Burgoon *et al.*, 2019). The increased prominence of populist parties across Europe and the Americas is fueled by the emotional appeals made by populist leaders, arguing that wealth *is* made but does not remain in the hands of the people for long if it passes to their hands at all. As such, topics such as the costs of living and (financial) access to healthcare are salient pressure points that populist leaders use to prove their point.

In extension of the evil elite, populists use selective anti-institutionalist rhetoric (Brubaker, 2017, p. 365). The court, the independent press, and even the legislative branch(s) are scrutinized. The method of communication is also important, where direct communication with the electorate over social media is preferred. This also facilitates a communication style that is reductionist and oversimplified by virtue of the nature of social media. Both reductionism and oversimplification are telling aspects of populist speak.

Where in the United States a populist may critique Washington, DC, European populists critique the EU institutions and its elites, both as MEPs and MPs in their respective Member States. An often-heard critique is the social distance of the 'Eurocrates' in Brussels from the lived experience of the average *burger* or citizen. Another argument is the complexity of the Union's institutions. Currently the European Union has three presidents[15]: Commission President Ursula von der Leyen, the Council President Charles Michel, and Parliament President Roberta Metsola.[16] Other reasons include the abolishment of internal borders through the Schengen Area (until the 2015-16 migrant crisis), and the monetary unification through the Euro and the European Central Bank. Furthermore, the European Parliament is often seen as weak and ineffective, partly because it cannot initiate legislation (yet); this is the purview of the Commission.[17] The European Union is seen, by both the far left and far right, as an elite-driven project that does not consider the on-the-ground experience of labourers (urban-biased far left) or middle-class citizens or farmers (rural-biased far right). In pursuing the 'ever closer Union', the EU leaches competencies away from its member states until, populists fear, the Union becomes a Federation complete with a European army. Lastly, other shocks, such as the aforementioned migrant crisis and the 2008

[15] Which led to the infamous Sofagate, when both presidents went to visit Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and they were asked who governed Europe, leaving Von der Leyen to sit on the sofa (De la Baume, April 26, 2021).

[16] Whereas the Council is place for the heads of state to meet (an American equivalent would be if state governors would come together in a council), the Commission functions like the American Senate, where each member state appoints a Euro-Commissioner who permanently represents the Member State's interest through a qualified majority or unanimity voting system.

[17] Treaty change may be on the horizon with Von der Leyen's re-election. Although it is becoming clear that the Union is gravitating towards the Commission Presidency, who is affirmed by the Euro-Parliament, the three titles are confusing. A suggest idea is to make the Commission President the Euro-President, appointed by the Euro Parliament (EP) and affirmed by the Commission, name the EP President the Euro-Speaker, and the through appointment of the EP and confirmation of the Council, name the Council president Euro-Vice-President.

financial crisis, also increases calls by the populist right for reclaiming national sovereignty (Pirro & Taggart, 2018).

'The other' can also be allied countries, as global/euro elites push for deeper transnational integration at the expense the common people. Other nations become seen as a drain on the profits of national resources processing, often ignoring or downplaying the benefits a nation may have from international alliances and as such potentially redirecting allyship to other nations (Miller-Idriss, 2019).[18] Taking this a step further is where conspiratorial thinking becomes part of the populist repertoire, particularly as pushed by the Dutch Forum for Democracy (FVD; or American *QAnon* leaders). In the case of the populist right, this blend of anti-elitism, anti-globalism, anti-multiculturalism, and ethno-nationalism is often commonly known as replacement theory. The global(ist) elite are said to allow or even incentivise the steady replacement of the common people (as *ethnos*) by non-white and/or non-Judeo-Christian peoples (Feola, 2021). This replacement theory in the USA has religious (Evangelical) undertones, whereas in the Netherlands these are secular-liberal in nature. The reasons given for the replacement of the *ethnos* are the so-called low birthrates of in-group members conjoined with the unsustainable levels of elite-planned non-western immigration.[19] The 'global(ist) elite' that are behind such a plot are a 'shadow elite,' such as Klaus Schwab who oversees the World Economic Forum at Davos,

[18] Examples are the Dutch Populist Left (SP) and Right (PVV, FVD) being respectively soft and hard Eurosceptic, the latter two even arguing for a potential succession of Union. Other examples are Trump's sceptic demeanor towards NATO and him removing the USA from several international agreements; Brexit's hard Eurosceptic MEP Nigel Farage offers a similar illustration.

[19] This conspiracy is furthermore easily paired with anti-abortion ideas.

who are said to control elected leaders (FVD, 2021; Matuszewski, *et al.,* 2024).[20] Finally, an important aspect of protectionist anti-elitism is that the (charismatic) leader of a populist right, being an elite themselves, can become incorporated into the in-group by being the champion –or in extreme cases messiah– of the *vox populi*.

Other Aspects

The cosmopolitan elites are seen as both 'outside' and 'on top' (Brubaker, 2017, p. 372). Their disconnect creates distance from the lived experiences of the common person, placing them 'outside', and their political dominance maintains their location 'on top'. However, as stated before, the populist right also problematizes those who are seen as 'outside' and 'below' the 'common people' of good middle-class standing.

These freeloaders –i.e., people experiencing homelessness or addiction, but also low-income earners– are a rhetorical foil[21] to the hard working and respectable 'common' taxpayers. A moderate expression of this sentiment is against low-wage workers, often referred to as low-skilled or uneducated, who are said to seek government hand-outs and want to abuse the system through weaponized incompetence. The established elite are said to be more responsive to these supposed abusers of the welfare state. And in pandering to the needs of these groups, misuse of the hard-earned tax monies of the ignored middle classes leaves them in hardship. This is seen as particularly troublesome when public spending is drawn out for less advantaged population groups during times of general

[20] As the Dutch FVD-leader Dr. Thierry Baudet said, they govern the people from the shadows and control the political leaders via a 'party cartel' (FVD, 2023, p. 8); This cartel consists of the mainstream parties that in different compositions have governed the Netherlands since Second World War. Baudet furthermore accused former vice-PM Sigrid Kaag of being a spy, as she obtained her MA in International Relations at St Antony's College, Oxford (Den Hertog & Nieuwenhuis, 2022, September 21).

[21] A literary tool to emphasize specific traits by presenting a complementary character with opposite traits.

financial misfortune. Arguments such as 'they place a drain on the taxpayer' and the need for 'law and order' expands the appeal of the populist-right to the higher bracket earners.

An exclusionist horizontal axis is also observed in addition to the vertical opposition discussed above. Brubaker (*ibid*.) enumerates minoritized groups –such as LGBTQI+ people, Indigenous peoples and nations, Muslims, immigrants, and refugees– who the populist right claims are unfairly privileged at the expense of 'the common people'. And as Allport (1979) puts it: "people who reject one outgroup will tend to reject other outgroups" (p. 68). Again, the elite are seen as more responsive to the pleas of these population groups for easy political gains on progressive 'woke' agenda points at the cost of not producing anything of substantial benefit to 'the people'. This horizontal social opposition clearly defines 'the people' as a heteronormative ethnos, whether implicitly or explicitly. In Europe this is often centered around those 'of native blood', drawing on the *jus sanguinis* (right of blood) legal tradition where one claims citizenship through the citizenship of their parents.[22] Additionally, a populist may draw on their country's Judeo-Christian roots. Using this justification, such parties may disavow a woman's right to bodily autonomy and disapprove of the equal rights to marriage for same-sex couples.

The Netherlands is, however, one of the most secular nations in the Union (PEW, 2018; CBS, 2023) and in line with the Enlightenment's tradition (Andeweg, Irwin, & Louwerse, 2020, Ch. 2, p. 91/505)[23], a 'paradox of tolerance' (Duyvendak, 2004) is observed: populist parties actually strengthen their anti-immigration and anti-multiculturalism

[22] As opposed to the jus soli (right of soil) tradition used in the e.g., United States and Canada, where citizenship is granted through being born within the country.

[23] "The values that were seen as being threatened by Islam were those of the Enlightenment (the right to criticize religious dogma, the separation of church and state) and relatively new postmaterialist ones such as women's emancipation and gay rights" (Ibid.).

rhetoric by citing equal marriage and abortion rights as an essential cultural principle (Vasta, 2007); "Western European [populists] currently combine their well-known culturally conservative agenda regarding immigration and ethnic minorities with a culturally progressive approach to gender issues and sexual minorities." (Deanekindt *et al.,* 2017, p. 792). In doing so, they use nationalist language to elevate the goodness of the native culture. Islamic and Arab cultures are spoken of as inherently incompatible with Dutch cultural practises, most recently by Freedom Party leader Geert Wilders (Moffit & Tormey, 2019, p. 392). The first to state such sentiments was Pim Fortuyn, who is often considered the first modern populist in the Netherlands, although he (like others after him) never styled himself as such (Lucardie & Voerman, 2002; Akkerman, 2005; Pellikaan *et al.*, 2007; Vossen, 2010; De Lange & Art, 2011). It must be noted that List Pim Fortuyn, his party, cannot simply be categorised as a right-wing party (*Ibid.*). Interestingly, and counter to the general perception of populists (especially in North America), Fortuyn was a gay sociology professor (Taggard, 2004). It suffices to say here that Fortuyn's political positioning was a direct response to the lack of full or adequate integration of especially Muslim immigrant workers which has led their now-often third or fourth generation Dutch descendants to arguably be culturally disconnected from mainstream Dutch society. Critiquing Dutch multiculturism in such a way was long considered a *faux pas*, given that any lack on nuance on the matter could quickly discolour any such a discussion with racist and xenophobic sentiments.

Raison d'Être

Having discussed what populist leaders do, below I will answer not only *why* populism occurs but also *why now.* The purpose of this section is to discuss society's tidal

forces that are pushing the current populist 'wave'. Brubaker's (2017) list of causes will be considered first, followed by Taggart's (2004) view on modern European populism's anti-globalists origins. Rooduijn & Burgoon's *paradox of wellbeing* (2018) will be discussed in historical context, with Mudde's (2010) *pathological normalcy thesis* as a final consideration to help place sentiments currently ascribed to the populist right within its wider European social context.

Since Second World War, there has been a noticeable demographic shift within the West. By the mid-1960s in the Netherlands, a steady stream of non-Western immigrant workers, specifically people from Morocco and Turkey, slowly changed (urban) public spaces into multicultural bedrocks (UCL, N.D.). These workers were invited through government-sponsored recruitment programs. Non-labour-based immigration also occurred when Indonesia (the then-Dutch East Indies) and Suriname gained their independence from the Netherlands in 1946 and 1975, respectively. Many residents of these formerly colonized nations were given the choice to move to the Netherlands and be granted Dutch citizenship. Furthermore, since the 1990s a third of the population of the Dutch Antilles –a collection of islands that are still a part of the Kingdom– now reside in the continental part of the Kingdom. Inter-EU migration further increases the non-native population.

According to the Dutch Central Bureau of Statistics (2023), 14.5% of the population in the Netherlands was foreign-born at the time of writing, and an additional 11.6% had at least one foreign-born parent. There is a widespread dialogue on whether the social integration of immigrant populations, specifically people of Arab descent, was adequately accomplished. The Dutch government invited them on the supposition that the guest-

labourers would leave, something that rarely plays out as such. Consequently, few if any language and cultural resources were made available to them, creating a cultural disadvantage resulting in ghettoization that is still noticeable today. The demographic trends and their corresponding policies on both the national and European level have led to the belief that the welfare state, the native cultural identity, and the 'way of life' of the natives must not only be preserved but protected (Brubaker, 2017).

Through the waves of neoliberalism and post-industrial policies –from the Reagan-Thatcher era to the 1990s and through to Barack Obama's presidency– the risks and responsibilities for individual welfare have been slowly shifting from the state *writ large* to a fixation on individual responsibility (*Ibid.*): "Neoliberalism is a particular form of free-market capitalism that replaced the form of controlled capitalism that preceded it" (Steger & Roy, 2021, p. 15). In the Netherlands, the neoliberal torch bearer is the VVD who co-led the two so-called Purple Cabinets,[24] during which the Labour Party in 1995 under PM Wim Kok 'shook off its ideological feathers'[25] for a more pragmatic policy landscape of privatisation.

Increasing post-Fordist modes of operation since the 1960s, furthermore, only exacerbated the currently felt problems in Western society. The decline through downsizing and outsourcing of local manufacturing jobs created segmented global markets, while the deepening of consumerism and lifestyle identities ('you are what you buy') accompanied this decline of production with a decline of class identity (Oxford Reference, 2024):

> *Much more than having an impact on the 'new left' (greens in particular), the transformations due to the declining secondary sector and post-industrial society, the globalization of the economy, the cross-border mobility of workers and the delocalization of*

[24] Purple given the collaboration between conservative blue VVD and red Labour, most notably excluding any confessional parties like the CDA or Christian Union.

[25] Which some commentators, such as economic geography professor Dr. Ewald Engelen, see as class-betrayal.

> *production had an impact on the 'new right' and populism in Europe (Wirth & Esser, et al., 2016, p. 20).*

It is important to again note that the populist-right tends to be centred around especially middle-class men (Gidron & Hall, 2017; Herzfelf, 2019; Saucer, 2020), the demographic who feel to have lost their employment base or have lost the sense of prosperity common in the 'roaring 90s' (Stiglitz, 2004)[26]. Brubaker (2017) and Taggart (2004) agree that these aforementioned trends created a steep and regional decline of stable, well-paying jobs which exacerbates the global, the European, and the national core-periphery disparities (Krugman, 1991a; 1991b; Baldwin, 2001; also see Fujita, 2001). 'Globalization and economic complexity' scholars Gräbner & Hafele (2020) ascribe this growing disparity to an 'unequal technological exchange'—at least within Europe. This disparity increases when the wealth and power is disproportionately concentrated at the socio-geographic core, which functions as a knowledge, financial, and technological gravitational well[27]. In earlier times:

> *The [1893 American] People's Party's political programme indicates that, ideologically, the origin of populism has a liberal and socialist undertone, different from the right-wing nationalistic rhetoric that we usually associate with it now (Bos & Brant, 2012, p. 705).*

Interestingly, the erosion of 20th century class-identity and an overall wealthier and amorphous middle-class, joined with an American-style 'red-scare' dog whistle arguing that 'the woke Left' is somehow in control and that their pluralistic minority rights are a danger to traditional lifestyles. With the return of protectionist policies,[28] lastly, might foster polycentric development (Copus, 2009; see Gräbner & Hafele, 2020, p. 14, fig. 6) through the return of a new generation of secondary sector jobs.

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[26] Although Stiglitz wrote about American prosperity, the Netherlands has continually shown to have a significant cultural overlap with the American experience.

[27] "[Ms. Aruna Roy] said "Defying all laws of gravity, money flows upwards. […] No corruption can take place without the connivance of the bureaucracy"" (Kamla, 2012).

[28] Such as Trump's 'America First', Wilders' 'the Netherlands back on nr. 1', as well as Biden's Inflation Reduction Act.

In the Netherlands this means that the urban core, the Randstad (Amsterdam, Rotterdam, The Hague, Utrecht), while increasingly unaffordable, pull all the skilled labour from the increasingly ignored peripheral agricultural provinces. The Western socio-demographic trends, as described above, have fostered sentiments of alter- and anti-globalism on both the far left and right, respectively. This also expresses itself through a soft and hard Eurosceptic party policy points, respectively, at both the national and Euro-parliamentary level. It is interesting to note that in many cases the same demographic (white, male, and working-class) to whom the Dutch populist actors appeal are in the regions that have traditionally been swayed more towards the social democratic Labour Party and the furthest-left Socialist Party (Wirth & Esser, *et al.,* 2016, p. 20; also see Otjes, 2024). Moreover, the aforementioned third-way Purple Cabinets –for which Labour shook off its ideological feathers– was succeeded by an unprecedented MP turnover in 2002. This was in part due to the new 26-seat LPF.[29]

Decentralized Populist Sentiment

Rooduijn & Burgoon (2018) analysed the "seven waves of European Social Survey (ESS) data (from 2002 to 2014), covering 21 countries, 27 radical right parties, and 22 radical left parties" (p. 1722) in order to see how socio-cultural and -economic dissatisfaction impact radical left and right voting. Their results show that for the less well-off, radical right voting is seen as risking socio*economic* unfavorable circumstance, e.g., due to a volatile market-economy or unstable currency; radical left voting, inversely, is shown to be risking troubling socio*cultural* conditions. Since leftist populists champion multicultural

[29] Prior to their leader's assassination nine days prior to that 2002 election, Fortuyn successfully let his message of cultural crisis resonate with the Dutch electorate (Pellikaan, de Lange, van der Meer, 2007). But this is also that, besides Fortuyn's obituary, all campaigning was ceased for the nine days leading up to that election.

frameworks that may result of electoral dissatisfaction (*ibid*.), given the sociocultural effects of high levels of immigration, lead to the European middle-income earners fearing that the newcomers will saturate the housing and parts of the labour markets

What is interesting about these findings is that radical left voting only occurs when levels of immigration are low, which runs parallel to the radical right's promise to return the welfare of the nation back 'to you: the people'. An example of this is Wilders commenting that a lady in the audience, during a 2023 television debate, needs more affordable health care conditions "not soon but now".

What is inferred from Rooduijn & Burgoon's work is that, besides the critiquing of the (supranational) elite and staving off high levels of immigration, the radical right has a doubtful record in repairing and/or cultivating national economic wellbeing. Although radical actors may present themselves as economic restorers (like UKIP's Brexiteers did), they are perceived as risky, given that they rarely have governing experiences, even where such parties and their leaders have experienced a long tenure in their respective Houses.[30]

As mentioned earlier, the *wellbeing paradox* occurs when a nation *writ large* seems to be doing well while the individuals are increasingly experiencing hardship, resulting in a desire for radical change. Taggart (2004, p. 282) adds to this that when the ideals of contemporary politics is not responsive to the 'heartland', (i.e., "the idealized community" (p. 274)) that it engenders a sense of crisis. 'Engenders' within the context of this thesis would be a populist actor 'invoking' the sense of crisis, which can result in a Laclauian rapture (i.e., revolution) due to "the site of power becom[ing] an empty space no longer occupied and

[30] Wilders is currently the longest serving MP in Dutch living memory.

exhausted by the sovereign body" (Gaonkar, 2012, p. 200; cf. Laclau & Mouffe, 1985, p. 186) which then allow for new styles of power.[31]

Altogether, democratic institutions are seen to be failing in their purpose of representation, mediation, and mobilisation. This decline in party democracy has in turn lead to populist actors proclaiming a crisis of representation where they promise to bring responsiveness back to the halls of power (Caramani, 2017). The European Union has already been mentioned as a perceived cause of the hollowing out of the nation-state through its pursuance of an 'ever closer Union'. However, national corruption and irresponsiveness are also leading causes for the call for democratic renewal. Transparency International Nederland (TI-NL) has published several pieces that show the Netherlands has worsened on the corruption index, ranking 9th among 168 UN nations and scoring 84% in 2015 to 8th/180 scoring 79% in 2023 (CPI, 2024)[32]. Note that, according to the CPI, the corruption committed by Dutch companies outside of the Netherlands does not impact this score. Furthermore, TI-NL reported that the anti-lobbying legislation at both the European and Dutch national level remains lacking. Moreover, the Netherlands under Rutte had actively stalled progress in this domain. The CEO of TI-NL and former D66-MP Lousewies van der Laan commented that during the Rutte's tenure the lobbyists' limousines were parked in front of *'t Torentje* (the Tower; the PM's office) while controversial and contentious votes on dividend taxes and the earthquake-causing gas extraction in Groningen, respectively, were being hotly debated.

Populism as Pathological Normalcy

[31] Mouffe and Laclau describe this agonist process as being morally neutral.

[32] Comparatively, Canada in 2015 scored 83% ranking 10/168, down to 76% ranking 12/180 in 2023.

The final part of this section will discuss Mudde's (2010) *pathological normalcy* thesis. Pathology is the study of the causes, components, courses, and consequences of disorders (Holmqvist, 2013). Disorder in a political sense is the real or perceived malfunctioning of the democratic apparatus. The failure of responsiveness and mobilisation can lead to crisis-mongering (Taggart, 2004).

Mudde (*ibid*.) defines extremism as antithetical to democratic procedures, while radicalism is defined as opposing liberal procedures. The former enables a totalitarian governing structure ruled by a singular ideology, while the monism of the latter see all diverging opinions as illegitimate. Populist actors at times invoke a deterioration of freedoms akin to the Second World War; referencing the fight against fascism but also later communism. Reich (1970) "considered fascism to be 'the basic emotional attitude of the suppressed man' and argued that '[i]n its pure form fascism is the sum total of all *irrational* reactions of the average human being'" (in Mudde, 2010, p. 1169 [p. xiii-iv]; italics in original).

Viewing right-wing populism as a *normal pathology*, which Mudde refutes in this article, means seeing such parties and their platform as 1) inherently alien to Western democracies; as 2) a fringe potential that is always present; and 3) are triggered only in extreme conditions of crisis or a "structurally determined pathologies" (Mudde, 2010, p. 1171). The latter are conditions of massive societal change where especially those of the middle-class, who understood themselves as prosperous, feel like losers of modernisation and globalisation and seek to elect populist candidates (i.e., the charismatic leader) who speak 'their mind' (*Ibid.,* p. 1172). Furthermore, it does not matter whether the crises are real or perceived, given that to the believer they certainly are real.

Reasons for the perceived alienness of right-wing populists is through their ideological framework which incorporates nationalism and nativism, authoritarianism, and the dualistic worldviews; and all together presenting their views in a 'as is' direct and iconoclastic fashion. This breach of protocol can be perceived as taboo and therefore 'other', however, none of these are specific to populists. Put differently, these political tenants and their delivery are not foreign to Western democracies at all. Nativism and nationalism are deeply rooted in Western society. It is a product of the organisational principle of modernity, building forward on the principles of Westphalia, where the nation-state is the organisational building block. The nation-state as the organisational blueprint for global politics was also a cornerstone of the European colonial politics. Furthermore, authoritarianism is the belief that society must be ordered, and infringement must be punished. This is also a core staple of conservative thinking:

> *The conservative political theorist Roger Scruton (1980, p. 19), for instance, argues that '[i]t is through the ideal of authority that the conservative experiences the political world', while fellow conservative Robert Nisbet (1986, p. 34) states that '[a]uthority is, along with property, one of the two central concepts in conservative philosophy'. According to Roger Eatwell (1992, p. 22), within conservatism 'man is seen as aggressive and in need of authority' (Ibid., p. 1174).*

But liberals like Hobbes (in his Leviathan) and socialists like Lenin (Mudde, 2010, p. 1174, [1961, p. 412]), too, call for absolute centralisation and strict discipline. Besides these secular ideologies, authoritarianism is also a key aspect in religious thinking: Christians, as Altemeyer (*Ibid.,* [1988, p. 202]) writes, are all a "child [whom must] obey a supernatural authority and, more to the point, an earthly authority system that acts in Its name.' Lastly, populism argues the political praxis must be the *volonté générale* (Mudde 2007, p. 23), and Canovan (1999) eloquently argues that there is a pragmatic and redemptive side to democracy. When the trust in the pragmatic institutional side of democracy fails, then the

appeal of a secular redemption through the *vox populi vox dei*[33] (Enoch, 2018; Palaver, 2013) becomes a necessity: "The promise of a better world through action by the sovereign people" (Canovan 1999, p. 11). Anti-establishment sentiments key to a populist worldview are rooted in concepts that "range from Lord Acton's famous adagio 'power corrupts' to the negative image of humanity so essential to Christianity and conservatism (e.g., in the Original Sin)" (Mudde, 2010, p 1175).

Mudde's Data

In order to strengthen his thesis, Mudde (p. 1176-8) cites a variety of *Eurobarometer* surveys ranging from 1997 to 2009. Regarding out-group thinking, in 1997, a third said they were "not at all racist", another third "a little racist" and a surprising last third openly expressed "quite or very racist feelings" (Barometer 113). 65% of EU-15 (EU member states 1995-2004) citizens agree that "our country has reached its limits; if there were to be more people belonging to these minority groups we would have problems". At the time, two-thirds believed illegal immigrants should be sent back and more radical than (most) PRRPs today, 20 per cent support "wholesale repatriation". The ESS 2003 surveyed 18 Western European countries, where 80% of respondents agree that immigrants committing serious crimes should leave, without denoting whether these immigrants had legal status. "Moreover, large minorities agree that 'immigrants committing any crime should leave' (46 per cent), 'government should not treat refugee applications generously' (45 per cent), and that 'immigrants that are long-term unemployed should leave' (43 per cent)" (*ibid*., p. 1176). A staggering 85 per cent of EU-25 respondents are very or fairly proud to be of their native

[33] Or *vox populi sive vox dei*: the people's voice, thus the voice of God; that the voice of the people and the voice of God are interchangeable. Here it can be taken to mean 'government of the people, by the people, for the people', as an ordained system of governance.

nationality according to Eurobarometer 66 (2007) and 59% feel fairly proud of being European (*ibid*.).

Mudde cites that many of the authoritarian attitudes incorporated in PRRPs' platforms are already present in the general public. Special Barometer 181 (2003, EU-15) think young people will commit less crime if jail sentences were tougher (37% in Sweden to 75% in Ireland). An interesting poll is that people find that the police are doing a good job while also better policing would reduce crime. 85% Of the surveyed population states there is too much tolerance for criminals, that crime needs stronger punishment, and the army and police are the most trusted institutions (Eurobarometer 66, 2006). Eurobarometer 52 (2000) states that 22% of the Dutch population is not (at all) satisfied with their national democracy. Notably, 62% 'tend not to trust' their government (Eurobarometer 69, 2008), and a staggering 75% have little trust in their political parties (Eurobarometer 59, 2003).

These and more statistics all point that "[p]opulist radical right ideas are not alien to the mainstream ideologies of western democracy and populist radical right attitudes are not just shared by a tiny minority of the European population" (*Ibid.,* p. 1178). Given the above, I agree with Mudde that populism must be studied from the supply-side, as these sentiments are "generated naturally" (p. 1179) and widespread demand is a given (p. 1181). Populist right parties are not only socio-economical, but they also have a socio-cultural dimension, similar and antithetical to Green parties, which explains the culture organisational type: the populist right parties are nativist, whereas Greens generally hold a pluralist worldview.

In short, tyranny is not foreign to Western politics. Mudde argues that the populist right ideals are *not* alien to western democracies, nor are political leaders of populist or fascist stripes. These very same sentiments allowed for autocratic leaders to emerge

throughout Europe throughout the past century. Mudde provocatively restates his research question as "why have so few [populist] parties been successful given the generally fertile breeding ground?" (p. 1181). The reason offered is the lack "saliency" and electoral breakthrough, since most populist parties have little governing power and, like in the Netherlands, have been often unable to make long term coalitions work. However, the latent potential, given enough dissatisfaction, remains an integral part of Western democracy; a sentiment upon which other parties can, and have, capitalized.

Rhetorica Populismus

Populist rhetoric is a discourse on the rightful location of governance authority within a given society (Norris & Inglehart, 2019, p. 217). So far, I have discussed the world view that motivates populist actors. To summarize, by utilizing a Manichean worldview, populist leaders polarize 'the common people' against the corrupt elite on top, the dangerous others 'outside', and the freeloaders below. In doing so populist leaders foster both pseudo-majoritarian and selective anti-establishment sentiments. This section will examine populist communications, first by discussing *rhetorica* as a tool and then applying it to populist actors in our set space (the West) and time (the past quarter century).

> *"In the Aristotelian tradition, rhetoricians understand what is persuasive. Rhetoric is the art of using language eloquently to persuade others. Speeches or writings exploit certain themes, images, and metaphors to win arguments, communicate meanings, and convince supporters. The classical art of rhetoric draws upon appeals based on ethos (the character of the speaker), logos (logic or reason), and pathos (emotion)." (Norris, 2020, p. 698; italics added)*

The use of *rhetorica* is not inherently biased, nor concerned with whether actions are congruent to words or at all manageable. It implies the suspension of disbelief on the part of

the listener; it is a performance art, a theatrical soliloquy (see Hart 2020). Symbolic, sloganist, and dualistic in purpose, persuasive but not substantive.[34]

In applying populist manners, the use of *rhetorica* is a facade to claim legitimacy through the *vox populi* while seeking to dismantle (components of) the liberal democratic and constitutional constraints on the legislative branch and the executive power (Norris, 2020, p. 699).[35] Importantly, populist actors claim to restore popular sovereignty by returning 'the power' back from the corrupted politicians to 'you, the people'.

Liberal pluralism, on the other hand, which respects diversity of opinion and minority rights through individual rights-based rule-of-law institutions, is antithetical to national populism (Norris, 2020, p. 700). But given the thin-centred nature of populism, populist rhetoric comes in many guises. At times, Geert Wilders' Party for Freedom (PVV), expresses moderately left-wing views (while being staunchly anti-leftist) on health care, social services, and care of the elderly, as well as moderate progressive social values[36] on issues such as gender equality, gay rights, and religious freedoms, while still being resolutely anti-immigrant and anti-Muslim (Duina and Carson, 2020).

In the current age of social media, appeal to emotions have trumped the use of nuanced reason; politics, if it wished to be seen, had to become bitesize (Blumler & Kavanagh,

[34] E.g., "drain the swamp", "lock her up", "get Brexit done"

[35] E.g., Hungary's Victor Orban, he explicitly maintains an illiberal democracy, where he continually erodes the freedom of the press and the independence of the judicial branch.

[36] It must be noted that 'progressive social ideals' such as marriage equality and protection of queer people are often used as a tool to legitimise racism while barely upholding such rights through votes in the House or public statements whenever these rights are perpetrated by in-group people. The PPV voted against the 2022 transgender law which would allow self-identification, saying "what fool would allow this?"; LGBTQI+ education in high schools was named a "woke mandate" in 2021, even though the PVV in 2017 did vote in favour of such education in trade schools and colleges while the VVD & CDA voted against.

1999). Current day media demands "spectacular, emotional and sensationalist framing of social political issues [with] a strong preference for personalized story telling" (*Ibid.*, p.23).

In order to strengthen their mandate, populist actors use of an *argumentum ad populum*. This "fallacious perversion" Reisigl (p. 554) reduces the meaning of 'the people' to denote only the in-group: *"*We *and only we* are the people*!"* (Reisigl, 2022, p. 553; emphasis added; see Müller, 2016, p. 3) and that as such "the people themselves constitute a unified whole" (Bernstein & Staszewski, 2021, p. 287). Wilders' 2023 victory speech is great example: "We [the people] are over it. We want –and we will make it happen that– the Dutch people will be put on number one again!" He clearly states that his mandate is derived directly from the reified *vox populi*, rather than through a democratic tally. This line of reasoning is an appeal to purity; while diversity of opinion, other than the populist prescribed 'orthodoxy', is seen as illegitimate[37] (Mudde, 2010; Bernstein & Staszewski, 2021). If any person may disagree with what populists say, then they cease to be part of 'the people' or co-opted by the elite. As such, the application of the populist Manichean worldview clearly results in as radical praxis.

Furthermore, the *argumentum ad populum* is a perversion of Rousseau's *volonté générale* because this 'general will' was intended to come together through democratic methods into one pronounced will. The perversion happens when a supposed fictitious homogeneous people is invoked, whose will is supposedly more valid than any other. Meaning that "the general will is not—in any obvious way—general, but it will also mean

[37] "Every actual democracy rests on the principle that not only are equals equal, but unequals will not be treated equally. Democracy requires, therefore, first homogeneity and second –if the need arises– elimination or eradication of heterogeneity" (Schmitt, 1988, p. 9, emphasis added) "Schmitt was a key political theorist of the Nazi regime; his understanding of democracy closely echoes contemporary populism" (Bernstein & Staszewski, 2021, fn. 20.) namely one that cannot be pluralistic.

that sovereignty is divided" (Thrasher, 2021, p. 56). Especially in a multi-party system like the Netherlands, all voices in the political area are a form popular representation.

Populist rhetoric, as this chapter has pointed out so far, shows that through the use of "abrasive but also colloquial, relatable, patriotic rhetoric" (Block & Negrine, 2017, p. 189) populist actors antagonize the elite and exclude perceived others in order to connect with their publics, who are often those discontented with current middle-ground politics. An emphasis within populist speech is the feature of 'scapegoating' (Schraff, & Pontusson, 2023; Burgoon *et al.*, 2019) which greatly appeals to the xenophobic tendencies of the European middle class (Mudde, 2010):

> *[…] the national political establishment ('Washington' in the case of the US), but also supranational elites (Brussels). In the world view of Trump voters and their European equivalents, it is not Blacks [sic] or immigrants that are to be blamed, but rather free-trade and socially-liberal elites who favor Blacks and immigrants over 'ordinary people'" (*Ibid.*).*

The populist right uses "immigrants, racial minorities and, more generally, undeserving recipients of welfare benefits or other kinds of government favors" (Schraff, & Pontusson, 2023, p. 4) as scapegoats, which falls in line with the earlier sections of this chapter. However, these groups are often not the direct blame.

In short, in order to examine the communication strategies of populist actors, it's important to understand that *rhetorica* serves as a powerful tool for shaping public perception. Drawing from the Aristotelian tradition, *rhetorica* employs language to persuade, often utilizing themes, images, and metaphors to convey messages and sway opinions. However, the use of *rhetorica* by populist leaders transcends mere persuasion; it serves as a facade to assert legitimacy while challenging established democratic norms and institutions. Populist discourse often revolves around reclaiming power for "the people" from perceived corrupt elites, yet the actions of these leaders once in power can diverge from

their promises, leading to erosion of democratic principles. While rhetoric may not inherently concern itself with the alignment of words and deeds, its manipulation to consolidate power poses a threat to liberal pluralism and minority rights. Moreover, the evolution of political communication, particularly through the rise of social media and 24-hour news cycles, has amplified the reach and impact of populist messages, further polarizing societies and exacerbating divisions. By appealing to emotions and employing scapegoating tactics, populist actors capitalize on discontent with establishment politics to bolster their support base, perpetuating a cycle of antagonism and division. In essence, the pervasive use of populist rhetoric underscores the need for vigilant defense of democratic values and institutions against the encroachment of illiberal forces, reminding us that the true essence of democracy lies not in the rhetoric of populism, but in the enduring commitment to inclusive governance and pluralistic ideals.

3 | Methodology

This study will examine whether the three establishment Dutch political parties have started using populist rhetoric since the start of the 21st century, and what (if any) the impacts of the populist developments have been on the wider electoral system. In pursuing this end, the research will contribute to the analysis of the populist *Zeitgeist* by including Geert Wilders' Party for Freedom most recent electoral win in November of 2023, after long-term PM Mark Rutte stepped down.

Research Question

The motivating question of this thesis is: **How has populists' rhetoric developed between the 2002-2023 elections, and is this populist rhetoric contagious within the Dutch party system?** This central research question brings together three sub-questions:

1. *Which parties are included in the study, and why; in other words, who are the 'establishment ' actors, and which other parties are relevant to this study?*
2. *How has populist rhetoric impacted the overall party system; meaning, (how) does the contagion show itself in 'savior' parties?*
3. *Which populist phrases, if any, do we see 'winner' parties employing?*

Note that, semantically, preference is given to 'contagion' over 'impact' given the inherently complexities of political ecosystems. The causality that impact would imply is not possible to prove within the scope of this thesis; contagion, on the other hand, can be more clearly measured through direct rhetoric comparison of election period data.

In order to complete my research, I will use a **manual longitudinal qualitative content analysis** of **party platforms**. The election years of 2002, 2010, and 2023 will be examined, with a justification for those three elections set out below. Only the party platforms of the leading parties and savior parties will be included. The selected manifestos

will be analysed and graded using a blended method. Given the focus on election manifestos (party platforms), Rooduijn *et al.*'s (2014) **paragraph-level coding scheme** will be overlain with the six pointers used in Hawkins' 2009 holistic grading rubric. Furthermore, Hawkins' 3-point grading scheme will allow more nuance and detail in distinguishing paragraphs that are either: 0–not populist; 1–clearly populist; or 2–extremely populist. Rooduijn's expanded coding scheme will allow for more details in why paragraphs were graded 0, 1, or 2.

The goal of this research is to determine the level of contagion that populist party rhetoric has on the overall party system. The thesis argues that populist rhetoric has increased over the past twenty-year period; however, given the specific anti-elitist line of reasoning, it may not have gone up everywhere equally. Furthermore, although reference will be made to other governing bodies –e.g., the States-Provincial given their relevance to the Senatorial elections (more on this in the next chapter)– only data from the national elections will be included within this research. Only national elections draw major public attention, and thus party manifestos at this order of government are a key lens through which parties can have a direct impact on how people see the party. But allusions made to the States-Provincial and the Senate is because, as the next chapter will detail, all deputies of the States-Provincial[38] form the electoral college which elects the Senate, and both the Senate and the House of Commons are needed to pass legislation. As such, both bodies are important to the analysis.

Hypotheses

[38] Including the additional college of deputies elected with the sole purpose to represent Dutch who are residing abroad in the senatorial election. Given that Dutch people register their residency with the municipalities and as such, when living abroad, cannot vote with any province.

In the next section, I differentiate two categories of parties –winner and savior parties– which are defined based on their respective functions in coalition building within the consociational, multi-party ecosystem of the States-General[39] of the Netherlands. The first group will be the 'winner' parties: Social Democrats (PvdA), the Christian Democrats (CDA), the Liberal Conservatives (VVD) and, as of 2023, also the Social Conservative Party for Freedom (PVV). The second category or 'savior' parties include the Nationalist LPF, Conspiratorial FVD, the Agrarian BBB, and the Constitutionalist NSC. My expectations will be as follows:

> ***Hypothesis 1 – There will be an <u>overall increase</u> in populist rhetoric amongst the 'winner' parties between 2002 and 2023.***

I expect to see that, of the establishment parties, the VVD will co-opt the most populist language because of the proximity between that party and the PVV. First and foremost, Wilders was himself a VVD-MP. The PvdA may have used some populist language by 2023 given that they, too, would seek to appeal through the use of a more populist style of communication. The CDA, however, is expected to see no such increase. Their voter base is relatively rural and traditional, and while we see a rise in religiosity as embraced by the Republican Party in the US since Ronald Regan's presidency, the Netherlands has not experienced a similar shift. Dutch tradition, also when secular, is centred around practicality and normality, or *normaal doen* (Camfferman, 2017; Rast, 2018).

> ***Hypothesis 2 – The 'savior' parties, <u>overall</u>, prove more populist than the 'winner' parties.***

Notwithstanding H1, it is expected that the savior parties employ more populist rhetoric given their newness to the political scene. This means that they are able to portray

[39] Of which the First and Second Chamber are the Senate and House of Commons, respectively.

themselves more adequately as outsiders who will deliver a long-promised new style of governance. The LPF was first to offer this alternative, as such I expect to see Fortuyn's often referenced populist streak. The FVD, known as the conspiratorial and briefly successful anti-establishment party, is likely to demonstrate very populist rhetoric. If the nomenclature would have been palatable, the party may have self-identified as fascist. The elitist-sounding leader accused the establishment parties of being a cartel and argued that the former Vice-PM[40] was a spy of the international order. Furthermore, BBB, an agrarian party, is also expected to be populist, albeit in a milder tone than the FVD, given their regional identity focus, which offers a counterbalance from the Randstad.[41] Moreover, a former Dutch agrarian party from the 1970s was widely considered populist as well. The final 'savior' party is the NSC. This party, unlike the others, will not be expected to display any populist rhetoric at all. The leader is a polemic former CDA top-MP known for his hard line on orderly conduct, timely deliverance of intelligence, and the need for constitutional judicial oversight. He furthermore stated to have a list of capable professionals in his party list. These principles run counter to the spirit of populism.

> ***Hypothesis 3 – The largest presence of populist rhetoric will be observed in the data from the 2023 election manifestos.***

This means that Dutch politics would indeed be experiencing a so-called *Zeitgeist,* thus questioning Rooduijn's 2014 study. H3 is only satisfied if half of both the 'winner' parties and 'savior' parties groups display 'clearly populist' rhetoric (score of 1 or higher), since to be in the 'spirit of the time' it must be expressed by both the establishment and those who seek to replace them.

[40] Sigrid Kaag, former-D66 party leader, for studying at St. Anthony's College in Oxford.
[41] The Urban core made up from Amsterdam, Utrecht, The Hague, and Rotterdam.

Hypothesis 4 – the PVV is indeed a clearly populist party.

This final hypothesis serves as a litmus test to uncover whether the methods employed here are indeed functional in locating populist rhetoric. This meaning that the PVV is certainly a populist party even when none other is.

Research Frame

Timeframe

The timeframe of 2002 to 2023 is set to capture the most recent period of Dutch electoral history. The 2002 election was pivotal, since leading Dutch politician Pim Fortuyn was assassinated by a radical environmentalist, Volkert van der Graaf. The murder was allegedly motivated by Fortuyn's Islamophobic statements in the run up to the campaign. Out of respect, all the other parties ceased campaigning that year.[42] Fortuyn's party –Lijst Pim Fortuyn (LPF)– went on to win 26 seats (17%) in the 2002 election, and together with the VVD entered a coalition with the election-winning CDA, forming the first Balkenende cabinet (Jan Peter Balkenende was appointed Minister President of the coalition executive). This election saw the largest change of seats in the legislature's history – changing 66 out of the 150 seats in the lower chamber. This record has only been surpassed by the most recent 2023 election, where the Party for Freedom (PVV) won with 37 seats (23.5%), more than doubling its seats, which, together with other turnovers, resulted in a ground-breaking 76 new parliamentarians joining the representative chamber (Kuijper, 2023).

Fortuyn's legacy has often been heralded as the starting point of the current Dutch populist party PVV. Mudde's pathological normalcy thesis, mentioned in a subsection of

[42] Which mainly worked in favour of LPF, given that Fortuyn's obits functioned as post-mortem campaigning.

chapter 2.II, argues that the sentiments which are often ascribed to populism are generally present in society even if they do not express themselves in a 'populist vote' per se, applies here. Furthermore, the 1998 election, which resulted in Purple II[43], saw a voter turnout of 73.3%, the lowest since the elimination of compulsory voting. In the election following, Kok's PvdA lost 1 million votes in 2002, which the second biggest electoral defeat in Dutch parliamentary history[44] (CBS, 2002, June 24).

Given the time and resource constraints of this thesis, I will analyse the data in the following order. Most importantly are the elections that ushered in a new governing party, which includes 2002, where CDA's Jan-Peter Balkenende succeeded PvdA's Wim Kok; 2010, which started VVD's Mark Rutte's tenure of longest seated PM[45]; and finally, the 2023 elections where Geert Wilders' PVV won as the largest party.[46] Noteworthy is that each of these cabinets include(d) a populist party.

Party Selection

To be included in this study, the parties must fall into one of two categories: to be considered a 'winner party', the party must have been one the biggest parties in any post-Second World War national election and must still exist today; in order to be considered a 'savior party', a party must have displayed the so-called 'secular savior syndrome', described below.

[43] Second of Labour PM Wim Kok's coalition with most notably the VVD.

[44] The biggest-ever electoral loss was the CDA in 1994, having lost 1.1M votes compared to the 1989 election.

[45] He was also the longest ever demissionair PM.

[46] However, on July 2, after the second longest negotiation period in Dutch history, the extra-parliamentary cabinet under party-less PM Dick Schoof was affirmed.

The first category includes the traditional three major parties in the Dutch party system. All Dutch Prime Ministers since Second World War came from either the Social-Democratic PvdA, the Christian-Democrats CDA, or the Liberal-Conservative VVD. Most recently, these include Wim Kok (PvdA, 1994-2002), Jan-Peter Balkenende (CDA, 2002-2010), and Mark Rutte (VVD, 2010-2024)[47]. Note, however, that the CDA was founded in 1980; prior to its founding, the Catholic People's Party (KVP) was considered one of the major establishment parties in the Netherlands. During the era of deconfessionalization (1967-1989) the KVP merged with two other parties (CHU and ARP) to form the CDA, and as such succession is both reasonable and presumed. Furthermore, as of the 2023 election, the PvdA has merged lists with the GreenLeft (GL) at all five orders of government. The now two-parties-one-leader model will also be seen as a continuation of the PvdA for the purposes of this research. Lastly, the PVV won the 2023 elections, thus qualifying to be included within the first category as well. However, given the coalition-building nature of Dutch politics, Cabinet Schoof was formed just before summer recess on July 2nd, 2024. This was the second longest negotiation period in post-war history.[48]

The second category results in the BBB (Agrarianist), NSC (Constitutionalist), FVD (Radical Right), and LPF (National Neoliberal). The 'secular savior syndrome' (SSS) or 'savior' party is a new party –no older than one election cycle– which has gained a large number of seats in *either* Chamber leading to coalition-potential in the Lower House. As Mudde (2010) describes the sentiments that drive populism are ubiquitous, although they do not always express themselves as a vote for a populist party unless a vehicle presents

[47] Mark Rutte remained demissionair-PM until Cabinet Schoof was formed on July 2nd, 2024, making him not only the longest serving PM, but also the longest demissionair PM in Dutch History.

[48] Second only to the formation of the short-lived Rutte IV.

itself as strategically viable. Arguably, the messiah party is a vote for a new party which is to release the electorate from the irresponsive 'politics as usual' politicians. Note that this does not require the electorate to be anti-elites, per se.

Since entering the Lower House with one seat in 2021, the Farmer-Citizen Movement (BBB) has become the biggest party in the Senate election in 2023, taking 16 of the 75 seats (or 137/572 States-Provincial)[49] and electing Provincial Councillors in every province. They currently hold seven seats in Lower House, which was partly due to leader Caroline van der Plas' reluctance to become PM. In line with the 1863 US People's Party, as well as the Farmers Party that existed in the Netherlands in the postbellum period, agrarianism is traditionally seen as populist.

New Social Contract (NSC) first entered the race in 2023 and gained 20 seats. Leader Pieter Omtzigt was a prominent CDA-member who lost the CDA leadership race on a decimal percentage, leading to a fall out with the party leader Wopke Hoeksta. Furthermore, Omtzigt was instrumental, together with former SP-MP Renske Leijten, in holding Rutte's governments accountable during the Childcare Benefits Scandal where the Dutch Tax Revenue Agency, on the basis of race and nationality, wrongly accused an estimated 26,000 families of filing fraudulent tax claims, resulting in the Agency requesting the full amount of 'wrongly received' child benefits. This led to many parents losing their jobs, homes, and children between 2005 and 2019. Like Van der Plas, Omtzigt showed ambivalence towards PM-ship, citing prudence given that a new party may not make a good leader if a coalition.

[49] Senatorial elections are tiered. Voters elect provincial councillors, who then vote for the Senate. As such, one counts both the total States-Provincial seats as well as the Senatorial seats.

NSC could be seen as the CDA's successor, drawing from the same rural voter-base; CDA under new leadership was left with four seats after the 2023 election.

Finally, the Forum for Democracy (FVD) is a party to the right of the PVV that, especially since the onset of COVID-19, showed its conspiratorial colours. They entered the Lower House with two seats in 2017, after which they gained 12 of the 75 Senatorial seats (#1 tied with VVD) and 86 of the 570 votes from the States-Provincial. However, after failing to deliver due to internal strife and party-radicalisation, the FVD fell back to two Senators in 2023 and from 8/150 (2021) to three seats (2023) in the Lower House.

Measuring Populism

Keeping in mind the details of the literature review from the previous chapter, this section will analyse the component parts of the Hawkins' rubric (2009, pp. 1062-4), Brubaker's repertoire (2017, pp. 365-7), and Rooduijn *et al.*'s (2014) manifesto codebook[50]. The sections will elaborate which aspects of populism each scholar has emphasised, which may be overstated for the purposes of European populism since Brexit and Trump's administration, and which aspects, if any, may have not been included. The purpose of this analysis will coalesce in the next section where the analysed parts shall construct a rubric which will measure current western populism with both accuracy and reliability.

This analysis will occur within a post-positivist paradigm. In line with Bisel & Adam (2017), I take post-positivism to assume "that social reality is out there and has enough stability and patterning to be known. Social reality is conceived as coherent, whole, and singular" (p. n/a). This paradigm does this by adding an interpretivist layer to positivism

[50] Which Dr. Rooduijn kindly provided for the purposes of this research.

(Panhwar, et al., 2017 ; See: Wildemuth, 1993; Fischer, 1998; Phillips and Burbules, 2000), resulting in the position that, especially for the purposes of socio-political research, truth should be understood as objective, meaning that it is verifiable and falsifiable, but the human experience of any found truth is necessarily imperfect given the subjectivity of a person's lived reality, which is composed out of inherently inexpressible qualia. As such, qualitative research is interpretive in nature. Marshall & Rossman (2016) voice this in their critique, where they find that qualitative social research ranges from "art/impressionist" to "science/realist" (pp. 45–6). Yet, reproducibility through intercoder reliability and cross-country applicability satisfies the knowability of social truths, even one as nebulous and misunderstood as populism.

Rubric Evaluation

Hawkins' (2009; see Appendix I) work is well cited and peer reviewed, however, the work is 15 years old at the time of writing, and predominantly concerned with populist rhetoric in South America. South America generally displays left wing populism (notwithstanding the recent election of Argentina's libertarian President Javier Milei). Hawkins' rubric will be examined in order to add adjustments specific to the measuring of right-wing populism within the Western[51] cultural context. To this, the work of Rooduijn *et al.* (2014) adds that the catalyzer towards populism is that the overall wealth of a nation grows while the lived experience of the citizen becomes increasingly austere. Furthermore, his codebook contributes exclusionism as a telling attribute of right-wing populism to which

[51] Although the thesis' focus is populism in the Netherlands, Dutch populism is a nation-specific expression of a wider Western populist 'Wave' (Mudde, 2007; 2014). Germany's AfD, Flemish-Belgium's Vlaams Belang, and France's National Front are all examples of this same Western expression. As stated in Chapter 2, Western populism is by-and-large right leaning, whereas South American populism is left leaning in its anti-American anti-imperialism. They are wider social trends and display cross-nation contagion.

a limitation or rollback of basic democratic rights for those seen as not belonging to 'the people' would be subject. Inversely, pluralist political communications accept and support the legal status and rights that all residents have.

Hawkins' first point refers to the dualistic moral worldview that populists embrace, regardless of their political stripes. Such a world view allows neither for nuance nor fence-sitting. One is either 'with them or against them', and little distinction is made on policy points. In opposition to this stands a more nuanced policy by policy approach –that of pluralistic politics– where one is able to agree with some parts and disagree with others. The next point ascribes cosmic proportions to the rhetoric of the speaker, where they tie themselves in with great religious or national figures. In the Netherlands –where *normaal doen* (acting normal or grounded) is expected even of the royal family– such grandeur is often misplaced. Furthermore, citizens of the Netherlands, like an increasing majority of Europe, are largely politically secular. Politicians tend to invoke Christianity only as a shared cultural background from which norms are derived, but not as a religion which guides the government. This is the case even though there are and have been explicitly Christian parties, with a wide variety in their levels of confessionalism.

The "cosmic proportions" (p. 1063) Hawkins speaks of, however, can be reinterpreted as placing the speaker and listeners alike in a crucial *locale*, a grand intersection in history, where external and internal evils have been threatening the goodness of normal everyday life. The often-imminent threat on the good and virtuous people is contrasted with a heyday of old. This reactionary tendency is selectively invoked, meaning that the lost benefits to the in-group are emphasised while their cost is ignored or even stated to be desirable again. The obvious critique to such reactionary rhetoric is that they

harken back to a time where oppression was more explicit and accepted, which would affect those who are not included in 'the people' for ethno-cultural reasons the most.

Hawkins' third point, furthermore, refers to a selective people-centric majoritarianism, where 'the people' is seen as making up the *meaningful* and culturally *homogenous* majority of the nation, lending the speaker democratic credence. Normality, or *gewoon doen* as the Dutch say, is a central theme here. Brubaker's (2017) repertoire is largely in agreement with Hawkins thus far. And of the points discussed thus far, Rooduijn's (2014) codebook only focusses on people-centric language, which only through context can be seen as populist or pluralist. This contextuality of whether 'the people' is said in a populistic context or not, is not directly touched on by Hawkins.

Anti-elitism lays at the core of Hawkins' fourth point. For the purposes of European populism, the elite are often simply the traditional political powers and the corporate web with which it surrounds itself. In addition to the elite within a nation, representatives within the European Union and its legion of institutions are also an easy target for accusations of out-of-touch elitism, as are those who visit the World Economic Forum in Davos. Given the corrupting and far-reaching influence these elite have, prescribes the fifth and six point, Laclauian rapture is in order. In other words, undemocratic means are permitted in order to 'return' the power to 'the people'; there is a call for liberation and a railing against the vested order. A Western example took place in the United States: the January 6th, 2021, insurrection, which took place on the same day a joint session of Congress verified the results of the November 2020 presidential election. Such dire measures are called for given the repeated populist invocation of national or general states of crises. Be it one of immigration, like a border crisis, or a new red scare, where 'woke' leftist politics is said to be the cause of societal

degradation, even where no (relatively) left-leaning politicians have held executive power in over a two decades.

Coding Manifestos

Appendix II still includes Rooduijn *et al*.' (2014) original instructions. However, relevant sections will be summarized below. The adjustments made for the purpose of analysis in this thesis will also be elaborated upon. First, and perhaps most obviously, where the codebook was to be used to cross-analyse parties from six different European nations, including the Netherlands, between the 1990s and the 2010s, it will now serve to only study the Netherlands. Second, in line with Hawkins specifically and the literature review more generally, Rooduijn notes that populism consists of three interrelated characteristics: people centrism, anti-elitism, and exclusionism. Hawkins' work interacts with how paragraphs are graded; if only one of these characteristics is present or implied, then the paragraph will be marked a 1 (clearly populist) instead of a 2 (extremely populist). The definition of a paragraph, as stipulated in Appendix II, starts on a new line, with or without an indentation. Bullet points will be grouped with the preceding text and so will lone sentences.

For the codebook and its shorthand please refer to Appendix II and the shorthand on the final page of this thesis. My codebook holds the six groups: 1) people centrism, 2) anti-elitism, 3) solution to anti-elitism, 4) exclusionism, 5) solution exclusionism, and 6) politics[52]. These are further subdivided into the following fourteen arguments[53]:

1. *People,*
2. *Anti-elitism,*
3. *System negativity,*
4. *(Lack of) decisiveness,*
5. *(Lack of) clarity,*

[52] Rooduijn called "other", originally only consisted of 'Distance', to which 'Nation' and 'Crisis' are added.
[53] The three items with an asterisk (*) are personal additions that will be addressed below.

6. *Favouritism,*
7. *Engagement,*
8. **Direct democracy,*
9. *Strong leadership,*
10. *Exclusionism,*
11. *Limiting of rights/liberties,*
12. *Distance (between people and politics),*
13. **National pride or cultural decline, and;*
14. **Crisis.*

Besides Favoritism and Leadership, all the arguments consist of two, three, or four layers. Each such layer has either open or closed question which allows the coder to add more nuance. The arguments' layer looks different from Rooduijn's original codebook. Rooduijn would number each argument's layer (e.g.: People1 (Root), People2 (Form), People3 (Qualify)), where for instance the common European people would be People1.2 *and* People2.5. The small alteration creates a root-form-qualify structure which allows notation compounding while maintaining clarity and ease of reading. The use is intuitive and in Appendix II when examining the codebook's explanations of each code and how to properly use them.

The argument now coded as DDemos was originally a single argument named Refer which denoted tools of participatory or direct democracy, such as referenda. The name and structure were changed to reflect the need for more nuance on the matter and to indicate, in the code-name itself, that it implies general tools of popular democracy more generally rather than only referenda. The Netherlands, at times controversially, does not have directly elected mayors and Minister-Presidents; a call for their direct election[54] also falls under this code.

[54] As the PVV does in both their manifestos.

The Crisis and Nation arguments have been added to section 4 of the coding instructions in order to enable the coder two extra contemporary layers. No other aspect of the list of populist arguments allows for the coding of nationalism or loss of national pride, nor does anti-elitism refer to crisis, although the literature does point out that these three aspects are part of the populist repertoire. Although the coding of this is important and adds to the richness of the data, it by itself is not enough to grade a paragraph extremely populist without a notion of popular sovereignty or anti-elitism. And this is broadly contextual for the call for nationalism, loss of national cultural good, or the invocation of crisis to be a populist argument.

Coding Calculations

I follow Rooduijn and colleagues' (2014) methodology in order to calculate the degree of populist rhetoric in the selected party manifestos. The introduction is weighted twice because the introduction "contains the core message of a party" (2014, p. 6), whereas the main body of a manifesto is generally a "detailed and technical elaboration of the arguments that are made in the introduction" (*ibid*.). But unlike Rooduijn, this thesis will account for the length of the text in a different way. Rooduijn and colleagues found that when they ran their "analyses without weighting the paragraphs, the results [did] not change substantively" (fn. 13, p.13) but in my view the nature of the texts vary greatly and that should be accounted for.

Rooduijn and colleagues (2014, p. 567) use a percentage-based expression of their results. Therefore, the maximum (t) score (S) divided by total amount (t) of paragraphs (P)

should not exceed 1[55], allowing for a result expressed in percentages. The introduction (i) is counted twice, making *2(Si/Pi)* plus the body (b), including an adjustment for length making *(Sb/100)/(Pb/100)*. In order to gain a result expressed in percentages, I divide by 3 (since introduction is two units plus one unit for the body) times a hundred (to gain an expression in percentages); put together this makes:[56]

$$(\mathbf{2}(\boldsymbol{Si}/\boldsymbol{Pi}) + (\boldsymbol{Sb}/\mathbf{100})/(\boldsymbol{Pb}/\mathbf{100}))/\mathbf{3} * \mathbf{100}$$

However, one must account for an introduction or body to have no populist paragraphs, as well as for a manifesto not to have an introduction. Given that dividing by 0 is impossible, wherever a 0 in encountered in the results, that portion of the formula is removed; meaning that for 0 in intro *((Sb/100)/(Pb/100))/3*100* and for 0 in body *2(Si/Pi)/3*100*.

Per example, if you look at Table 2 (p. 56), if we plug in the data from the PVV–2010 manifesto:

PVV–2010: *Si = 11.5; Pi=16; Sb=13.5 Pb=100*

*(2(Si/Pi)+(Sb/100)/(Pb/100))/3*100 =*

*(2(11.5/16)+(13.5/100)/(100/100))/3*100 =*

*(2*0.7187+0.135/1)/3*100 =*

*(1.4375+0.135)/3*100 =*

*1.5725/3*100 =*

*0.5242*100 =* ***52.42***

Either the introduction (i) or the body (b) are not present or have no populist paragraphs, that section of the formula simply falls away. The reason is that if any of Si, Sb, Pi, or Pb are

[55] In a formula that looks like St / Pt ≤ 1 which is the same as St / Pt ≤ 100%
[56] Math reminder, from left to right: first, solve (between brakes); second, the * and /; then + or -.

0, this would make that section redundant. Per example, PvdA–2002 and BBB–2023 follow, and ther These outcomes can be cross-referenced in Table 3 on page 54 of this thesis:

***PvdA–2002**: Si=0; Pi=0; Sb=4.5; Pb=450*

*(2(Si/Pi)+(Sb/100)/(Pb/100))/3*100 =*

*(2(0/0)+(4.5/100)/(450/100))/3*100 =*

*(0+0.045/4.5)/3*100 =*

*0.01/3*100 =* ***0.33***

***BBB–2023**: Si=6.5; Pi=125; Sb=0; Pb=400*

*(2(Si/Pi)+(Sb/100)/(Pb/100))/3*100 =*

*(2(6.5/125)+(0/100)/(400/100))/3*100 =*

*(2*0.052+0/4)/3*100 =*

*0.104/3*100 =* ***3.47***

4 | Dutch Political History

The Kingdom of the Netherlands is a unitary parliamentary constitutional monarchy with a party-list proportional representation (PLPR) electoral system. Although Amsterdam is the Kingdom's biggest and capital city (a remnant of the Napoleonic era), the government sits in 's Gravenhage (The Hague). Besides Dutch, the Frisian is the second official language and is only spoken in and around Fryslân, besides the three so-call minority languages of Limbourgish in the southern-most province of Limburg, Nedersaksish in Twente, and the creole Papiamento in the Caribbean constituent countries of the Kingdom.

The Kingdom consists of four constituent countries and three special municipalities. The European part of the Kingdom, the country of the Netherlands, has twenty different electoral districts,[57] each of which have their own electoral ballots; this means that a party may choose to either not run or present a different list in any given district, although this rarely happens. Practically, each party runs in each district, but certain members on their party list may or may not run in certain districts or are presented in a different order.[58] Note that the political leader of the Netherlands is called the Minister-President or Premier, however for reader ease I will continue to use the English-style Prime-Minister (PM) as not to confuse with the abbreviation for Member of Parliament (MP). Unique within Europe, the Dutch Constitution bars the judicial branch from ruling on the constitutionality of new legislation, reserving this right to the Members of Parliament instead.

[57] Roughly overlapping with the twelve Dutch provinces, adding one extra district each for Amsterdam, Rotterdam, The Hague, the special Caribbean municipalities, and splitting four provinces (North and South Holland, Noord-Brabant, and Gelderland) in two.

[58] Interestingly, NSC was considering only running in certain (rural) districts but opted not to. In a way, this is not dissimilar to Bloc Quebecois running in only Quebec.

The Dutch Kingdom also has a Caribbean part, which was formerly known as the Dutch Antilles and currently consists of the constituent island countries of Aruba, Curaçao, and St. Maarten,[59] each of which have a devolved parliament, and the three islands of Bonaire, St. Eustatius, and Saba which are 'special municipalities'. The constituent countries each have a Prime Minister who leads the country, and a Governor, who represents them in the Hague. Although these six islands are vital parts of the Kingdom, this thesis is solely concerned with the political system of the Parliament of the country of the Netherlands, focusing specifically on the leaders of the political parties in the Dutch Lower House.

The Netherlands has five orders of elections: the European Parliament, the House of Representatives, the provinces that form the States-Provincial, the Waterboards, and the municipalities. The provincial and Waterboard elections are nationally held at the same time. The States-Provincial vote for the Senate and is made up out of the twelve provincial houses, which currently hold at 589 seats,[60] All members of each order of government can split away from their party and retain their seat and given the low electoral threshold can even start a new political party if they see fit.

The 75-seat Senate and 150-seat House of Representative, or the respective First Second Chamber of the States-General, make up the Dutch Parliament. The electoral threshold for the House is $1/150^{th}$ (0.67%) of the total number of valid votes. Voters' choices are biased toward the party leader, meaning that a party leader practically always gains the

[59] Only the Dutch half. Before devolution, this island was the only border the Netherlands shared with France.

[60] Including the nineteen seats reserved for the special municipalities in the Caribbean. The 570 total provincial seats are subject to change as per the population of any given province. And since 2023, an additional council has been added to represent all Dutch citizens living abroad, the number of councillors is relative to the voter turnout of abroad-residing citizens. This council is elected with the sole function of representing Dutch citizens living abroad in the senatorial elections.

most votes. However, the PLPR system allows for preferential voting. In the House any candidate on the ballot can gain a seat when they obtain 25% of 1/150th, or 0.17%, of accepted votes, even if their rank is lower than the number of seats won by their party. This means that if a party wins ten seats in the House and a candidate ranked #15 on that party's list reaches the preferential vote threshold, then they may get one of their party's ten seats, granted that internal party regulations permit this.

The party list proportional representation (PLPR) system in tandem with the lowest electoral threshold of any full democracy practically means that no single party has ever held an outright majority in the House; a common result are governing coalitions involving the agreement of between two and five parties. Governments that are sworn in are subsequently referred to using the last name of the Minister President, and a roman numeral is added if has PM served more than one term (similar to the "Trudeau government" or "the Harper government"). There are no term limits.

It has happened that the biggest party did *not* form government. Since the 1970s, the biggest party, Labour, was thrice excluded from cabinet nor did they deliver the Prime-Minister. The 1977 election was especially noteworthy as MP Den Uyl, who had been Labour leader since 1966 and super-majority[61] coalition Prime-Minister in the previous 1973-1977 term, won 53 seats(a +10 increase). At the municipal level, however, it is not uncommon for the biggest party to be excluded from coalition; this occurs about 10% of the times.

After a PM gives their cabinet's resignation to the monarch, their cabinet becomes "demissionair" which means that they are in a caretaker capacity. This will remain the case until the monarch resigns them, and an interim cabinet has been sworn in. In practice, this

[61] Forming a quinto-party coalition with 97 seats while Labour themselves held 43.

means that although an election has taken place, a new PM does not take office until a coalition agreement has been reach and their cabinet, with the PM as the first amongst equals, is sworn in. Under Mark Rutte, the ease of forming cabinet has been steadily degrading; after 360 days[62] of negotiation, the *kabinet-Rutte IV* was finally formed on 10 January 2022. In the interim, the previous cabinet functions in a demissionair capacity. Since 2002, it has happened that five out of the eight cabinet formations took approximately 200 days to form. Although kabinet formations can normally take about100 days, long stretches without a functioning kabinet have happened only twice since Second World War in 1989 (187 days) and 1977 (272 days).

Like other European electoral systems, the Dutch House seats a wide variety of parties. One-seat parties are very common, given that the system allows for minority voices to enter Parliament. The 2023 National Election resulted in 15 parties represented in the Dutch House. The 2021 election held a record number of parties on the ballot: a total of 37 parties resulting in a record 17 seated parties. The previous time the national ballot held more than 30 parties was in 1933 with 54 electable and 14 seated parties.[63] Finally, no party has held an out-right majority since 1900.

Party Histories

PvdA: Labour Party

They are a social-democratic party founded in 1946. They governed the Netherlands for the first ten post-Second World War years under resistance hero PM Drees. In the 1990s,

[62] Rutte III was decommissioned for 299 of these 360 days.

[63] The interbellum National Elections saw high number of parties running, ranging between 31 and 54. Furthermore, the Netherlands was neutral during WWI.

Labour was, in the words of Wim Kok: "shaking of its ideological feathers" which he described as freeing. These infamous words spoken short after the start of the Purple Cabinets –where Labour governed with the right-liberal VVD and progressive-liberal D66– made many believe that they were watering down their ideals (van Praag, N.D.). As vital components of these cabinets were centred around privatisation, putting a bigger emphasis on individual responsibilities.

Labour did not have a salient response against the perfect storm that was Pim Fortuyn's (LPF) rise. Only half of Labour's seats remained after the 2002 election. Although they did form Banlkenende III in 2007, Labour was unable to really make its mark. During the Rutte's tenure, Labour MPs formed the Turkish-Dutch party THINK (DENK),rom which, in turn, the Left-Radical, Intersectional ALL1 (BIJ1) split.[64] This latter party was a one-seat party from 2021 to 2023, electing the first-ever Black female party leader in Dutch history.[65]

Samson's leadership brought Labour back to short-lived prominence. Forming the two-party Rutte II coalition, it left the party decimated. After Rutte stepped down in 2023, GreenLeft and Labour decided to join under former Labour MP and MEP Frans Timmermans resulting in their lukewarm second place.[66] The two parties have also joined as one bloc Senate and will present as one list for Euro-Parliamentary (EP) elections. Labour MEPs join

[64] This party was first called Artikel1, as the first constitutional article guarantees, as of 2023, the right to equal treated and forbids discrimination on grounds of "religion, political orientation, race, sex, handicap, sexual orientation, or any other grounds" (denederlandsegrondwet.nl, N.D.). The second article enshrines freedom of speech.

[65] MP Sylvana Simons was a key figure in convincing PM Rutte to apologies for the Dutch history in enslaving and trading African peoples by stating that she never wishes there to be a day where one Dutch person says to another "oh that Second World War; that is too long ago". (Tweede Kamer, 2021, 23 September). In December 2022, the PM apologised, followed by King William-Alexander on Keti Koti the sesquicentennial memorial of the abolishment of slavery (July 1, 2023).

[66] 25 seats (+8; 15%) compared to PVV's 37 (+20; 23.49%) win and continued higher polling.

the Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats (S&D), whereas GreenLeft MEPs are sent to Greens–European Free Alliance (Greens/EFA).

It is possible that the 1999 WTO Seattle Riots influenced Labour Party's thinking when they wrote this platform. This led to especial loss of face for the Dutch Labour Party. The year prior, then President Bill Clinton cheered on the Third Way in his state of the Union address, after which he invited Premier Wim Kok to the White House as a guest of honour at the DLC Roundtable in 1999, where Clinton said:

> *I would also like to just very briefly say how very much I admire the people who are here with me at this table today -- how much I have learned from them, how much I look forward to working with them at every opportunity. Wim Kok, from the Netherlands, actually was doing all this before we were. He just didn't know that -- he didn't have anybody like Al From who could put a good label on it. (Laughter.) But he was doing it, for years and years and years (Clinton, 1999).*

In other words, Kok's social-liberal cabinet was tied to, and recognized for, championing the Third Way politics of the era. This new politics was centred around liberal globalisation and championing international trade as a war deterrent. Which, as logic follows, makes the WTO the embodiment of this new international principle. As such, the Battle for Seattle that December must have been not just a hit to the Clinton White House, but an amplified hit to Kok's Purple Cabinet.

CDA: Christian Democratic Appeal

This Christian democratic party is a the youngest of the three traditional parties. Since they are a fusion of three denominationally different parties in the 1980. The most prominent of the three was the Catholic Peoples Party (KVP), who led the negotiations with the pre-World Wars Anti (French) Revolutionary Party (ARP) and the protestant Christian Historical Union (CHU). Given that the Netherlands is home both Protestants and Catholics – respectively, above and below the rivers Waal and Meuse– this fusion party now brings

together the two main denominational party representations.[67] The idea of this fusion had been floating around for thirteen years. The tri-party cooperation worked so well that Dries van Agt became the KVP/CDA PM in 1977 until 1982 (CDA.nl, 2024). They quickly delivered another PM, Ruud Lubbers, in 1986 – although he formed government due to Labour (the with the biggest number of seats) could not form a majority coalition.

One of the leading questions was the role of the Christian gospels in the to-be political party. As such, in 1972, a 'contact council' was created to streamline discussions between the parties. Its leader developed the 'response-philosophy': centering not the gospels but the political response to them, as the central guidelines for the party's cooperation. Amongst their core values are 'responsibility spreading', which means that not everything is up to government to decide, nor should all power lay in one organisation; a dualistic sense of justice, where the good is rewarded and the bad punished; the right to personal development (as God intended), solidarity with less-fortunate through biblical compassion; and 'rentmeesterschap' (loanmastership) which understands that people ought to take good care of the earth in order to keep it healthy for future generations. Before becoming PM, Jan Peter Balkenende voted against equal marriage rights (a 2001 Labour motion). However he backtracked his opposition once become leader on the Netherlands.

As such, this party argues for smaller government, although to a lesser extent then the VVD. They do not disapprove of capitalism, nor do they see the Market as the solution. Central is the application of Christian values. The CDA has been a sobering force on social welfare, however their concept of solidarity is expressed in preference for income-

[67] Currently, the conservative Calvinist Staatkundig Gereformeerde Partij (SGP; Reformed Political Party) and the moderate Christian Union are two other Christian parties.

dependant tax system. This frugality also expresses itself in actively wanting to decrease the sovereign debt. CDA also supports strong EU regulation for animal welfare and reducing CO_2 emissions. Lastly, their electorate is mainly pulled from 'the provinces' rather than *de Randstad* (the urban multi-city core of the Netherlands). After the New Social Contract won 20 seats in the 2023 election, the CDA now under leader relatively progressive Henri Bontebal, the party was left with 5, down a significant 15 from 2021. This placed them outside of coalition for the first time since 2002. Given them, by Bontebal's admission, a chance to reflect and reinvent themselves.

VVD: People's Party for Freedom and Democracy

This liberal conservative party claims descendance form the highly influential independent-liberal[68] trice PM Johan Rudolf Thorbecke[69] responsible to for the current-day constitutional monarchy.[70] Moreover, the VVD was founded exactly 100 years after the Constitution was given Royal Ascend, in 1948. Moreover, the VVD has formed government all but twice since 1982. The first time in opposition was a progressive lean within the CDA persuaded Lubbers in 1989 to form a grand coalition with the PvdA, which stood for four years and seven months. Only other time was in 2006, when an internal leadership race between VVD-leader Mark Rutte en VVD-second Rita Verdonk was ongoing, leading to the

[68] Prior to party politics.

[69] He served under King William III between 1849-53; 1862-66; and, 1871-72.

[70] Dr. Thorbecke is widely regarded as the Dutch statesman, being remembered especially for his amendments to the Constitution of the Netherlands in 1848. This reformed the Netherlands from an absolute to a constitutional monarchy amidst the wider European liberal democratic 'Springtime of the Peoples' (Merriman, 2010, p. 715).

expulsion of Verdonk 2007.[71] This VVD in-fighting landed the party 4th place for the first time since 1956. In the last forty-two years, the VVD spend roughly eight years in opposition.

The VVD stands for the protection of property and the protection of individual rights. They also uphold justice as the right to equality under the law, enlightenment era inspired religious tolerance. Their cultural roots lay in the Judaeo-Christian, humanism, and Enlightenment traditions. They stress the importance of Dutch language to the overall culture of the country. The VVD vision of the state is to act as a powerful but limited and frugal apparatus, stimulating collaboration and self-sufficiency. Other central tenants are the free market economy, the support of the liberal international rules-based order, and low trade barriers. As such it comes as no surprise that they are a pro-EU party, who plea for a robust national sovereignty to balance the core EU competencies.

The VVD has traditionally favoured governing with CDA (and the KVP prior to the merge) since 1977. In 2002, VVD-leader Mark Rutte gained fewer votes than his party-list's #2 Rita Verdonk, former Minister of Immigration and Integration. This unprecedented occurrence led Verdonk to attempt a failed 'coup', leading to her expulsion from the party. She later founded a political party entitled 'Proud of the Netherlands' (Trots of Holland). The VVD suffered from this loss of face in the following 2006 election.

PVV: Party for Freedom

Although currently being the ruling party in the Dutch Lower House, the Freedom Party only has one member, the founder Geert Wilders. Association with the party is done

[71] The 2006 elections resulted in more votes for Verdonk than for party-leader Rutte. After an attempted intra-party coup was uncovered, Verdonk was ousted. After which she founded her own party Proud of NL (Trots op NL).

through an organisation of the same name. This (lack of) party structure allows its leader full freedom to unilaterally set the course of the party. Put simply: Wilders *is* the PVV. This results in the party having little representation outside of the States-General, nor does the party have a science bureau, a youth branch, public party-congresses, or a party news outlet (Vossen, 2012b). At the time of writing, Wilders is the longest serving MP.

Prior to founding the PVV, Wilders was a member of the liberal conservative VVD starting in 1989 and was first elected to the Commons in 1998. During this time, he mentored the to-be PM Mark Rutte. In 2004, during kabinet-Balkenende III, Wilders broke with his party. The first cracks showed after he co-published a ten-point discussion paper, proposing that the party would not allow a third Purple cabinet. While MP Rutte wanted to pull the VVD more towards social liberalism. Through one of the ten points, Wilders and co-author expressed their refusal to follow party line concerning the ascension of Turkey to the EU once the country satisfied the EU requirements. Wilders cited the fundamental cultural differences of Turkey as a secular Muslim nation with the secular Christian roots of Europe. Finally in 2004, after giving an interview to HP/De Tijd where he stated to 'eat hijabs raw', Wilders became an independent MP.

At its core, the PVV strives for the Netherlands to be "free, prosperous, and sovereign." Since the rebranding from the 2006 election onwards, Wilders' PVV has become known for its firebrand anti-Islamic talking points, which in many cases objectively run counter to the Dutch Constitution—like a ban on Qurans. He fears that Dutch culture is being replaced by Islamic culture. He furthermore argues for more robust care for especially the elderly. The rights of women and queer people are often invoked but only in the context of protecting them against the supposed backwards cultural habits of people from Muslim-majority

nations. The Freedom Party's voting record show a lukewarm support when bills for queer protects are tabled. Wilders is also strongly anti-socialist or "left-liberals."[72] His party self identifies as social-conservatives and anti-Brussels. Although having won the 2023 election, Geert Wilders has declined the Prime-Ministerial role, opting instead, like the three other coalition leaders, to remain an MP. He has instead appointed Dick Schoof, the former head of the Dutch General Intelligence and Security Service, as Minister President. Since he has proven skill in "listening to his political bosses" (de Volkskrant, 2024, 29 May). Dick Schoof and his cabinet were sworn in on July 2nd, 2024.

Pim Fortuyn

Beyond the 'traditional three plus one' parties, there are four 'savior' parties. As discussed in the methodology above, these parties are or were new parties that had massive gains within one election cycle as the act as a vehicle for the electorate's discontent with the status quo. For the LPF, this was the Purple cabinets formed by Labour and the VVD, for the other three parties this status quo was Rutte's 'Teflon'[73] tenure. In other words, they are a vehicle for democratic discontent of their respective current cabinet. As pointed out above, the electoral discontent can be expressed through an election for either Chamber. These parties have quickly grown from non-existent to major played in either a General Election or a Provincial (thus Senatorial) Election. In the Netherlands, all twelve provincial elections are held simultaneously, as the combined seats of the States-Provincial elect the Senate and generally vote along party lines.

[72] This term is an 'Americanism', denoting the far left while in the Dutch ideological spectrum this would actually mean centre left.

[73] As no scandal would seem to stick to him, akin to the anti-stick of Teflon.

The oldest and shortest lived of the aforementioned parties is the LPF or *Lijst Pim Fortuyn.* Named after the former social science professor, Pim Fortuyn first associated himself with the PvdA until 1989, after which he joined the VVD. As this did not prove successful, he started his own party on the 15th of February, 2002. Fortuyn, besides his strong opposition to Islam, was strongly opposed to the multicultural policies of the previous governments, stating they had failed at integrating allochthone population groups. The Netherlands was not an immigration nation. Nine days prior to the 2002 election, Prof. Dr. Fortuyn was shot and killed by radical environmentalist. Leading to the hunting phrase: 'The bullet came from the Left". The Fortuynists, after the death of their charismatic and so-said flamboyant leader, did join the first CDA-cabinet as the second biggest party, but soon after fell into disarray. By the 2006 election the party was disbanded.

The LPF is generally considered the first Dutch populist party of the twenty-first century. Not only was Fortuyn a flamboyant gay man, but he was also critical of Labour and Purple's Third Way. Fortuyn was deeply and vocally critical of the Dutch multicultural policies that until then allowed for immigrant populations to remain within their cultural silos, akin to the pillarization[74] of the previous century. After his assassination in 2002, just nine days for that year's national election, the BBC European Correspondent described Fortuyn as:

> *the biggest mystery of all. He was a right-winger who had pictures of Marx and Lenin in his house. A man intolerant of Islamic culture because it wasn't tolerant enough for his. Most Dutch people describe him as a populist rather than a fascist.*

[74] A social structure where Catholics, Protestants, Socialist, and inexplicitly Liberals each formed a pillar. Each pillar had an associated party, football club, news station, etc.. According to the BBB, as shown below, this era allowed for inter-class solidarity based on these pillared identities. However, rapid secularisation in the 1950s led to an abolishment of the pillar-system.

Prior to Fortuyn, others have tried immigration and immigrant skeptic policies, with little to no success. "The policy platforms of Dutch far-right parties such as the NVU, CD, and CP[75] had been one-dimensional and rather simplistic in their antiforeigner sentiments" (Dorussen, 2004, p. 142). Fortuyn did not only tackle this issue from a wholly new angle, namely in favour of immigrant's full integration (perhaps even assimilation) into elevated Dutch culture which was rooted in a secular Judeo-Christian and Humanist traditions. Those unassimilated were at a disadvantage, so it would inhumane not to ask them to take up responsibility to belong within the Dutch framework. Since the LPF, after all, is a party that stands for a free and democratic state upholding everyone's equality (both in rights and responsibilities) before the law, regardless of race, gender, faith, and sexuality.

Context and timing matters: Hans Janmaat the leader of the Centre Party (CP; later Centre Democrats (CD)), was the only post-war seat given to a supposed populist fascist. He was an CP-MP from 1982-84, an independent until 1986, and the sole CD-MP between 1989-98. Janmaat was shunned, both on the floor of parliament as no other MP wished to speak with him, and by the press — as he never failed to proclaim (Brand, 2007). Finally, Fortuyn tried and failed at to grow within both the PvdA and later the VVD, would certainly have known this.

Whereas Wilders is said to have taken over the electoral success of the LPF in exaggerating their xenophobic ideals, Baudet may have been cut from more similar cloth as Fortuyn. Both were highly educated men in style with a rancune towards the vested powers. Yet, Baudet shares little more with Fortuyn than that they both wrote a book on the preceding PM's tenure (The Ravage of Rutte's Ten Years; Baudet & Frentrop, 2020).

[75] Respectively, the Dutch People's Union, the Centre Democrats who later become the Centre Party.

Especially considering the lack of work to show for on the side of Baudet, where Fortuyn created the widely used Student Transit Pass (OV Kaart; Valk, 2024a). The author of authoritative biography of Fortuyn, who was also an undergraduate from of his, states that after Fortuyn's political 'big bang', his political praxis has become splintered amongst several right-populistic parties (Valk, 2024b).

Thierry Baudet

In 2016, Dr. Thierry Baudet founded the *Forum voor Democratie*, FVD or Forum for short, as a conservative think tank. Central to the party's ideologies are (re)gaining of Dutch national sovereignty, the introduction of various forms of direct democracy through referenda and petitions, direct mayoral elections,[76] e-democracy, and breaking the 'party cartel'. This latter point refers to the rotation of power between labour, the Christian democratic, and the liberal parties. Inferring a political oligopoly. In the 2017 election they won two seats in the Commons, followed by a landslide tie with the VVD in the Senate in 2019. Such an ideological imbalance between the First and Second Chamber of the States-General rarely happens. Baudet quickly lost grace, however. Besides the heavy infighting, Baudet suggested the creation of 'Forum Land'. Suggesting a Forum currency, a news outlet, dating app, and schools. Only the latter of which is still the case. This proved unpopular as it was seen as cult-like overlapping with Nazi in-group patterns. Unlike Wilders, who publicly got a vaccine, Baudet and his party strongly opposed the COVID-19 lockdowns, curfews, and vaccine mandates. FVD currently has two and three seats in the First and Second Chamber, respectively.

[76] Since mayors are appointed by cabinet.

Caroline van der Plas

Moving with the farmers protests throughout the Netherlands and Europe in 2021, the *Farmers' Citizen Movement,* or BBB (not Triple-B), became the agrarian political vehicle to challenge the The Hague establishment. Being squeezed between EU-level nitrogen reduction policies –which call for larger consolidated and more automated farms– and the need for greener –therefore smaller scaled– farms, farmers across the country feared that their way of life was endangered. Being the second agrarian party since Second World War, the BBB's leader Caroline van der Plans won a single seat in the 2021 election. Her party has currently secured her position in the current coalition as junior party and will deliver the Minister of Agriculture. Given that a PVV-VVD-NSC coalition already commands a majority of the seats, the BBB's part in the presumptive cabinet is especially due to their landslide victory in the provincial elections. Which led them to become the biggest party not only in the senate, but in *every* province in 2023. Besides being a party for Dutch farmers, the party is big on (re-)investing in 'the regions'[77] and small-town Netherlands, by promoting regional identities through allowing more prominence to the local dialects and the recognized minority languages[78] the southern Limbourgish, the eastern Nedersaksish, and the Caribbean Papiamento.

Pieter Omtzigt

Lastly the newest party of the group: *Nieuw Sociaal Contract* (NSC). This party was founded after their leader Pieter Omtzigt split off from the CDA after losing its leadership

[77] As opposed to the Randstad 'Edge City' which is made out of Amsterdam, The Hague, Rotterdam, and Utrecht, at the west coast of the Netherlands.

[78] Since Frysk (Frisian), spoken in northernmost province of Fryslân (Friesland), is an official second language.

race by a few dubious decimals. Dr. Omtzigt, in his position as a prominent Christian Democrat, together with the Socialist Party's (SP) Lilian Marijnissen, was instrumental at uncovering the Child Benefits Scandal, which resulted in the fall of Rutte-III. This made him very popular with the electorate, as a smart leader with integrity. However, in the run up to the 2023 election, Omtzigt seemed to be ambivalent towards becoming Prime Minister, citing that it is hard for a newly formed party to govern all at once. According to the Dutch election compass organisation, Kieswijser, which is run through the University of Amsterdam, the NSC is ideologically close to the bible belts' State (Calvinist) Reformist Party (SGP). His party mainly promotes institutional renewal. First and foremost, through creating a constitutional court, which means that a constitutional amendment must be made to remove the limitations laid on the judicial branch to judge laws on their constitutionality, given that this competency currently lays with MPs. Secondly, the NSC proposes a change to the electoral system, which may give more democratic weight to the rural areas. They also want smart international cooperation, improvement to the coast of living, and more attention towards healthcare, food quality and housing crisis.

5 | Results

The first section will discuss the quantitative data collected through a detailed analysis of the manifestos, after which I will present a qualitative analysis of the fifteen party platforms.[79] The main goal is to assess whether the party system shows signs of populist rhetoric contagion, with the PVV as reference point. The final section looks at the development of populist parties' rhetoric. The language use of the populist party or parties will be analysed before it is compared with the language use of the other selected parties. This will give a clear overview of rather rhetoric contagion has taken place.

For a reference sheet on which of the three traditional parties (PvdA, CDA, VVD) formed government in the post-Second World War elections, please consult Table 5 in Appendix III.

General Findings

Table 1 shows the electoral results of each of the eight selected parties over the eight elections between 2002 and 2023. Although no election was held in 2008, the 'coalition shuffle' preceding the Balkenende IV cabinet is also included. These results show that the populist parties (LPF, PVV, FVD)[80] do best when the preceding governing party has been in place for a longer time: in 2002, Wim Kok (PvdA) had passed on the torch to Ad Melkert; like Mark Rutte (VVD) passed on his leadership to Dilan Yeşilgöz in 2023; Jan-Peter Balkenende

[79] The order used is chronological: starting with PvdA (leader 1994-2002), CDA (2002-2010), VVD (2010-2023), LPF (in existence 2002-2006), PVV (since 2006), FVD (since 2015), BBB (since 2019), NSC (since 2023).
[80] As per the literature review.

(CDA), however, *did* run in the 2010 election but faced a 50% loss. Although the CDA did run with the incumbent PM for an unheard of fifth cabinet[81], the reshuffle of their then two-year-

Table 1. Electoral results since 2002.

Seats	Balk I	Balk II	Balk III	Balk IV	Rutte I	Rutte II	Rutte III	Rutte IV	Schoof
	2002	2003	2006	2008	2010	2012	2017	2021	2023
PvdA	23(-22)	42(+19)	33(-9)	***33***	30(-3)	***38(+8)***	9(-29)	9(=)	25(+16)*
VVD	***24(-14)***	***28(+4)***	***22(-16)***	22	***31(+9)***	***41(+10)***	***33(-8)***	***34(+1)***	***24(-10)***
CDA	***43(+14)***	***44(+1)***	***41(-3)***	***41***	***21(-20)***	13(-8)	***19(+6)***	***15(-4)***	5(-10)
LPF	***(+)26***	8(-18)	0(-8)	–	–	–	–	–	–
PVV	–	–	(+)9	9	***24(+15)***	15(-9)	20(+5)	17(-3)	***37(+20)***
FVD	–	–	–	–	–	–	(+)2	8(+6)	3(-5)
BBB	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	(+)1	***7(+6)***
NSC	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	***(+)20***

Read the data as follows: seats(gains). The colours correspond to a party gaining or losing seats. * In 2023 the PvdA merged lists with GroenLinks (GL). ***Bold-italic*** items, regardless of colour, means that that party was part of the coalition.

old two-party CDA-PvdA coalition (which in turn only lasted another two years), was not a show of strong governance. And so, while the LPF without their leader had faded into oblivion by 2010, the new PVV with the experienced Geert Wilders at its helm were able to capitalize on the CDA's weakness. Moreover, their reshuffle resulted in a two-party coalition with the PvdA (social democratic Labour), for whom Geert Wilders harbours a special resentment (PVV, 2010; 2023). Wilders' iconoclastic, antagonistic, and direct communication style must have appealed to the voter, given that his nine-seat party (2006) went to twenty-four (fifteen seat increase) by 2010. This infamously swayed former-mentee Mark Rutte (VVD-PM) who, together with the CDA, formed a minority government, to allow the PVV to supply-and-demand his coalition plan. Meaning that the PVV did support the

[81] Only Hendrikus Colijn (ARP), who served for a total of 6 years and 76 days, had a fifth cabinet in 1939 which lasted for 16 days.

government's budget as an ally in the Commons, while not being a part of a formal coalition.[82] This configuration did not last, however, which has haunted the PVV throughout Mark Rutte's tenure. This led to the VVD placing a *cordon sanitair* on the PVV.

Table 2 displays the number of paragraphs for each of the fifteen manifestos analyzed in this research. The columns show, in order, the number of paragraphs in the introduction (Pi) and the body (Pb) of the manifestos, followed by the related populist-score of the introduction (Si) and the body (Sb). The order in which the parties are listed corresponds with the qualitative analysis below and aligns chronologically (see fn. 65).

Table 2. Paragraphs (P) of introduction (i) and body (b) and their score (S).

Year	2002				2010				2023			
Parties	Pi	Pb	Si	Sb	Pi	Pb	Si	Sb	Pi	Pb	Si	Sb
PvdA	0	450	0	4.5	0	300	0	0	0	500	0	0
CDA	5	345	0	1	21	400	0	1	23	375	0	0
VVD	0	270	0	0	18	200	0	1	29	550	0	0
LPF	2	20	0	0.5	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
PVV	–	–	–	–	16	100	11.5	13.5	11	120	4	11
FVD	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	12	200	5	13
BBB	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	125	400	6.5	0
NSC	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	3	110	0	0

Table 3 shows the product of Chapter 3's formula (p. 49). What stands out is that Rooduijn and colleagues concluded that, in 2006, the PVV's populist score was 23.08% (2014, p. 567) in 2006. Applying my formula,[83] the PVV's score went up to 53.42% in 2010 and back down to 27.30% in 2023. This would be in line with my expectations of the party, given that the CDA's tenure and coalition with the PvdA must have allowed Wilders to do

[82] Comparable to how the New Democratic Party of Canada (NDP) support the Liberal Party of Canada's minority governments from 2019 onwards.

[83] Which is based on Rooduijn and colleagues and is comparable given that Rooduijn stated that accounting for main-body length influences the overall score little.

what he does best: critique the left. The LPF also stands out, but for different reason. Namely, although the literature (Including Rooduijn *et al.*, 2014, p. 563) name Fortuyn a populist, my data does not support this notion.

Table 3. Results

Results	2002	2010	2023
PvdA	0.33	0.00	0.00
CDA	0.10	0.08	0.00
VVD	0.00	0.17	0.00
LPF	0.03	–	–
PVV	–	**52.42**	**27.30**
FVD	–	–	**29.86**
BBB	–	–	3.47
NSC	–	–	0.00
Average:	0.114	13.167	8.661

Table 4. Term count of eight studied parties per election year

Terms	2002			2010			2023		
	Elite	Burger	NL'er	Elite	Burger	NL'er	Elite	Burger	NL'er
PvdA	1	123	37	0	64	6	1^	37	7
CDA	0	36	3	0	50	19	0	33	6
VVD	0	31	4	4^	23	6	0	5*	**40****
LPF	6^	14	1	–	–	–	–	–	–
PVV	–	–	–	**23**^	13	12	**13**^	3	**33**^
FVD	–	–	–	–	–	–	**16**^	11	13
BBB	–	–	–	–	–	–	5	99	11
NSC	–	–	–	–	–	–	0	73	6
Total:	7	204	45	27	150	43	35	261	**116**

^ Former leader/cabinet included (score-word): PVV 2023 mentions 3-Rutte, 4-former cabinet, 4-left, 1-Nederlander in title; PVV 2010 2-elite, 3-Rutte, 4-cabinet, 12-left; LPF 5-Purple, 1-Kok; FVD 1-elite, 7-cartel, 2-moloch, 6-woke; VVD 2010 1-elite, 3-former cabinet.

* Each of these times, "_burger(s)_" was joined with a business or entrepreneurial noun.

** Of these 42, the VVD (2023) said "We the Dutch" six times which were only placed in the introduction. They remained the only party to use this phrasing within the analysed data.

Table 4 displays the per manifesto references to the elite and the people. Most commonly, the word *burger* is used. *Burger* means people, but also citizen. Another term

used is *Nederlanders,* which is the country's native demonym (similar to 'Canadians'). Yet, where 'Canadians' or 'Americans' may be a commonly used term in North America, *Nederlanders* or *de Nederlander* (the collective singular) are not. Whether the term is in general disuse due to the Second World War-connotation with nationalism or for other reasons, is not clear from the context.

It is noteworthy that of the three elections studied , 2023 sees the use of the term *Nederlander(s)* (*NL'er* for short) spike to 116, up from the preceding 45 (2002) and 43 (2010). Even when the three smaller new parties (FVD, BBB, NSC) are excluded from the count, it still reaches 86. Furthermore, the PVV also used the diminutive in its title (see following section). The VVD decided to switch from their traditional use of *burger* to *Nederlander(s)* between 2010 and 2023.[84] Moreover, of the 40 times the VVD (2023) said *Nederlander(s)* they stated *Wij Nederlanders* ("We the Dutch") six times, and only in their introduction. They are the only party to use this phrase throughout the dataset. The five times they did say *burger(s)*, it was followed by a refence to the business-orientation or entrepreneurial nature of the Dutch, which fits the VVD's liberal brand.

Given the use of compound words in Dutch, I searched was for "_burger(s)_", with a space at either end of the word to ensure the noun itself was found. "Nederlander(s)", especially in plural, is rarely used in compound words. Both the plural and singular of the terms have been counted.

The references to the elite were more diverse. Included are the naming of the Minister President, reference to their cabinet and its nicknames, the Left, 'woke', cartel, and Moloch. Moloch (FVD, 2023) is the first to stand out. Although the section below will go into greater

[84] For reference, the 2021 VVD manifesto shows a rough parity on the use of the term.

detail, it suffices to say it is a Canaanite god which heavily implies to be child sacrifice. They also coined the term 'party cartel' in reference to the traditional three parties, and the three or so parties with which they often join in coalition .[85] The PVV prefers to shun the left-liberal clique, their judges, state-news outlets, and appointed mayors. The PVV seems to disregard that the VVD and CDA are not considered left by common methods of measuring party leaning. But this may betray their self-styled social-conservative nature, meaning that 'left' is a relative term, much like the CDA may be seen as 'far right' by the Socialist Party (SP).

Table 5. *Big 3 party in coalition (C) of opposition (O)*

Governing	VVD	CDA	PvdA
1946	–	C*-	C^
1948	C	C*	C
1952	O	C*	C
1956	O	C*	C
1959	C	C*	O
1963	C	C*	O
1967	C	C*	O
1971	C	C*^	O-
1972	O	C*	C
1977	C	C^	O
1981	O	C	C
1982	C	C^	O-
1986	C	C	O
1989	O	C	C
1994	C	O	C
1998	C	O	C
2002	**C**	**C**	**O**
2003	**C**	**C**	**O**
2006	**O**	**C**	**C**
2010	**C**	**C**	**O**
2012	**C**	**O**	**C**
2017	**C**	**C**	**O**
2021	**C**	**C**	**O**

[85] Primarily GroenLinks (GL) and ChristenUnie (CU).

2023	C	O	O+
Total (77):	53	64	39

Table 5. (Kiesraad.nl). The CDA did not exist until the 1977 election. The KVP, the senior of the three parties that merged into the CDA, is referenced with the C*. They were part of the governing coalition all 29 post-bellum years. O+ indicates the PvdA-GL 2023 list merger.
Note that the PvdA has been part of a coalition, let alone delivered the *Minister President* the least of the three. The C^ and C*^ denote that party did not have the most seat (C*- or O-) but did deliver the PM.

Qualitative Results

PvdA: Thrice a Progressive

After having been in power from 1994 to 2002, it would unexpected if the Dutch Labour Party became critical of the establishment elite. It is worth noting that in assessing a labour platform, people centrism as a class-based need is to be expected. What stands out in Labour's first manifesto is that they refer back to their roots in the pre-Second World War Social Democratic Labour Party (SDAP). This is significant given that Wim Kok infamously stated to have "shed the party's ideological feathers" (Trommel, 2015, p.230), favouring the more pragmatic Third Way. This cornerstone to the first PvdA-VVD alliance was fundamental to the Purple Cabinets, yet, they have been widely considered to have alienated their traditional base (Giddens, 2000; Bos, 2010; Trommel, 2012; Vos, 2019), which have then found higher ground with first Fortuyn and later Wilders:

> *Purple became an ice-cold bureaucratic machine, and led by Premier Kok, [having shed his party's social democratic] ideological feathers […]. This cold Purple did not have a grand narrative about a changing world, nor a single inspiring story to tell. The only appeasing adagio went: work, work, work. This is why Pim [Fortuyn] is still alive.* (Trommel, 2015, p. 230)

Populist rhetoric would be most unexpected in the 2002 manifesto, yet more people-centric idioms would have been expected. The text seems to strive at length to avoid any reference to class. This may, perhaps, be explained by the fall of Soviet Union just three years prior to the forming of Purple, and as such signal that 'the Left' should reorient itself more towards the centre like 'the Right' did after the fall of fascism a generation earlier (Oudenampsen, *et al*., 2014).

Given that the 2010 and 2023 manifestos have even less populist rhetoric, below will explore the few near-populist statements found in the 2002 text. The closest that the Labour

Party has come to displaying this anti-elitist and people-centrist rhetorical markers are when they refer to the democratic deficit in international orders. The European Union, being the closest and most notable amongst them, is described by Labour as becoming more meaningful in the identity building of its citizens; it is also said to be a cornerstone of the international rights-based order. Yet, the Labour manifesto claims that EU institutions are distant and vague for most citizens, and that there is an increased need for a citizen-based governing approach within it .

This sentiment is then redressed by stating that "international conferences cause great protest where elected, appointed, and business elites seem to unilaterally chart a course. The feeling that 'they', those in power, get to decide while 'we', the normal people, get no say has a realistic foundation" (PvdA, 2002, p. 64 [Chapter 10.2]). The 'they' and 'we' indicates, but does not endorse, the sentiment of leaders not representing the people. The rhetorical distance created in this subtle and hidden paragraph is marked as populist, due to the people-elite dichotomy of "us" versus "them".

In the 2010 manifesto, there is a clear lack of anti-elitism, and wherever government was said to have a distance from the governed, it was only to point out that the government ought to only act where its actions are effective: "Then: speed.[86] Then: results. Finally: accountability. Which demands for less bureaucracy, more speed, less layers of government, an effective parliament with more inclusion of citizens" (PvdA, 2010, pp. 18-9). Although this quote is mildly critical of government and the public service, it is decidedly not populist. For this statement to be populist a clear reference to the citizens' sovereignty is needed or,

[86] May be better translated to "followed by: speed", but the transliteration was kept to maintain the spirit of the original text.

otherwise, a scolding of the apathy and incompetence of either the bureaucracy or parliamentary elite.

In the latter part of the 2010 manifesto, Labour stipulates a list of priorities organized on themes. Priority item 2.8.2.1 (pp. 67-8) argues for more direct influence of citizens, with more regular than only "once every four years" (p. 67). While Labour does support that the state-appoint of mayors, they also advocate for corrective referenda, citizen initiatives, and an improvement of the electoral system.

The 2023 Manifesto is unique in that the party has chosen to ally itself with the GreenLeft, a popular 'new labour' party associated with young voters, especially students, with a particular focus on the environment. In this manifesto, there is explicit reference to the mutual trust between citizens and the government, something that is distinctly non-populist:

> *A government that trusts her people, gives agency and support. This means that citizens will increasingly be enabled to participate directly in policy decision making via referenda and citizenship councils. Or even that citizens themselves will be given a seat that the boardroom of public services such as housing corporations. (PvdA, 2023, p. 8)*

Note that in this quote trust is given, implying it is conditional if the citizenry is to be given an increased direct say in the government. This affirms parliament's supremacy as the will of the Dutch people. This affirms a respect for the politician's craft; MPs are party vetted and carry popular mandate, making them practicing professionals.

In the paragraph that precedes the above quote in the Labour manifesto, Labour praises the citizenry's ability to organize and gain agency. Examples they give are groups who have created their own organic farms or renewable energy hubs, with an explicit focus on corporations such as Triodos Bank, who "only invest in initiatives with a positive impact

on society. Choose for green, fair, and human" (Triodos Bank, N.D.). Through this, the social-liberal turn is still palpable.

On page 41, Labour proposes to encode the EU right to fair governance into the constitution. This section from the EU's Charter on Fundamental Rights grants to citizens access to an impartial institution when their national government acts in violations of their rights. This is meaningful, given the relative ease by which constitutional changes can be made in the Netherlands.[87] The only institutions with the implied jurisdiction would be the Court of Justice of the European Union (CJEU) and the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR)[88]. This would strengthen protection of citizen's rights against their own governments. While in the interest of the citizenry, this promise runs counter to populist sentiments, given the strengthening of 'far removed' and unelected instructions.

The scores and grade count of the PvdA are as follows: 2002 lacks an introduction, and the main text of 450 paragraphs scored 4.5, resulting in a grade of 0.33; 2010 & 2023 both did not have any populist paragraphs.

CDA: Traditional Neighbourly Values

The Christian Democratic Appeal has been part of every governing coalition between 2002-2023; they are the *preferiti* of the four VVD coalitions. In the 2023 election, however, they were decimated; the CDA now have only four seats remaining. This is partly due to Pieter Omtzigt becoming independent in 2021 and forming NSC in 2023. However, the party

[87] First a constitutional amendment goes through the normal two readings per house. Then, following a general election, a ⅔rd super majority is needed in both houses for the amendment be become part of the constitution.

[88] Note that these institutions are governed by different bodies: the CJEU is the highest court of the EU, whereas the ECtHR is the human rights court of the 46-member Europe Council of Human Rights (ECHR) which predates the EU and is not one of its institutions.

is and remains staunchly non-populist in its rhetoric. Nowhere throughout any of the manifestos was there any 'populist speak'. Note that CDA-PM Ruud Lubbers led the Netherlands for twelve years prior to the two Purple cabinets (see Appendix III). The party has been a ruling party in Dutch society and would only stand to lose from anti-elitist sentiments.

The 2002 manifesto starts with a pluralist acknowledgment that Dutch society has become a multicoloured and diverse society (p. 5[89]); that society has grown beyond the borders of the nation state. Unlike the LPF and later the PVV, the CDA does *not* argue for a Judaeo-Christian Humanist heritage of Dutch culture. Instead, their Christian-Democratic values consist of four principles: spreading of accountability, to share (e.g., financial) burdens; public justice with clear boundaries; solidarity between rich and poor, young and old, the strong and the less fortunate, and; stewardship of our natural, social, and financial environment for next generations. These principles create the goal for a social, trustworthy, engaged government for sustainable (financial) growth. An altogether successful message, but also explicitly non-populist.

The ten policy priorities that follow end with the assertion that although the Netherlands is a home to people from a variety of backgrounds, it is not an economic-immigration country for non-EU citizens. Although the populist-right advocates for similar or more conservative levels of immigration, nothing about this priority is out of the ordinary for a party that is, as the former PM put it last year, belonging "to the center of the political spectrum and emphasizes the balance between the state, market, and society, working on

[89] "De samenleving is veelkleuriger en diverser geworden" (CDA, 2002, p.5) meaning: 'Society has become multicolours and more diverse."

the basis of political principles like public justice, responsibility, solidarity, and stewardship."

Unlike the 2002 manifesto, in 2010 the CDA does state that "Dutch society is shaped by a unique history of social interrelations and the Judeo-Christian and Humanist tradition" (CDA, 2010, p. 13), as part of their second chapter named *Freedom, Freedom of Expression, and Equality*. The CDA affirms the non-populist sentiment that "there is no democracy without pluralism" (p. 13). In other words, 'the people' as *demos* does not require to be a homogenous *ethnos*. This also means that the CDA distances itself from the 'no true *Dutch*man' fallacy which populists use to contrive a rarely clearly defined in-group. The CDA grounds this pluralistic understanding of Dutch society in Article 1 of the constitution, which protects the right to freedom from discrimination.[90]

Given that the Dutch multi-religious history, and its importance to the nation's founding, the CDA affirms the government's secularity: "the government has no opinion on beliefs of its people[91]" (*ibid*.). This is a notable difference from the populist right who argue for 'the people' as *ethnos,* at times going as far as the eugenic conspiracy that the 'the elite' are actively seeking to replace the native population.

Even though religion is not a prerequisite in defining ethnicity, the Dutch populist right opine with increasingly unresisted ease about the malefactions of people of Arab or African descent. Expressing a specific distaste for Islam, its practices, and accompanying religious and cultural habits. During the 2010 election, the CDA argues the return of trust in politics through policy that would increase citizen participation. Such participation and

[90] Which has primacy over the right to freedom of speech as protected in Article 2.

[91] Here the word mensen is used, meaning humans or men without a possessive pronoun: e.g., "the belief of men". However, in English this is too archaic to be rightly interpreted, as mensen is a casual word in Dutch.

mutual collaboration could bring back the trust between population groups, as opposed to using dividing lines and emphasizing 'us' from 'them' (CDA, 2010, p. 15).

In 2023, the CDA has a more conciliatory tone. Under renewed leadership,[92] the CDA intends to repair the losses it made due to its association with the Mark Rutte's VVD governments' many scandals. Early on in the manifesto, the CDA states that the "rule of law must protect citizens: "if you are robbed, if your home sinks due to gas mining [in Groningen], if the government stops your social insurance payments [child benefit scandal], if you are fleeing [refugee crisis]" (CDA, 2023, p. 7). This critical tone can be to distance themselves from the Mark Rutte's tenure but can also be interpreted to prepare their position as a small opposition party.

In 2023's twelfth and final chapter, the CDA opens the discussion on just governance by asking whether or not national governments are still able to tackle the societal problems we face today (CDA, 2023, p. 86). Given that this follows a small chapter on intra-European solidarity, the CDE underlines the pressures of border-defying issues which the *status quo* is increasingly less able to address. The solution the CDA suggests is the human measure: a focus away from the central halls of power to the '*locales of need*'. "[The g]overnment and citizens have to search for a new dynamic" (*Ibid*.): strengthening local governance and citizens-councils and redressing the aforementioned scandals and shortfalls of the Rutte-era, are central to this final chapter. This dynamic is to be a structured and layered collaboration, not a polarizing distrust between opposing factions. This, the CDA argues, starts by

[92] After the last leader, Wopke Hoekstra, (to whom NSC's Pieter Omtzigt lost, left to become the Dutch Euro-Commissioner. A post he was reaffirmed in after the swearing is of the current Schoof government.

supporting local initiatives, which increases the agency and happiness of both the dense and the sparser populated areas (p. 88).

The main bodies of both the 2002 & 2010 only have score a 1 each; 2023 has no populist paragraphs. The grades, in chronological order are: 0.10, 0.08, and 0.00.

VVD: The People's Liberal Development

Opening the 2002 Dutch Liberal's manifesto is the motto "Freedom and Responsibility" (VVD, 2010, p. 4), a slogan that, with the clarity of hindsight, really did not pay off: the VVD lost 14 seats (where Labour lost 22) after the 2002 election, leaving them just 24 seats in the legislature. They phrase, somewhat paternalistically, how citizens have different and contractionary stakes in society (p. 5). Regardless of how that message was received, the 2002 manifesto acknowledges a pluriform electorate. In order to adequately handle these pluralistic contradictory needs, a professional and elected elite is needed to assess which needs are prioritized. Both layers of this argument –the pluralist electorate and need for professional elite– are not populist since populism presumes a homogeneous electorate (be it *demos* or *ethnos*) who's singular *vox populi* is a force in opposition to the interests of those in power.

The VVD deliberately focuses on market competition, and the lack of government programs to deliver a similar variety in options so the consumer can choose the best product according to their ability and needs.[93] Freedom "for citizens is the basis for mutual respect" (p. 10). In contrast to the wealth of (free market) choices in private services, that citizens

[93] Free market capitalism's grounding in the realist understanding that each agent is rational and able to make an unbiased decision for the best product, reasons that market forces and industrial or political actors cannot coerce or otherwise influence the consumers choices.

have come to see the government as stale, bureaucratic, non-transparent, unapproachable, and unfriendly (p. 8), while there being no alternative provider of public services.

Since the VVD was second-in-command during the Purple years, they are co-responsible for the creation of this image. Yet the manifesto does not acknowledge this. This opening section is not graded populist. Even if any anti-elitism can be inferred from this section of the 2002 VVD manifesto, then it lacks the corresponding people-centrism necessary to be graded populist. The absence of a notion for popular sovereignty from an overbearing elite shows the lack of populist intent, especially when we consider the "mutual respect" phrase from page 10 of the party's platform. This indicates a clear and cooperative distinction between the people (the *demos*, or electorate) and their government, implying the parental role of government, that has a better overview of the pluriform and contradicting needs of the nation.

In the 2002 manifesto the VVD argues that "the government serves the citizenry and not the other way around" (p. 38). To reduce the national government's size, the liberals want to delegate more to "the order of government closest to the citizens" (p. 39), such as the municipalities, "where possible" (p. 39). It is worth noting that the jurisdictions of municipalities in the Netherlands is not a privilege of the provinces, all orders of government rely on the national government for their competencies. One administration might desire a more centralized structure, where the next may decentralize, in order to optimize the government-of-the-day's mandate. Here is seen a gesture towards populism, but still within a framework bias to the powers of the parliament.

Prior to winning his first term as PM in 2010, Mark Rutte's VVD argued that they "as the people's party [*Volkspartij*]" (VVD, 2010, p. 5) stand up for all people in society: "rich and

poor, native and foreign born, men and women, sick and healthy" (*Ibid*.). This is quickly followed by their desire for a more efficient application of the police force that "is trying their very best to keep everyone safe" (*Ibid*.). This manifesto does stand in the shadow of the 2008 financial crisis. It is because of this that the party's motto and manifesto title was *Order on Business.* However, this crisis, being two years prior, is only mentioned once throughout the forty-two-page program. This singular mention is in the introduction of the first chapter as a set up for business-owner and entrepreneurial protections. The set-up of free-market protections joined with the rhetorical promise to serve everyone, shows the signature centrist (neo-)liberal leanings of Mark Rutte's program. This neo-liberalism could be said to slip towards libertarianism, not populism, in their desire for a "powerful, small government" (p. 30). Like in 2002, the VVD restates that "The governing administration serves the people and not the other way around"[94] (VVD, 2010, p. 30). Rutte's VVD is of the opinion that such a small and powerful structure would deliver an effective and lean bureaucracy. On the question on how populist the 2010-VVD was, the answer is this: "The government is not the representation of a small elite but belongs to and is in service of every citizen" (p. 30). This is the only time that elites are explicitly mentioned in this manifesto displaying their anti-populist stance.

The VVD wants to shrink government and the public administration. In 2024, the PVV-led coalition argues for the same, stating that during Rutte's tenure, the bureaucracy

[94] Translation note: 'overheidsbestuur' translates directly to public administration, however, this does not imply the same people in English and Dutch. 'Overheid' being the government, and 'bestuur' being the institution or collective that 'steers' (e.i., governs), I have opted to translate it to mean 'governing administration' as I take this word to refer to the rule of coalition or cabinet and their appointed public servants. Furthermore, 'is er voor' means 'is there for', in this situation North Americans would use the word 'serves'. Lastly, where normally I translate 'burgers' to mean citizens, here I translate it as 'the people'. The reason is two-fold, 'burger' means something between citizen en people, and 'serve the citizens' is not a political line Anglophones ever hear.

continued to remain the single largest employer in the Netherlands. This indicates that, from far-right perspective, the VVD did not succeed at shrinking the government. Nor did they make it more accessible, as public dissatisfaction was high near the end of Rutte's tenure. Besides wanting to reduce the Chambers of the States-General to 100 and 50 seats down from their respective 150 and 75, the VVD also proposed to a *Randstadprovincie*[95]; the rules would also be loosened so that the non-Randstad provinces could merge together with more ease. All and all, the intention here is to reduce the amount of public representation and administration.

Overall, the 2010 platform is distinctly not populist. And although there is lip service paid to being non-elitist and being for and in service off all the peoples of the Netherlands, the party seems to hold true to the demographic they put front and centre in their opening pages: the entrepreneurs and (landed) upper and upper-middle classes, with a bias to urbanist and foreign investment. Their progress is by-and-large an economical one, flavoured with a pro-national sentiment. Altogether, these factors seem to have been creating the conditions of the Dutch electorate to give the unknown a try.

The final of the three manifestos[96] marks a subtle departure from the more *laissez fair* style the VVD used. The motto this time is "Give Space. Set Boundaries." (p. 1); with two resolute full-stops, even this statement sets the boundaries between the two stated principles. Furthermore, the first chapter is subtitled: "The VVD want to keep the

[95] Which would be akin to allowing the Greater Toronto Area (GTA) to become a separate province. The Randstad is the urban region akin to the GTA in Canada, it is considered to range between Rotterdam, The Hague, Amsterdam, and Utrecht City, spanning roughly three (and a bit) provinces. As such, Holland would re-merge and incorporate Utrecht Province and Flevoland (a man-made province to relief pressure from the Amsterdam Region).

[96] Besides the actual manifesto, the new leader, and former Minister of Justice Dilan Yeşilgöz also published a personal leadership statement which effectively summarizes the manifesto.

Netherlands safe in a *dangerous world*" (p. 16, italics added) referring to strengthening NATO and other defense spending, which directly succeeds the subsection on "… handling migration" (p. 11). This first chapter's topical sequence cannot remain unnoticed for our purposes of defining right-wing populist contagion.[97]

Yet, there has been no populist grading in the 2023 manifesto thus far. Immigration certainly is a big and visual issue, but not inherently populist. It would have been populist if the *ethnos* would be pitted against 'the other', in this case the immigrant, with full points if blame is attributed to the (leftist or globalist) elite. But the 2023-VVD program does not display this.

The 2023 VVD manifesto holds another notable change: for the first time within the VVD-data set, covering eight manifestos over twenty-one years, have they opted to switch the use of *burger* to *Nederlanders*. The Dutch *burger(s)* is a commonly used word to denote the electorate and means something between 'citizens' and 'people', without the legalistic context of the 'citizen', but a more pluralist connotation than 'the people'; *Nederlanders* is the plural dominative, meaning 'the Dutch'. Yet, although in nations like Canada and the United States stating "all Canadians" or "all Americans" may be a common way of denoting the electorate, in the Low Countries this is not the case. It can be seen as having ethno-

[97] It is worth reiterating that the Rutte's final cabinet fell over disagreement on the proposed categorisation of refugees into two streams, where stream A holds people fearing personal persecution in their home country, and people in steam B are those fleeing war or other non-personal threats to their person. VVD and CDA were supporters of the policy, where the second largest coalition party the social liberal D66 and the then-five-seat social conservative ChristenUnie (Christian Union or CU) opposed it. This is a distinction Germany already makes, argued the proponent VVD, yet two of the three other coalition parties refused to support such a policy in the Netherlands. Leading to Rutte handing in his cabinet's resignation to the King and the subsequent November 2023 elections which lay at the foundation of this thesis.

nationalistic overtones, while arguably implying legalistic undertones. In doing so, it could be used for an appeal to purity.[98]

Both the 2002 and 2010 VVD programs, use *burgers* over *Nederlanders*. With a count of 31 and 23 uses of *burger(s)* and variations thereof, while using *Nederlanders* 4 and 6 times, respectively. The 2023 program, however, prefers *Nederlanders* over *burger(s),* with a counting 40 and 5 respectively, flipping the term use ratio. For context, the otherwise unused 2017[99] VVD program slightly prefers *burger(s)* with a count of 19 over *Nederlanders* with a count of 15. Indicating that the switch in terms happened gradually under Rutte. He must have understood that after the fall of his third cabinet over the Child Benefit Affair his tenure and his party's rule was at risk. The six times *burger(s)* were mentioned in the 2023 VVD manifesto, it was always in the context of entrepreneurial business ventures.

The Dutch, in the 2023 manifesto, are described as hardworking (six times) and concerned with the current national unaffordability and global instability. But in the introduction of the program, the VVD used the phrase *wij Nederlanders,* "we the Dutch," (VVD, 2023, pp. 3-8) six times and only in introduction. The VVD mention "we the Dutch" in a slightly different context about once per page (twice on p. 5 and skipping p. 7). The introduction opens with "We the Dutch are ambitious, creative, and entrepreneurial" (p. 3), followed by the VVD wishing for "we the Dutch" (p. 4) to have more agency in health care; that "we" (p. 5) should no longer rely on the USA for defense and safety; that "the Dutch" collectively govern (p. 6) and "together" (p. 5) make the democratic rule of law. Finishing on a positive note: "[a]bove all else it is vital that we the Dutch, with all our talents, ambitions

[98] I.e.: 'no true Dutchman would do X'.

[99] This election is right in the middle of the 2010 and 2023 elections, leading to Rutte III. N.B.: Rutte II or Rutte-Asscher was nicknamed Purple III, since it was a two-party coalition with the PvdA.

and worklust [sic], work together, not toe-to-toe but shoulder-to-shoulder, in solidarity" (p. 8).

Not one of the six cases described above is particularly populist, even though the *We the People* format can be a good indication for nationalistic sentiments. Although the phrasing is unusual for a Dutch political party to use, it did not strike a segregating tone. Elites were not mentioned or implied – which makes sense given that the VVD itself can reasonably be seen as the elite. Nor is there any implication that *wij Nederlanders* excludes non-European residents. Moreover, the VVD argues that "Dutch people with foreign roots should be able to live their life in peace and without interference of any foreign nation" (p. 15). The VVD speaks highly of the citizens of the Netherlands, and although being skeptical and conservative on issues of migration, they do not exclude anyone within the legal structure.

The VVD has led or co-led most coalitions for the past thirty years, save the two years of Balkenende IV. Using anti-elitist language, or even critiquing government more broadly, is strategically imprudent. Even when they speak of the 2008 Financial Crisis (VVD, 2010) and its aftermath way into 2010 (VVD, 2023), or even when addressing current issues (*ibid*.), they tend to refrain from blaming. They prefer stating the concerns in broad ways, echoing popular sentiments, stating that "[t]here is an important task to restore the confidence of Dutch people in politics" (p. 72), which would be achieved through being "serviceable, reliable, and transparent with attention to people['s needs]" (p. 73), a tone which rang hollow in the 2023 election.

Only the 2010 VVD manifesto score a populist point, resulting in a 0.17 grade. Both 2002 and 2023 a graded 0.00.

LPF: Purple's Misfortuyne

Fortuyn's seven-page 2002 manifesto opens with the instability caused by the 9-11 attacks and inflation. The nation's safety on the international stage is no longer guaranteed. The European Union, subtly implied as a saving grace within this global set up, as "too bureaucratic" and "uninspiring" (LPF, 2002, p. 1) to citizens. Wim Kok's Purple Cabinets did bring prosperity to the Netherlands, but this was due to the "favourable wind provided by the business sector" (*ibid.*),[100] while criminality is at an all-time high. "The annual stream of tens of thousands of new people, who mostly fall into illegality,[101] has to stop" (*ibid.*). The second paragraph lists eleven negative things Purple has left the Netherlands with. Amongst these are a "rusted self-indulgent political culture of appointed regents without creative of learning abilities" (*ibid.*). These politicians have left society split in two in the urban areas, where the immigrant half is gaining a socio-cultural *dis*advantage by not being able to, willingly or otherwise, participate in Dutch daily life. Importantly, the *poldermodel*[102] has rusted into place, implying that a stale middle ground does not serve anyone. This can be read as a dog whistle for democratic reform towards more direct democracy, which Fortuyn touches on later. Fortuyn's major political thorn-in-the-side is the neoliberal Third Way of the Purple years. He loathed the highly bureaucratic government apparatus that this administration created. The dog whistle in the "calcification" (p. 7) of the Dutch social life in tandem with the stagnation of the *poldermodel* (p. 2) could have led to the Fortuynist calling

[100] Something especially the VVD is known for motivating, however this is left unmentioned. Nor is PM Wim Kok mentioned by name.

[101] Whether due to loss or denial of status or due to criminal activities, is not specified by the Dutch word "illigaliteit".

[102] A Dutch form of political consensus-making, given the consociational nature of the Dutch pure-PR parliamentary system, furthermore: "The verb polderen refers to a unique Dutch approach to decision- making and consensus-building" (Orizzonte-Ramirez & Westplat, 2023, p. 1).

for grand democratic overhaul. This, however, could never grow into anything given Fortuyn's murder.

Democracy needs to include citizens more directly, finds Fortuyn. He describes these citizens as "the assertive citizen" (p. 5)[103]. He uses this same descriptor as his goal for education: to create *mondige burgers* (p. 2). In this section on domestic affairs, he states that the assertive citizen should be reminded of their responsibilities to the state, while also being more directly included into the governance of the state.

Although this section is not explicitly anti-elitist, it is counter-institutional. Fortuyn argues that the citizenry ought to elect their *Minister-President* (PM) and *Burgemeester* (Mayor) directly (p. 7). Here we get the only Hawkins-1, meaning half a score-point. To the extent that Fortuyn's seven-page manifesto explains his aims and deeper desires for the future of the Netherlands, the simplification of the state structure –including the thinning of the public service at every level– would thin the state apparatus to be more directable by the *volonté générale* as represented by a directly chosen leader which a mandate that can overrule the State-General. Yet, the manifesto does affirm the *trias politica* on which the Dutch state is founded. And in the same paragraph there is also a statement on liberal equality before the law, expressing both rights and responsibilities. While earlier in the text Fortuyn advocates that "stronger shoulders should carry more [financial] burden" (p. 5). Arguing for a fair and balanced tax system in favour of the working class. While populists

[103] Whereas this translates directly to "the responsible citizen", the adjective mondig, holds the root word for mouth, and as such it holds connotations of well spoken, opinionated, able to defend themselves oratorically, and assertive.

generally affirm the needs of the middle classes, they tend to not actualize these promises. Fortuyn was murdered before he could have actioned his ideas.[104]

Counter to my expectations, the LPF only scored a 0.5 in the introduction while having no populist paragraphs in the main body. Resulting in a 0.025 grade.

PVV: The Fortuynate Successor

The 2010 introduction leads with recounting how the Dutch people bravely declared their independence from the mighty Spanish-Habsburg empire through the 1581 *Act of Abjuration.* In so doing, Geert Wilders argues, the Dutch popular sovereignty took centre stage in Europe. With this Wilders draws a parallel to current days, where "the leftist clique" (p. 7) stands in place of the Spanish Crown, suppressing the real difference of consciousness of the people and the foreign governing elite[105]. Wilders wants to let "our people [*ons volk*[106]]… express themselves; since collectively *de burgers* know better" (*ibid.*) than the left-liberal elite "who think the world looks like Woodstock" (*ibid.*). As such, the "normal people" (p. 6) must go to the Hague in order to make it part of the Netherlands again.

The PVV self-identifies as social conservatives (PVV, 2010) with a clearly stated hate for the anything 'left'. Wilders states clearly the Fortuyn's murder "with a bullet from the

[104] It is, however, worth noting that the widely used Student Public Transportion Card (*Studenten OV Chipkaart*) was created by Fortuyn. The media outlet NRC covered a story on Fortuyn's life and impact, pointing out how his unorthodox way of thinking and dislike for the neoliberal bureaucracy created the now very popular and widely used transit pass.

[105] It was partly due to the religious differences between King Felipe II of Spain, a Catholic, and the predominantly Protestant Seventeen Provinces of the Netherlands, over which Felipe was Lord, that the Low Countries banded together in a States General. The Act of Abjuration inspired the United States of America's 1776 Declaration of Independence from King George III.

[106] This would most directly be translated to "our folk", but the nuance is slightly different in English: E.g., in Exodus 5:1 where Moses tells the Pharaoh to "let <u>my people</u> go" (New King James Bible, 1982) or *laat <u>mijn volk</u> gaan* (Herziene Statenvertaling Bijbel, 2010); *volk* implies an ethnos, whereas "folk" does not as it is an informal way to denote any group of people which may be of mixed enthos (Cambridge Dictionary, 2024).

left" (p. 6)[107] must serve as a warning; the 'left', here, isa relative term including liberal ideologies such as the social liberal D66 and the liberal conservative VVD. Within both of the analysed manifestos, the PVV used the American-sounding term 'left-liberal' to refer to the perceived dominant *zeitgeist* and its elite. Both of the PVV's manifestos deploy very clear people-centric and anti-elitist language. Between the 2010 and the 2023 manifesto, 'the left' is mentioned a total of sixteen times, as can be seen in Table 4. If all single-term reference to the governing elite[108] are counted together, than the 2010 manifesto is to most overtly anti-elitist of all analyzed manifestos.

The elite, according to PVV's 2010 introduction, are detached[109] from reality by maintaining that all cultures are equal: "Are we powerless" (PVV, 2010, p. 5), is then asked, that "we" (*ibid.*) stand by while "the detached elite … break all that is held dear" (*ibid.*)? "No, the PVV will see to it that we" (*ibid.*) will declare us apart from the elite and their "moldy leftist ideal of the past" (*ibid.*). The Manichean language and invocation of the popular will is clearly present.

The introduction showcases most of Hawkins' (2009) points: a soft Manichean world view; a malign and opposed elite; a popular will; one that is claimed to prevail under the party's leadership and incites cosmic proportions. In this case it comes in the form of grand historic events, claiming today's choice of government to be equal to the era in which the European wars of religion started. There are no overt undemocratic practices that, due to the "moral baseness" (Hawkins, 2009, p. 1064) of the elite is allowable to restore democracy.

[107] Shortly after the murder, the then LPF chairman Peter Langendam accused Wim Kok and cabinet of this, an accusation that enraged PM Kok. A sentiment that was repeated during the assassination attempt on former President Donald Trump on July 13, 2024.

[108] Including: Rutte, (reference to the former) cabinet, the left, and elite.

[109] Losgeslagen (lit. to have been 'beaten loose') also has the connotation of being deranged.

However, what Wilders already practices in his 2010 rhetoric is rather unconstitutional; namely, claiming that Dutch culture with its roots in Judaeo-Christian and Humanist traditions is elevated over and irreconcilable with Islamic cultures and practices. As stated in the previous chapter, the Dutch constitution gives primacy to the freedom from discrimination (Art. 1) over the freedom of expression (Art. 2). And although Wilders is on record as recently as July 3rd, 2024[110] stating that his party is *not* racist, his repeated insistence on the "islamification [sic]" (PVV, 2010, p. 6) of the Netherlands *is* to set aside on the base of ethnicity and/or religion which, to this author, is clearly racist. As Tables 2, 3 and 4 clearly show, the introduction is strung together with populist-speak, and most interestingly, significantly more than Fortuyn's. The main body of the 2010 manifesto uses a more practical language. The majority of the hundred paragraphs discuss concrete policy plans; in total, these paragraphs scored 14 points. Table 4 shows that this is the highest main body score within the analysed data.

The chapter "Choosing for de-islamification[111] [*sic*.] and anti-mass-migration" (p. 13) and the subsequent chapter on "Choosing democratisation" (p. 17) expectedly carry more populist rhetoric. The former chapter argues that the governing elite have been "converted" (p. 13) to an ideology of "cultural relativism" (*ibid.*) due to which "violence against gays and women, honour revenges, and school dropouts etc." (*ibid.*) did not decrease. Wilders also ventures the argument that "Due to the club in Brussels, Europe is quickly becoming Eurabia [*sic*.]" (p. 13). This paragraph opening line uses language invoking replacement theory

[110] The first of two days that the Commons debated the coalition accord, prior to summer recess.

[111] It is noteworthy that the work islambestrijding uses no capital letter 'i', and the term (-)bestrijding is generally translated to fighting to control, like in pest control (ongediertebestijding); implying Reconquista era extermination.

language.[112] The latter chapter argues that there is a world of difference between what the Dutch *burger*s and what the elite think; elite do not understand the people, only a "radical democratisation can break the dominance of the left elite" (p. 17). In order to regain this control, the PVV wants to allow the direct election of the Minister-President and mayors, disband the Senate, and allow judges and Officers of Justice to be directly elected. The inclusion of this latter group is because , in the PVV's view, judges are detached[113] from the reality of citizens.

The chapter on re-centralizing the Netherlands in foreign policy (p. 41) denounces the Euro-bureaucracy (i.e., the elite) to form foreign and defence policy on behalf of the EU as a whole. Foreign development aid also needs to be cut; only emergency aid should be allowed. Instead, a strong military should be realized in order to shift the focus on domestic issues:

> *As the mayor of Zaltbommel said: "Do we need an expensive air force for vague wars in far flung countries, or* is the enemy within our own country*?" By which he means the issues of street terrorists in his city. That is why the PVV choses for domestic safety (p. 41; italics added).*

Wilders also proposed that parliament removes the 'maintenance of the international legal order' from Article 100 of the Constitution.[114]

When Mark Rutte announced that he would step down as leader of the VVD in 2023, while continuing as demissionair-PM, it signalled a significant shift in Dutch politics. It

[112] As the name implies, replacement theory professes that the governing elite are actively trying to replace the native population of, in this case, the Netherlands with non-Western people. Most notably, in implies that those who are supposedly replacing the natives are people of colour. Included in this theory is that the low birthrates in Western nations may or may not have been part of this plan. According to the National Immigration Forum, this includes the voter replacement (2021).

[113] Wereldvreemd lit. 'world-estranged'.

[114] N.B.: The article reads that; The Government shall inform the States General in advance if the armed forces are to be deployed or made available to maintain or promote the international legal order. This shall include the provision of humanitarian aid in the event of armed conflict (De Nederlandse Grondwet, 2008, Art. 5.2.100; translation provided by author).

became quickly apparent that with Rutte also his *cordon sanitair* had left, leaving the door ajar for the now sworn in Cabinet Schoof. As the longest currently serving MP,[115] Wilders certainly saw his opportunity. His 2023 manifest was titled "The Dutch First" (PVV, 2023, p. 1), *Nederlanders weer op 1*, and restated in the introduction's opening line as "The PVV wants to put the Dutch first again" (p. 3). This clearly and effectively mirrors Trump's MAGA and America First lines. The Netherlands is to be a nation where the Dutch are cherished again, given the ongoing discrimination the Dutch have been facing; "The Netherlands is not an Islamic country" (*ibid.*). No more billion-Euro expenses to left-liberal ideological policies such as nitrogen limitations and climate; not to Brussels, Italy, or Africa; nor on frivolous wars (cf. p. 10). "We [the country] will turn left or right" (*ibid.*).

First order of business is immigration: "Our beautiful country" (p. 6) is despoiled through the "refugee tsunami and mass-migration" (*ibid*.) from mostly non-Western and Muslim-majority nations that Mark Rutte and the EU-top have allowed in. Items like healthcare,[116] which is becoming increasingly unaffordable for many Dutch, is free for refugees (*ibid.*). "The PVV *does* choose for the Dutch and will end the discrimination of *Nederlanders.* We will put the Dutch first again!" (p. 7). Moving on to safety, in a continuation of 2010, the PVV state that the *mocromafia*[117] is still a primary source of danger in Dutch cities. So Wilders proposes that police corps chiefs, just like mayors to whom the police are accountable, ought to also be directly elected. This is essential, he argues, given the tens of

[115] And the fourth longest in Dutch Parliamentary history.

[116] Which private but compulsory, with limited government assistance for the poorest.

[117] Street gangs made up predominantly by people of Moroccan descent. These are generally 3rd or 4th, at the time of writing perhaps even 5th generation Moroccans, too white to be Moroccan and too foreign to be Dutch. Being descendant from guest labourers, the government well into the 1990s failed at proving integration services (e.g., language classes) for.

thousands of pro-jihadists that reside in the Netherlands. Given the imminent danger they pose, "the Netherlands should enforce a system of administrative detention" so that "these people, when needed, can be *preventatively* locked up" (p. 13, italics added). However, these unconstitutional measures were 'put in the freezer' in order to start coalition talks.[118]

Finally, the PVV argues that the highly educated population of the Netherlands always gets what they want and that the government does not only belong to the left-liberal elite (p. 29). Not even the municipalities protect their own native people, Wilders argues. Solutions are low-threshold binding referenda and elected mayors, and the elitist Senate should be abolished.[119] The European elite, moreover, have gained more and more influence over national defence. Much to the annoyance of the PVV (p. 39), Rutte IV agreed to and enacted that the Dutch land forces will fuse with and fall under German command (NOS, 2023), something the PVV vows to return back to Dutch control. The final pages of the manifesto repeat the same rhetoric as seen throughout, a call to prioritize the nation and its natives, ending with that "through this method, we will rebuild the Netherlands and put the Dutch first!" (p. 45).

The PVV only ran in 2010 and 2023. In 2010 they scored a 11.5 and a 13.5 for the manifesto's introduction and body, respectively; resulting in a 52.42 grading, the highest in the dataset. The 2023 manifesto scored a 4 and 11 for its introduction and main body, which led to a 27.30 grading.

FVD: Minerva's Boreal Owl

[118] In order for the PVV, VVD, BBB, and NSC to collaborate, the PVV needed to be reminded of the details of the constitution (Den Hartog & Klaassen, 2023; Dietvorst, 2024).

[119] Who are elected by the members of the States-Provincial.

Thierry Baudet's Forum for Democracy (FVD or Forum) opens his program with the words *Ten geleide* (FVD, 2023, p. 3), a relatively unused and decadent way of saying 'foreword'. Given that the program does not have a clearly distinguished introduction, the "12 Rules for the Netherlands" (FVD, 2023, pp. 6-7) executive summary will be considered as such. In doing so, the short three paragraphs under *Ten geleide* will be ignored given that they hold no substance besides greeting the reader. Noteworthy throughout Forum's manifest is the use of more elite-sounding language. Baudet, in his acceptance speech after winning the Senatorial tiered elections in 2019, opened his speech with "The owl of Minerva spreads its wings as night falls" (Van Poucke, 2019), a speech which was filled with unusual terms such as "the boreal world" (*ibid.*), and *oikofobie* (fear of one's home and its appliances; *ibid.*). Baudet's love for decadent language shines through in the 2023 manifesto, too.

In Forum's Twelve Rules, Baudet states to want a 'smart Nexit' to regain Dutch Sovereignty (#1); democratic renewal by introducing Swiss-style binding referenda and elected mayors (#2); unconditional and unrestricted freedom through the proposed Freedom Act (#3), which would make curfews, vaccine-mandates, and censorships illegal;[120] followed the need to protect children by placing a ban on woke "transgender-propaganda" (#5; p. 6) and its medical practices and an independent commission to repress the availability of books which promote the wrong political ideas; and, a mortarium on naturalisation for immigrants while also offering asylum to Julian Assange and Edward Snowden (#6). The final half of the proposed rules are to promote "peace in Ukraine" (p.

[120] N.B.: Whereas Baudet is strongly against the COVID-19 vaccine and its mandate, Wilders publicly vaccinated as seen on X.com (Wilders, 2021).

7),[121] but also reference health care, mobility, education, and a prosperous entrepreneurial climate. These twelve rules are further expended upon throughout the program.

The term 'left' was not significant. Instead, the platform opted for terms such as 'woke,' albeit sparsely; mostly this occurred in the context of denouncing LGBTQ-visibility and proposing legal bans on affirming treatments and queer-inclusive education, calling it all child-corrupting propaganda. Here, too, we see an Americanism: terms such as woke-propaganda, woke-mob, and transgender-ideology are often used by MAGA Republicans (cf. Anderson, 2018). The "party cartel" (p. 14) is also a returning term, inferring that at least the three traditional parties and a few close-to-coalition parties are in cahoots with each other, each party offering a differently worked edition of the same script. Another interpretation could be that the liberal democratic style of governance as a whole –covering the mid-left to mid-right– fails to deliver what it promises. One of the solutions Forum mentions is binding Swiss-style referenda on policy proposals. Of interest too is that the single time the word "elite" (p. 39) is mentioned it is in a positive way in the chapter on education. Here, Forum argues that proper classical education, where academic postsecondary is reserved for only a few and not the masses, would allow the re-creation of an educated elite which has fallen into the background through the democratisation of higher learning.

Finally, Forum calls the European Union "a bureaucratic Moloch … that is regulating more aspects of our lives" (p. 12). Moloch is an old Canaanite god, which is named in the Hebrew Bible several times, primarily in the Book of Leviticus; the Bible strongly condemns practices that are associated with Moloch, which are heavily implied to be child sacrifice. Winston Churchill used the term *Moloch* in reference to Adolf Hitler's cult of personality in

[121] Meaning starting settlement talks and removing support.

the first volume of his *The Second World War* book series the *The Gathering Storm* (Churchill, 1948). Overall, the FVD's 2023 manifesto scored 5 for the introduction and 12 for the main body, resulting in a grade of 29.86.

BBB:[122] BBBetter Regions

With a 128-page program, the BBB certainly has written the most for their 2023 election. The introduction (BBB, 2023, pp. 3-28) is split in several sections and interrupted by the table of contents (pp 4-5). The introduction is filled with anecdotes and pop-cultural references. Like FVD before, there is a pre-introduction greeting message which will be excluded from the analysis. The first negative remark made about Mark Rutte's tenure is to call the past government a "white collar government" (p. 7) which, through mass privatisation and pushed individualisation, has led to a loss of practical skilled workers and trades people. The government is seen as a tool for the upper-middle classes; the global elite who "are as at home" (p. 8) in The Hague as in New York City and Brussels. The growing gaps that urban-elite policy orientation has created calls, so the BBB argues, for a post-Second World War-style social rebuilding (p. 8), since people have lost the places that served as the central social hubs of any community. These thirds places, be they local bars, sport clubs, or libraries, are locations where "joy and sorrow [*lief en leed*]" (p. 9) are shared, and business discussed. As to the manifesto introduction is a verbatim of a tipsy pub guest, the BBB includes capitalized words: "And then you do not have to … TEAR DOWN [*sic*.] people, because they do not have a generally accepted opinion. … Not just PROsperity, also wellBEING" [123] (p. 10). This and other capitalized words makes this unusually long and

[122] The abbreviated name is pronounced as B-B-B, not Triple B.

[123] Niet alleen welVAART, OOK welZIJN.

meandering introduction sound like listening to the political views of one's compatriot in the local bar. Moreover, the section in the introduction which asks, "why this long story"? (p. 20), does not directly answer the leading question: "society needs to be a safety net and a trampoline. We have to all return to the core, and from their regain control. ... and embrace the opportunities that our modern era offers us" (p. 20).

The BBB also uses Americanisms such as "the silent middle" (p. 13) or majority "who are turning off the news channel, … and decide to no longer discuss politics" (*ibid.*), implying a somewhat softer version of PVV's 'the woke state media' argument. Furthermore, the BBB's introduction argues for "repillaring"[124] (pp. 13-14); where first there was a vertical pillar system – shaped on shared identity – there now is a class based 'horizontal pillar' (i.e., class) system.[125] In other words, the governing elite guide their own interest rather than the consociational power sharing style the soft sectarian pillar system is implied to have intended. Given the centralized nature of Dutch national politics, and the lack of intra-pillar solidarity, the national government needs to be de-centralized, the BBB argues (p. 21). This would imply more power to the provincial and municipal councils through, for instance, the ability to hold referenda on both national and local levels. Another way to make the government less central and more approachable, or "human-scale" (p. 25), is by creating the right to talk to a real person when reaching out to a government or ministerial service, including the option of seeing such a representative in person within the region one lives. This nod to the CDA-style human measure, would allow local dialects and minority

[124] Dutch social structure where social life was governed through soft sectarianism based on one's Catholics, Protestants, Socialists and Liberals beliefs. It fell in disuse after the rapid secularisation of Dutch society, especially in Catholic circles.

[125] N.B.: Dutch farmers, on average, earn double the medium Dutch household income, with an average usable income of 81,800 EUR (2021) compared to the median 48,500 EUR (CBS, 2023).

languages[126] to be spoken in the locales where the constituents go to seek support. Besides, the BBB would like to introduce inter-ministerial communication and adjustment for policy purposes.

After less than thirty pages the main body starts. Given the BBB's strive to become a vested party[127], it makes sense that their manifesto effectively quadrupled in size (31 to 128 pages) compared to their first manifesto in the 2021 election. Given this, it is understandable that BBB-leader Caroline van der Plas choose for a more policy-based approach. Noteworthy are Chapter 8a Safety and 8b Refugees and Migration, implying a direct correlation between the two, where they could have split them into separate chapter numbers. The BBB opens chapter 8b with the need to "hit [our] fist on the table at the EU" (p. 93) in order limit immigrants to the Netherlands, but this is not explicitly anti-elitist. This is not graded populist given the lack of reference to any popular will.

Overall, the main text does not include any populist rhetoric, including the preference for the term *burger* (99 counts) over *Nederlander* (11 counts). Whichever few paragraphs did hold populist sentiment in the introduction, where it is expected and more effective, is drowned out by just how large the introduction is; scoring a 6.5 on 125 paragraphs. The main body did not have any populist paragraphs. The BBB 2023 manifesto is graded 3.47.

NSC: Renewed Rules & Responsibilities

The one-page introduction holds no populist speak. This is in line with the expectations, given Omtzigt's former CDA-membership and his hard stance on constitutional

[126] Such as Limbourgish (in the south), Nedersaksish (north-east), and Frisian (North; in Friesland).

[127] They now form government primarily due to their across-the-board success in the 2023 Provincial-State election and thus their plurality in the Senate, while only holding seven seats in the Commons.

accountability. After 'Teflon' Rutte's many scandals, Omtzigt, in past collaboration with the Socialist Party leader, has become critical of the government and its increasing powers. Yet, where other parties have pivoted towards a sense of popular sovereignty, Omtzigt argues for a more expertise-led solution.

Omtzigt could even be seen as anti-populist, in that he wishes trained and educated people to take charge to fix the accountability gap and increase popular opinion on the functionality of government. Through the concept of contract theory, the NSC divides the responsibilities of consociationalism between the government and any relevant other party. Although a Rousseauian social contract requires a more populist-leaning *volonté générale*, which by the right leader can be made the lightning rod guiding a contrived *vox populi*, Omtzigt seeks to set up a social contract akin to the enlisting of other professionals. Namely, that when one needs a pipe fixed, or bread made, investments overseen, etc., one sets up a contract with a professional; the same should be the case with the government. Professional public servants, trained in a variety of disciplines conducive to good governance, should head government, exactly because they are skilled professionals.

Every section in the main text includes a "what can be expected of the government" and "what to expect from society" (cf. pp. 7, 34), and, in the immigration chapter, also a "what to expect from newcomers" (p. 24). Heading each chapter with a reminder of what every party's responsibility is within the contract reminds the reader that the professionals (i.e., the government) must fulfill its contractual obligations, since "people [*mensen*[128]] can only

[128] Mens(en) is generally translated as human(s) or person/people, sharing the same root as the English collective noun 'men'. N.B: The 1795 Dutch De Verklaring van de rechten van de mens en de burger is based on the 1789 post-revolution Franch Déclaration des droits de l'homme et du citoyen; meaning The Declaration of the Rights of Man and the Citizen.

fulfill their side of the social contract (and fully participate in society) when their existence is based on a sturdy foundation" (p. 5).

The NSC's flagship proposal is the creation of a Constitutional Court (p. 8) which could also be formed by giving the Supreme Courts the jurisdiction to test legislation on constitutionality. Given that unlike almost all other European nations, the Dutch parliament reserves the right to check its own laws on constitutionality. It is no surprise, then, that the NSC was the hardest to keep at the table during coalition talks. Furthermore, he qualifies his party-list candidates as expert, which runs counter to the noted *Zeitgeist* at the heart of this thesis. Such a court would allow a balance of power towards the primacy of the Dutch parliament. This is especially needed, the NSC argues, given that "parliamentary research shows that balance of power [*macht en tegenmacht*[129]] is lost when it is most needed" (p. 9). Lastly, the NSC argues that is should become normalized to appointed expert-ministers, "*vakministers*" (p. 11), who are either independent and/or from outside of parliament.

Noteworthy in the rest of the main text are the NSC's written commitment to protecting Constitution's Article 1, the ban on discrimination, as the basis of the democratic rule of law, including the protections and full acceptance of "LBGTQIA+ people in school at work" (p. 29). Colonialism in the Caribbean and Indonesia, and the Dutch part in the transatlantic slave-trade, also need a mandatory place within Dutch history curriculum and cultural services: it needs to take its place "*next to other forms of suppression that our society has finally conquered*, such as the feudal system, limited suffrage, discrimination of women, and child labor and extortion. There will be National Museum of Slavery" (p. 31, italics added). This section is included here, given how different the LPF, PVV, and FVD especially

[129] Lit. power and contra-power.

have tackled such topics. Often the mention of Dutch past wrong doings is phrased as a woke agenda point which wishes to teach non-patriotism to the new generation. Moreover, it was not until LPF that pro-nationalism really took a place again amongst Dutch political dialogue. Given how the close cultural ties to the Germans and their dislike of (non-sport) overt nationalistic rhetoric and symbols, such as flag waving, the NSC, here, places these nuanced topics amidst the history of our nation as a done deal, a conquered specter of the past. Altogether, the NSC is graded an expected 0.00 for their lack populist rhetoric.

To Conclude

Of the fifteen analysed manifestos, only a small handful displayed populist speak. These were the manifestos of the PVV 2010 and 2023, and the FVD 2023. The BBB, in its longwinded 2023 manifesto, proved much less populist than expected. Which is especially noteworthy given their supposed focus on local, regional, and non-urban identities, which have since led to the rural/farmer dating app AgriMatch. The NSC proved stanchly anti-populist, with its focus on professionalism as well as the balance they seek to strike between institutional and civic responsibilities. Moreover, they acknowledge that all institutions require oversight: most notably the judicial branch needs the competency to test legislation on its constitutionality, a power that is currently solely reserved for the *Tweede Kamer.* The LPF, although being often cited as *the* populist party in the Netherlands, turned out to not pit 'the people' against the Purple cabinet's neoliberal elite. While the establishment party *par excellence,* the VVD, also refrained from such divisive rhetoric, they did shift in the way the refer to 'the people'. Moving from *burger* to *Nederlander*. Their Christian Democratic co-ruling party, the CDA, proved consistently non-populist.

The 1990s, after the ending of the cold war, saw a deepening of the Third Way neoliberal turn. United States' President Bill Clinton affirmed that Purple Premier Wim Kok (PvdA)'s coalition with the liberal-conservative VVD was a champion of this doctrine. Pim Fortuyn rose to power in opposition to the widespread neoliberal privatisations, deepening bureaucracy, free trade, and the immigration influx this supposedly created. The neoliberal globalised free trade system saw many companies outsource their labour in cheaper countries with less protective legislation or places with lower collective bargaining abilities. Most famously, Fortuyn broke the taboo on directly addressing the several generations of the urban people with immigrant backgrounds, who through wilful or ignorant government neglect were unable to integrate into Dutch society. This, after Fortuyn's murder with a "bullet from the Left", left the field wide open for Wilders' split for the VVD to fill this niche. Where the LFP was sceptic towards integration and thus conservative on immigration, the PVV turned this up to unfiltered Islamophobic messaging. A strong police force and directly elected municipal and country leaders, besides care for especially the elderly and animals are other policy proposition of the PVV.

6 | In Conclusion

"The sun will shine again in the Netherlands", Freedom Party leader Geert Wilder said when presenting his coalition's *Hoofdlijnenakkoord*[130], "[w]e are writing history today, together as four parties. But also, the PVV, my own party, in cabinet, in the centre of power. We went from the biggest opposition party to the biggest party in government." And so, the long promised 'new governing style' has finally arrived in The Hague. *De Nederlander weer op 1*[131] (PVV, 2023), Wilders promised, after finally winning a plurality in the *Tweede Kamer*[132].

This thesis has contributed to the understanding of Dutch populism and their rhetoric into 2023, to find out how populist rhetoric has –if at all– spread in the wider Dutch party system. The instigative reason for this was that when Rooduijn and colleagues published their 2014 study, no *Zeitgeist* was deemed to be present. Yet, the populist PVV did win the 2023 elections, so the question re-emerged: has populism really taken on now? In this chapter I will answer the research questions and hypotheses. I will also discuss the efficacy of using manifestos as the subject of qualitative discourse analysis. After which I will review what future avenues of research could look like.

Besides the two well-known populist parties, the LPF and PVV, three establishment parties are examined, these are: the social-democratic PvdA/GL, the Christian-democratic CDA, and the liberal-conservative VVD. Three newer 'savior' parties are also included: the

[130] Lit.: key points accord. Whereas coalition accords are normally more substantive and representative of a narrative cohesion between the governing parties, this coalition only wanted (was able to) to agree on key points. It was noted by NRC Haagse Zaken (NRC The Haguian Affairs (2024, July 5); similar to CBC Power & Politics) that Schoof, when presenting his cabinet to the Commons on July 2nd and 3rd, that no overarching binding narrative was present. Instead, PM Schoof hammered on executing the key points of the accord.

[131] Lit: Putting the Dutch first.

[132] The Dutch House of Commons

radical-right FVD, the agrarianist BBB, and the constitutionalist NSC. The PVV's win in the Dutch 2023 national election showcases another example of how European is leaning to the right. Therefore, a special focus is put on the rhetoric of the populist right, leaving out the left-populism in places such as the Socialist Party (SP).

Blending Rooduijn *et al.*'s (2014) paragraph-as-unit-of-analysis method with Hawkins' (2009) 0-1-2 grading system, I created a formula that counts the amount of populism in any given manifesto, expressed on a 100-point scale. To gain a comparative glance at the political developments of the new millennia, I focussed on 2002, 2010 and 2023. Since each of these years saw a new *Minister President* succeed the previous government. Each manifesto was coded using a slightly amended codebook by Dr. Matthijs Rooduijn (Appendix II) and subjected to a qualitative discourse analysis.

The Netherlands has long been seen as a corner in Europe where right-wing populism has had a prominent place within its political landscape, given that the leaders of the LPF and the PVV's are known internationally. With the election of the PVV in 2023, a Dutch populist *Tijdsgeest*[133] seemed undeniable. At large, I examined how Dutch populists speak in their manifestos and then compare these results to how the three establishment parties speak in their manifestos. Three newer 'savior' parties are also looked at, given that newer parties better show which opinions in society feel unheard by the three establishment parties. In short, I looked at whether the PVV's 2023 win also showed a contagion of populist rhetoric in the party ecosystem. That is, whether the three establishment parties and the three 'savior' parties use more populist language in their programmes in periods of political change; when populism seems to have more potential.

[133] Dutch for Zeitgeist, or spirit of the times.

Review

How has populists' rhetoric developed between the 2002-2023 elections, and is this populist rhetoric contagious within the Dutch party system?

The main research question is best answered through the three sub-questions:

Which parties are included in the study, and why; in other words, who are the 'establishment ' actors, and which other parties are relevant to this study?

The political establishment are the parties which have won a national election since Second World War and are still in existence: PvdA, CDA,[134] VVD, and PVV[135]. Other relevant parties are newcomers who in less than two electoral cycles gain enough electoral momentum to become relevant in coalition formation. These are the LPF, FVD, BBB, and NSC. In the Dutch political system has amongst the lowest electoral threshold to obtain a seat: 1/150st[136] of the casted vote. Allowing independents of breakaway groups good electoral chances. However, gaining a significant number of seats is relatively unusual. Briefly, the LPF entered the *Tweede Kamer* in 2002 with a record twenty-six seats. The BBB won only one seat in 2021 but won a plurality in each Province and thus in the Senate in 2023, together with their current seven seats. The FVD preformed a similar feat an election cycle earlier. And finally, after splitting off from the CDA, Pieter Omtzigt's NSC won twenty seats in 2023.

How has populist rhetoric impacted the overall party system; meaning, (how) does the contagion show itself in 'savior' parties?

The *Tweede Kamer* generally has just over ten seated parties, called *fracties*[137]; one or two of the traditional three parties forms a governing coalition with one or two smaller parties. This

134 The CDA is preceded by the KVP, which was in government until it merged with two other parties to form the CDA.

135 They gained the right of initiation in the formation of this government and appointed the independent PM Dick Schoof.

136 Depending on voter turnout, which is generally over 80%, this is 60,000 to 75,000 people (Vossen, 2017).

137 Lit.: fractions, parts.

consociational consensus building form of coalition forming is called *polderpolitiek*, or the *poldermodel*[138]. However, in 2021 under VVD Mark Rutte the Netherlands saw a near-record thirty-seven parties running, resulting in seventeen seated parties.[139] Currently, since the 2023 election, the *Tweede Kamer* counts fifteen *fracties*[140] (Tweede Kamer, 2024).

With this in mind, the question asks whether populist rhetoric has spread to smaller parties? Yes, but only the now electorally unpopular *Forum Voor Democratie* (FVD). The FVD won a tied first place with the VVD in the 2019 Senate. Forum-leader Thierry Baudet's elite-sounding way of speaking in tandem with his party's stark anti-establishment rhetoric and push against 'woke' ideologies, and globalist conspiracies, makes them populist *par excellence.* Baudet repeatedly calls the three major and their preferred coalition parties a 'party cartel', implying a false centrist-liberal choice, which all leads to the same globalist undermining of popular sovereignty. The other small parties, the BBB and NSC, did not display any populist rhetoric. The BBB does not use a Manichean worldview, although they are sceptical of especially the EU. They ask the government to listen to people outside the *Randstad*, but their push for a bigger focus on regional identity and infrastructure does not amount to a reified *vox populi.* The NSC is stanchly anti-populist: they call for professionalism in the government and desire to give the high courts the jurisdiction to test legislation on their constitutionality. Something which is currently still the purview of Parliament.

Which populist phrases, if any, do we see the 'winner' parties employing?

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[138] A polder is a plot of land enclosed by dykes, such as the man-made province of Flevoland, or the reclaimed lands of the provinces of North and South Holland.

[139] The only other time the national ballot held more than 30 parties was in 1933 with 54 running and 14 seated parties (Vossen, 2014). Examples on the left are DENK [Lit.: think], a focussing on the Turkish-Dutch vote, who split off from Labour, and BIJ1 [Lit.: together] an anti-racist intersectional party who split off from DENK.

[140] PVV 37 seats (#1); PvdA/GL 25 seats (#2); VVD 24 seats (#3); NSC 20 seats (#4). The rest of the parties have less than ten seats each.

It has proven tempting but hard for the 'winning' parties to employ an anti-elitist critique. They may need to form cabinet together after the election, is one reason. Another is that by-and-large, they themselves are the elite that could be critiqued. The VVD has a record of arguing for new style of governance, while the old one was also a VVD-led cabinet. However, by 2023, the VVD had both opened up towards greening the economy and being strict on immigration (VVD, 2023). And although no party used strong anti-elitist and people-centric language, the VVD did start referring to the electorate as *Nederlanders*[141] whether than the more common *burgers.* Moreover, the VVD also used *wij Nederlanders*[142] six times in their introduction, each time colouring the definition of the Dutch as business-minded and entrepreneurial; portraying themselves as the natural ruling party of the Netherlands.

Hypotheses

Hypothesis 1 – There will be an <u>overall increase</u> in populist rhetoric amongst the 'winner' parties between 2002 and 2023.

As the answer to the research sub-questions already point out, H1 is proven wrong. There is <u>no</u> overall increase in populist rhetoric amongst the 'winner' parties. The only nudges towards populism found amongst the 'winner' parties are less than a single point out of hundred for the PvdA in 2002 (0.70) and the VVD's change from *burger* to the demonym *Nederlander.*

However, given the way the two categories are divided, the PVV is also part of the 'winner' party-group; given that they have won the biggest plurality of the vote in 2023. Yet, neither for the PVV was there an *increase*. Founded in 2006 by their still only party member and leader Geert Wilders, the party scored 23.24 according to Rooduijn and colleagues

[141] Lit.: the Dutch.
[142] Lit.: We, the Dutch.

(2014), and by my own calculations, a 52.42 in 2010 and a 27.30 in 2023. Meaning that for the PVV their score went down drastically; or rather, they peaked in 2010. This was a response to the CDA's short-lived fourth cabinet, a two-party CDA-PvdA coalition, which was unlikely to be renewed into a fifth CDA mandate. Geert Wilders must have understood this, as his strong appeal to the Dutch people made his party the second biggest in 2010. Resulting in Rutte-I being a *gedoogbeleid: a* VVD-CDA minority government with the support of the PVV.[143] This was a short-lived arrangement, after which the Mark Rutte's VVD refused to ever collaborate with the PVV again. In 2023, Dilan Yeşilgöz succeeded Mark Rutte,[144] and she did not rule out the PVV. Likely hoping for such a chance, the PVV leader presented a less hawkish persona: Geert Wilders was nicknamed *Milders.*[145] Cracking down on immigration, moreover, has become a more central node in VVD's playbook over the elections covered in this thesis. Given the Western trend, the PVV's radical hard-line against non-European immigration –bordering on replacement theory rhetoric[146]– may certainly be a reason for this shift.

Hypothesis 2 – The 'savior' parties, overall, prove more populist than the 'winner' parties.

H2 proves true. Relying on the two groupings as defined, the 'winners' (PvdA, CDA, VVD, PVV) over all the included years average out to 7.34, while all the 'saviors' average out to 12.13. however, while the PVV is only counted as a 'winner' party, it does also qualify as a 'savior' party for having won, on its second try, second place in *Tweede Kamer*. If we account

[143] Similar to the Supply-and-Confidence agreement the Trudeau (LPC) minority government struck in 2022 with the NDP in Canada.
[144] Who went on to become the NATO Secretary General.
[145] A play on 'Wilders' and 'milder'; mild means the same in Dutch as it does in English.
[146] Such as was the case with his former Senator Marjolein Faber, who currently serves as Minister for Asylum and Migration.

for this (as such relocating the PVV to the 'savior' group), this will leave the 'winners' with 0.12 and the 'saviors' with 18.84 point out of a 100. Proving H2 true, twice over.

Hypothesis 3 – The largest presence of populist rhetoric will be observed in the data from the 2023 election manifestos.

H3 is partly false. Given the PVV's unexpected populist rhetoric peak (52.42) the four-party average results to 13.17 for 2010, contrasted to 2023's eight-party average is 8.67. However, 2023 did see more populist parties (two; PVV & FVD) while 2010 only saw the PVV proverbially punching above its weight. Moreover, the BBB after winning the States-Provincial and thus the Senate,[147] would have wanted to present itself as a real governance party. Which would contrast them from their more activistic and regional dialect using protest 2021 party.

Hypothesis 4 – the PVV is indeed a clearly populist party.

The PVV proved itself a populist party through and through; confirming H4. The aforementioned 52.42 (2010) score and the 27.30 (2023) score in context of Rooduijn *et al.'*s 23.08 shows that the methodology applied to the fifteen manifestos is able to point out the populist parties from the non-populist ones.

The reason that the 2023 is not the most populist on record –if we look at average score, rather than to the number of parties with populist rhetoric– is due to the PVV's deeply populist 2010 manifesto. The significance here is that one party is indeed able to pull the data into one direction, given the limited data set used. Contextually, 2023 resulted in the

[147] All the Provincial Councillors together form the electorate for the Senate. And the BBB won a plurality in every province, becoming the unexpected biggest party with 17 out of 75 seats in the Senate in 2023.

most right-wing coalition in Dutch history, a protest that seems to have been over twenty years in the making.

Mark Rutte was certainly not unpopular, but a coalition led by his party certainly became heavily criticized from both the left and the right; resulting in an increase of six new parties. These are the left-wing intersectionality BIJ1, the Turkish-Dutch DENK, the conspiratorial right-wing FVD, the right-wing JA21, the agriculturalist BBB, the conservative constitutionalist NSC. Splintering, as this phenomenon is called, is an expression unique to a proportional representative system. Where split-offs from major parties (e.g., DENK from PvdA, and BIJ1 from DENK; NSC from CDA; PVV from VVD) actually stand a good chance of getting re-elected as a one or more seat party come the next election cycle.

Splintering, however, makes forming government significantly more challenging. Resulting in the long coalition talks of both Rutte-III and Rutte-IV, as well as the half year talks leading up to cabinet Schoof. As such, I generalize splintering as result of problem-specific protest voting. Certainly not everyone that votes for a non-establishment party is protest voting, but in times where change in governing ethos and style is demanded and promised but not delivered MPs are able to vote with their feet by leaving major parties or for outsiders to start a new party (such as the BBB and FVD). This behaviour may force the establishment parties –especially the VVD– to recognize these voices and potentially pick some to govern with or copy policy points from in order to win back those votes.

Personal Insights & Commentary

This section will set out my personal insights gained throughout the research of this thesis. It will discuss more high-level and historical aspects that lay at the foundation of the

researched topic, as well as looking at the meaning of the nuances in the Dutch case. Populism in the Netherlands was perhaps the most well known internationally for the murder of Pim Fortuyn. Since 2002, populists of many stripes but mostly right wing have risen to prominence throughout Europe and the West. But no data shows that the Dutch case is a bellwether for Western populism. Counter to the Westminster derived first past the post (FPTP) systems that my Canadian readers may be most familiar with, European proportional representation lays at the foundation of the parliamentary prominence of the populist right wing in all European countries.[148] Dutch right-wing politics is not unique within the West. Moreover, when looking at Donald Trump's language use and that of the PVV's manifesto in 2023, we can see a clear overlap: *Let's put our own country first*. As populists feel that the global elite have pushed for a global world and in doing so rob local populations of their identities and livelihoods. Pim Fortuyn and Geert Wilders both felt that 'our' cities (Rotterdam for Fortuyn and Utrecht for Wilder) are being taken away from us, with vivid portrayals of low-income elderly native-Dutch couples who were the last remaining white people in a neighborhood that predominantly houses people with a migration background. However, immigration and even embedded racism[149] need not only drive the vote for the populist right. The maze of neoliberal bureaucracy, the 2008 financial crisis, and now the housing crisis which is felt throughout the West have made the middle-class voters feel squeezed out of their living standards. The fears this brings up are easily guided towards anti-elitist and anti-immigrant sentiments. Arguing that strangers get more from the government than the citizens do. While at the same time the far right, PVV and FVD, do not

[148] Even in France, which uses a system more akin to multiparty FPTP system.
[149] As I disused in Chapter 2, where Mudde used a Eurobarometer datum to show that many Europeans self-identify as (somewhat) racist.

speak about the need for unions or the direct policies to curb the unaffordability of current day life.

The resonance between the sentiments of our current time and that of the Gilded Era (the late 19th century United States) is particularly salient. The late 19th century was a time of social Darwinism and unchecked capitalist interests, where the populists called for a unification of the rural farmer and urban industry worker; a call to action that invokes the famous communist hammer-and-cycle. It is not odd that well into the 20th century, populists were named in line with socialists (Erlich, 1977, p. 145). Since then, the reconciliation of social democrats (PvdA) and neoliberal conservatives (VVD) into the Third Way has proved to be a powerful movement yet deeply unpopular. Full free market forces drive many people out of participation though privatizing key aspects of the welfare state. This drove down already low fertility rates, which increased the need for immigration to keep the economy growing. The *Wellbeing Paradox*, which follows, sees the nation *writ large* increase in economic growth, while the lived experience (Van Rossem, 2011) is one of increasing unaffordability.

Where the Socialists used to fight for the rights of workers and the lower class, Wim Kok's Third Way –which was celebrated by Bill Clinton (see p. 55 of this thesis)– estranged workers both urban and rural. These common people feel left out and ignored by the establishment which seems most concerned by economic output. Throughout the West we see that people fill in the gap between the promise and experience of their democracies by electing iconoclastic right-wing strong(wo)men, who promise a return of popular sovereignty and show how pliable the political system can be. Brubaker and Mudde (Chapter 2) showed a nuanced understanding of the *why* underlying the populist sentiments. In

summary, Brubaker argues that these are institutional failures due to the irresponsiveness of multinational corporate corruption, in tandem with social loneliness due to the neoliberal individualistic paradigm:

> *Strikingly, social-democratic parties did not seize the political opportunity created by these major economic shifts. Instead, their neoliberal turn in recent decades left the field open to other parties, on the right as well as the left, to advance populist economic claims). … "When democracy deteriorates, the people deteriorate with it." When society erodes, so does democracy" (Brubaker, 2017, p. 371).*

While Mudde argues in his thesis on *For Pathological Normalcy* that many of the sentiments that make up the right-populist spirit, are always present in the European population but not prioritized. And so:

> *"White, middle-class, native-born citizens' reactions to economic stress and demographic change in order to convince voters that their own identity is at risk, threatened by these changes in general and by immigration specifically" (Bonikowski 2017, p. 202).*

The Left is continually blamed for all that is wrong: "The second great enemy in Wilders' world view is a progressive elite, which consists of most parties and politicians, but also large parts of the media, the courts, the universities, and the bureaucracy" (Vossen, 2010, p. 27). Perhaps this is due to relativization, the 'liberal-left' (PVV, 2010), in the eyes of the PVV and FVD means anything left form the Christian Democrats. Whereas the Left in earnest does *not* include the VVD in the Netherlands. Of the three establishment parties, the PvdA has not governed the least, and have delivered a PM even fewer times[150] (Table 5, Appendix III). Then why is 'the Left' still blamed for all the woes of the Nation? The PvdA has not governed since Rutte-Asscher (VVD-PvdA, or 'Purple III'), 11 years ago. The real sentiment that many angry and disenchanted people have nowadays could find an outlet in a populism of the old American brand. The old populism, in the words of the Democratic party candidate William Jennings Bryan said on July 9, 1896:

[150] E.g.: Den Uyl's PvdA won the 1982 election, but Den Agt's CDA formed cabinet.

> *You shall not press down upon the brow of labor this crown of thorns; you shall not crucify mankind upon a cross of gold.*

This sentiment is what certain populist leaders today also promise, but rarely deliver on. The populist-right is a primarily concerned with fighting identity politics, rather than economic policies (Rooduijn & Burgoon, 2018). While the inverse also holds true: the populist-left is seen as risky on grounds of immigration but is more trusted to remedy economical concerns of the lower and middle classes (*ibid*.). The populist-right framing of globalization as being favored by cosmopolitan and progressive elites who are working against the interests of ordinary people may be more powerful than (mere) economic rationales (Miller-Idriss, 2019).

Future Avenues

The amount of real-time contagion is hard to pin-point through the methodology I have employed in this thesis. Establishment parties have shown to remain true to their roots, besides a turn towards a pragmatic shaking off of ideological feathers. Populism is best found closest to the agent and where the agent can be found closest to the people. In the cases of the LPF, PVV, and FVD, the leaders had considerable input if not full authorship over the manifestos. However, when looking at the contagion in the establishment looking at recorded parliamentary speaking time may prove more fruitful. This will, however, cost considerably more resources or a very well-coded AI-assistance. Looking into the impact of the 'populist turn' in the European Parliament would also enriching for the field. The 2024 European Parliamentary election saw old populist groups change and new one's form. Sovereigntists, separatists, and nationalists have significantly more foothold in the Euro Parliament, even though the European leadership under Commission President Ursula von

der Leyen has chosen to remain loyal to the centrists red-yellow-blue[151] alliance. Another avenue of qualitative field research could be to look into the popular understanding of what 'the Left' entails.

Closing Remark

When I started my academic career, the Brexit vote and Donald Trump's election engrossed me, and led me to pursue two degrees in political science – specializing on the place of Europe and thus the Netherlands in this changing world. A world whose history has most certainly is still not yet ended. If power is left in any one place for too long it will corrupt. Corruption will leave masses disenfranchised and hollowed out, as corporate, industry, and military interests are pursued over the well-being of the people. And, where the people's well-being deteriorates, there democracy and liberal principles will deteriorate (Brubaker, 2017, p. 317). For nearly 150 years, populism has been a force that sought to break the monopoly of power away from the establishment whenever the needs of the people were not felt as a priority:

> *Populism was "a protest against forced economy, debt, and privation to the producer, and peace, plenty, happiness, and prosperity to the non-producer" (Dunning, 1891, p 101). Reflecting a simple and highly moral people were the sharply drawn opposites which the Populists contrasted – millionaires and the masses; … Democracy and Plutocracy; speculators and producers; robbers and the robbed. One element was central: the distinct division between the two forces (Erlich 1977 p 144).*

I have studied what is really written by political parties, in the hope of coming closer to understanding how we can bridge the divides of our time by seeing where the global political forces are not applying a human measure, willfully or otherwise. In the hope that, indeed, the sun will shine again over a more unified and prosperous Netherlands.

[151] Red: Alliance of Socialists and Democrats (S&D; e.g. the PvdA); Yellow: Renew Europe (made up of liberals such as Macron's Renaissance party and the Dutch VVD); Blue: The European Peoples Party made up of centrist conservatives and Christian democrats.

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Appendix I

Hawkins' Rubric for Populist Speech Analysis

Final Grade:

2 A speech in this category is **extremely populist** and comes very close to the ideal populist discourse. Specifically, the speech expresses all or nearly all of the elements of ideal populist discourse, and has few elements that would be considered non-populist.

1 A speech in this category includes strong, **clearly populist** elements but either does not use them consistently or tempers them by including non-populist elements. Thus, the discourse may have a romanticized notion of the people and the idea of a unified popular will (indeed, it must in order to be considered populist), but it avoids bellicose language or references to cosmic proportions or any particular enemy.

0 A speech in this category uses **few if any populist elements**. Note that even if a manifesto expresses a Manichaean worldview, it is not considered populist if it lacks some notion of a popular will.

Populist[152]	**Pluralist**
It conveys a Manichaean vision of the world, that is, one that is moral (every issue has a strong moral dimension) and dualistic (everything is in one category or the other, "right" or "wrong," "good" or "evil") The implication—or even the stated idea—is that there can be nothing in between, no fence-sitting, no shades of grey. This leads to the use of highly charged, even bellicose language.	The discourse does not frame issues in moral terms or paint them in black-and-white. Instead, there is a strong tendency to focus on **narrow, particular issues**. The discourse will emphasize or at least not eliminate the possibility of natural, justifiable differences of opinion.
The moral significance of the items mentioned in the speech is heightened by ascribing **cosmic proportions** to them, that is, by claiming that they affect people everywhere (possibly but not	The discourse will probably not refer to any reified notion of history nor use any cosmic proportions. References to the spatial and temporal consequences of issues will be limited to the material

152 Hawkins (2009). Minor changes have been made to apply to refer to the Canadian context. Bolds in original.

necessarily across the world) and across time. Especially in this last regard, frequent references may be made to a reified notion of "history." At the same time, the speaker will justify the moral significance of their ideas by tying them to **national and religious leaders** that are generally revered.	reality rather than any mystical connections.
Although Manichaean, the discourse is still democratic, in the sense that the good is embodied in the will of the majority, which is seen as a unified whole, perhaps but not necessarily expressed in references to the *vox populi*[153]; however, the speaker ascribes a kind of unchanging essentialism to that will, rather than letting it be whatever 50 percent of the people want at any particular moment. Thus, this good majority is romanticized, with some notion of the common man (urban or rural) seen as the embodiment of the national ideal.	Democracy is simply the calculation of votes. This should be respected and is seen as the foundation of legitimate government, but it is not meant to be an exercise in arriving at a pre-existing, knowable "will." The majority shifts and changes across issues. The common man is not romanticized, and the notion of citizenship is broad and legalistic.
The evil is embodied in a minority whose specific identity will vary according to context. Domestically, in the North America and Europe, it is often the out of touch ruling class elite, perhaps the impersonal national bureaucracy or Eurocrats, the UN and other global and supranational fora, or more conspiratorially a global cabal with evil, perverted, and hedonistic tendencies. Such ideas are often accompanied by a derogation of racial, sexual, and/or ability minority groups who are said to be	The discourse avoids a conspiratorial tone and does not single out any evil ruling minority. It avoids labeling opponents as evil and may not even mention them in an effort to maintain a positive tone and keep passions low.

153 Original: "voluntad des pueblos" or will of the people, which this research argues compares to Mudde's vox populi (2017). This 'will', as mentioned in chapter 2, is reminiscent of Rousseau's volonté general of the common folk who are seen as the majority. This change is made since discourse is seen as an enaction of a will, where the will has become the outspoken voice of the people.

disproportionally advantaged by the corrupt(ing) elite.[154]	
Crucially, the evil minority is or was recently in charge and subverted the system to its own interests, against those of the good majority or the people. Thus, systemic change is/was required, often expressed in terms such as "revolution" or "liberation" of the people from their "immiseration" or bondage, even if technically it comes about through elections.	The discourse does not argue for systemic change but, as mentioned above, focuses on particular issues. In the words of Laclau, it is a politics of "differences" rather than "hegemony."
Because of the moral baseness of the threatening minority, non-democratic means may be openly justified or at least the minority's continued enjoyment of these will be seen as a generous concession by the people; the speech itself may exaggerate or abuse data to make this point, and the language will show a bellicosity towards the opposition that is incendiary and condescending, lacking the decorum that one shows a worthy opponent.	Formal rights and liberties are openly respected, and the opposition is treated with courtesy and as a legitimate political actor. The discourse will not encourage or justify illegal, violent actions. There will be great respect for institutions and the rule of law. If data is abused, it is either an innocent mistake or an embarrassing breach of democratic standards.

Overall Comments (just a few sentences):

154 Original: "Domestically, in Latin America it is often an economic elite, perhaps the "oligarchy," but it may also be a racial elite; internationally, it may be the United States or the capitalist, industrialized nations or international financiers or simply an ideology such as neoliberalism and capitalism."

Appendix II

Coding Scheme

CONTENTS

Populism in Election Programs
Final Version (2014)

Author:
Dr. Matthijs Rooduijn[155]
M.Rooduijn@uva.nl

A. General information election program

B. Information specific paragraph
1. The people
2.A. Anti-elitism
2.B. Solutions anti-elitism
3.A. Exclusionism
3.B. Solutions Exclusionism
4. Politics (Other)

General Information

A. Introduction and definition of populism

The central question of this content analysis is whether the ideas of **Dutch political parties have become more "populist" between 2002 and 2023**. In order to answer that question, we will focus on election programs. The period of interest **is January 1st, 2002, until December 31st 2023.**

Before we can determine the degree of populism in an election program, we have to define populism. Populism consists of three interrelated characteristics.

1. Populism emphasizes the "the people"
Populists emphasize the fundamental position of the people, who stand at the centre of their vision of the world. They see "the people" as a monolithic and homogeneous entity, and not as consisting of different individuals and groups.

2. Populism is anti-elitist

155 University of Amsterdam. Faculty of Social and Behavioural Sciences. Programme group: Challenges to Democratic Representation. https://www.uva.nl/en/profile/r/o/m.rooduijn/m.rooduijn.html?cb

Populists are hostile towards elites because they are seen as obstructions to the centrality of the people.

3. Populism is exclusionary
Populists are not only hostile towards elites. They are also hostile towards individuals or groups ("others") who are not part of what populists consider to be "the people".

The first goal of this coding scheme is to distinguish these three characteristics. The second goal is to distinguish different forms of populism. The centrality of the people could concern the people's voice, their identity, their values, their rights or their prosperity. The anti-elitist feature could be understood in political terms (e.g. anti-parties), economic terms (e.g. anti-capitalism) or cultural terms (e.g. anti-intellectualism). The exclusionary characteristics of populism could manifest themselves in, for instance, **xenophobia, nationalism, anti-Islam, or anti-Americanism.** The third goal is to get a more specific understanding of the solutions populists may offer, such as for instance more direct democracy or more decisiveness.

B. Unit of measurement

The unit of measurement is the paragraph. Coders can recognize new paragraphs by an extra space between the last line of the old paragraph and the first line of a new paragraph, or by an indention of the first line of a new paragraph. A new paragraph can also be indicated by simply starting a sentence on a new line. For every election program, the coder has to decide how new paragraphs are indicated. A title belongs to the paragraph that follows. A list with proposals (and the text that introduces these proposals) should together be seen as one paragraph.

For every paragraph coders have to determine whether one or more of the so-called "populism arguments" are present. These arguments will be presented in the next section of this codebook. It is important that the arguments are made by the authors of the election program themselves, and not by an actor mentioned in the text. If, however, it is clear that this actor is cited or referred to because he or she supports the opinion of the writers of the election program, the arguments should be coded. Paragraphs concerning other countries than the country of interest are excluded. Paragraphs concerning the European Union should be included, however.

If the meaning of a text in a paragraph is unclear, the coders can make use of information in the two previous paragraphs. These two paragraphs form the "context unit".

Coding Instructions

The next section offers an overview of the so-called "populism arguments". Make sure that you know them well. A thorough understanding of these arguments is absolutely necessary.

Decide for every paragraph which specific argument is mentioned. If a certain argument is made, enter a "1" (national level), a "2" (European level) or a "3" (both levels) in the cell for this variable. If the argument is not made, enter a "0".

If an argument is made implicitly, it should also be coded. This is not the case if the codebook explicitly states that this argument should me made *explicitly*. An implicit argument is an argument that can logically be deduced from the reasoning of the authors. The coder should, however, be cautious and not interpret too much.

Populist arguments

1. The People

People **Reference to the people**
Do the authors refer to "the people"?

Note 1: The authors can refer to "the people" directly by means of terms such as "the people", "the citizens", "the Dutch", "The Netherlands", "the community", "the society", etc. They can also refer to "the people" more indirectly. This is the case if they use terms such as "our nation", "public opinion", "the electorate", "our culture", "we", etc. They also refer to the people if they propose to introduce a measure that implies that emphasize the importance of the people. Examples are the proposition to introduce more participatory democracy or a strong emphasis on integration.

Note 2: We do only speak of "the people" if the authors of the text (implicitly) identify themselves with "the people". This means that in some particular cases even the broad term of "Westerners" or the narrow term of "Twentenaar" or "Brabander" could refer to "the people".

Note 3: The authors of a text do NOT refer to the people if they only talk about specific subgroups *within* the people, such as children, elderly, migrants, etc.

Note 4: What the authors mean by the "the people" can also differ from case to case. It could refer to the sovereignty or power of the people, their identity (national feelings, values, ideas, religion, language, ethnicity, etc.), their prosperity, their rights, their wisdom, etc.

0. Argument not made [go to **AntEl**]
1. Argument made on the national level (also if not explicit which level)
2. Argument made on the EU level (this means that "the people" is defined on the European level: for example as a "European community")
3. Argument made on both the national and the EU level

PeopleF **Form of the people**

If the authors refer to "the people", do they refer to any of the following categories?

Note: More than one category can be selected. If you are not sure, do not hesitate too long and choose "9" (Not clear where they refer to).

1. The voice (power) of the people [go to **AntEl**]
2. The identity (e.g. national feelings, values, ideas, religion, language, ethnicity, etc.) of the people [go to **AntEl**]
3. The prosperity or economic situation of the people [go to **AntEl**]
4. The legal situation of the people (e.g. rights and liberties) [go to **AntEl**]
5. The common people
6. Other
7. Not clear where they refer to [go to **AntEl**]

PeopleQl **Qualify form of the people**

If the authors refer explicitly to another form of the people, write down as explicitly as possible where they refer to.

2.A. Anti-Elitism

AntEl **Anti-Elitism**

Do the authors criticize political, cultural, economic, legal, or media elites?

Note 1: Elites are not individual persons. Criticisms regarding for example a prime minister or a businessman are usually not anti-elitist. Only if these individuals are portrayed as representatives of a certain elite these criticisms should be seen as anti-elitist.

Note 2: Criticisms regarding a specific government, political party, company, medium or organization is usually not anti-elitist. It is only anti-elitist if it concerns an elite *in general*, or if a specific government, political party, company, medium or organization is clearly portrayed as a representative of an elite in general.

Note 3: Be careful not to confuse anti-elitism with "system negativity" (see next page).

0. Argument not made [go to **SysNeg**]
1. Argument made on the national level (also if not explicit which level)
2. Argument made on the EU level
3. Argument made on both the national and the EU level

AntElF **Form of anti-elitism**

If the authors criticize elites, do they refer to any of the following categories?

Note: More than one category can be selected. If you are not sure, do not hesitate too long and choose "9" (Not clear where they refer to).

1. Political anti-elitism (e.g. politicians in general, political organizations, political parties, the "established" political order, "Brussels", "politics" in general) [go to **SysNeg**]
2. Economic anti-elitism (e.g. business elites, bank executives or capitalism in general) [go to **SysNeg**]
3. Cultural anti-elitism (e.g. intellectuals) [go to **SysNeg**]
4. Legal anti-elitism (e.g. judges) [go to **SysNeg**]
5. Anti-media (e.g. journalists) [go to **SysNeg**]
6. Other
7. Not clear where they refer to [go to **SysNeg**]

AntElQl **Qualify form of anti-elitism**

If the authors refer explicitly to another form of anti-elitism, write down as explicitly as possible where they refer to.

SysNeg **System or institutional negativity**

Do the authors criticize the system (of the state or the EU) in general or do they criticize specific (semi-) state institutions?

Note 1: This is the case only if they have FUNDAMENTAL criticisms on the *functioning* or the *power* of the system or specific institutions. This argument is not present if the authors express criticisms regarding substantive policies only.

Note 2: The SysNeg argument is also present if the authors criticize procedures and/or rules of the system, the administration or specific institutions (e.g. a lack of transparency, too many checks and balances, bureaucracy, etc.)

0. Argument not made [go to **DecisivA**]
1. Argument made on the national level (also if not explicit which level)
2. Argument made on the EU level
3. Argument made on both the national and the EU level

SysNegF **Form of system or institutional negativity**

If the authors criticize the system (of the state or the EU) in general or they criticize specific (semi-) state institutions, do they refer to any of the following categories?

Note: More than one category can be selected. If you are not sure, do not hesitate too long and choose "9" (Not clear where they refer to).

1. The system (of the state or the EU) in general [go to **DecisivA**]

2. The administration [go to **DecisivA**]
3. (Semi-) state institutions [go to **DecisivA**]
4. Other
5. Not clear where they refer to [go to **DecisivA**]

SysNegQl **Qualify form of system negativity**
If the authors refer explicitly to another form of system negativity, write down as explicitly as possible where they refer to.

DecisivA **Lack of decisiveness**
Do the authors complain EXPLICITLY about an alleged lack of decisiveness, efficiency, effectiveness or efficacy?

0. Argument not made
1. Argument made on the national level (also if not explicit which level)
2. Argument made on the EU level
3. Argument made on both the national and the EU level

ClarityA **Clarity**
Do the authors EXPLICITLY criticize an alleged lack of clarity?

0. Argument not made
1. Argument made on the national level (also if not explicit which level)
2. Argument made on the EU level
3. Argument made on both the national and the EU level

Favour **Favouritism**
Do the authors write about favouritism, nepotism or corruption among elites and/or institutions?

0. Argument not made [go to **Engage**]
1. Argument made on the national level (also if not explicit which level)
2. Argument made on the EU level
3. Argument made on both the national and the EU level

2.B. Solutions Anti-Elitism

Engage **Engagement / Listen to people**
Do the authors argue that the people should be more involved, that they should have more influence, and/or that they should be better listened to?

If this argument is made, the <u>People</u> argument is also made.

0. Argument not made [go to **Refer**]
1. Argument made on the national level (also if not explicit which level)

2. Argument made on the EU level (this means that "the people" is defined on the European level: for example as a "European community")
3. Argument made on both the national and the EU level

EngageF **Form of engagement**

If the authors argue that the people should be more involved, do they refer to any of the following categories?

Note: More than one category can be selected. If you are not sure, do not hesitate too long and choose "5" (Not clear where they refer to).

1. Political involvement [go to **Refer**]
2. Economic involvement [go to **Refer**]
3. Legal involvement [go to **Refer**]
4. Other
5. Not clear where they refer to [go to **Refer**]

EngageQl **Qualify form of engagement**

If the authors refer explicitly to another form of engagement, write down as explicitly as possible where they refer to.

DDemos **Arguments for direct democracy**

Are the authors in favor of tools of participatory or direct democracy such as, for instance, popular initiatives or referenda?

Note: This refers to political decision-making by citizens themselves, and not to direct elections of officials (see **Leader**).

If this argument is made, the <u>People</u> arguments are also made.

0. Argument not made
1. Argument made on the national level (also if not explicit which level)
2. Argument made on the EU level (this means that "the people" is defined on the European level: for example as a "European community")
3. Argument made on both the national and the EU level

DDemosF **What is in need of (more) direct democracy**

If the authors argue in favor of tools of participatory or direct democracy, do they refer to any of the following categories?

Note: More than one category can be selected. If you are not sure, do not hesitate too long and choose "5" (Not clear where they refer to).

1. National leaders;

2. Politician or Referenda;
3. Decentralisation
4. Other
5. Not clear where they refer to

DDemosX **Limiting/cutting [institution] to increase 'power of the people'.**
If the authors argue in favor of tools of participatory or direct democracy, which explicitly stated body do they refer to.

Note: More than one category can be selected. If you are not sure, do not hesitate too long and choose "8" (Not clear where they refer to).

1. State General
2. Provincial Houses
3. Municipalities
4. Judicial Branch
5. EU
6. News/Journalism
7. Other
8. N/Clear

Leader **Strong leadership**
Are the authors in favour of (more) powerful, and/or directly elected officials, such as for instance the prime minister or the major?

0. Argument not made
1. Argument made on the national level (also if not explicit which level)
2. Argument made on the EU level
3. Argument made on both the national and the EU level

DecisivB **Decisiveness needed**
Do the authors state EXPLICITLY that (more) decisiveness, efficiency, effectiveness, or efficacy is needed?

Note: If this argument is made, it could well be that the DecisivA argument is also made.

0. Argument not made
1. Argument made on the national level (also if not explicit which level)
2. Argument made on the EU level
3. Argument made on both the national and the EU level

ClarityB **Clarity**
Do the authors argue EXPLICITLY in favor of clarity?

Note: If this argument is made, it could well be that the ClarityA argument is also made.

0. Argument not made
1. Argument made on the national level (also if not explicit which level)
2. Argument made on the EU level
3. Argument made on both the national and the EU level

3.A. Exclusionism

Exclus **Negativity towards "others" / Exclusion**

Do the authors express negative opinions regarding "others" (i.e. persons or groups who are perceived as not belonging to "the people" the authors identify themselves with)?

Note 1: This negativity could, for instance, be related to the others' identity (they have an inferior identity), the influence they exert (they are too influential), the way they act (it is in conflict with how "we" act), the rights they have (they have too many rights), or merely their presence or arrival (they should not be or come here).

Note 2: Negativity regarding criminals should not be coded. Criminals form a group, which most people are negative about by definition.

0. Argument not made [go to **Rights**]
1. Argument made on the national level (also if not explicit which level)
2. Argument made on the EU level
3. Argument made on both the national and the EU level

ExclusF **Form of exclusion**

If the authors express negative opinions regarding "others", do they refer to any of the following categories?

Note: More than one category can be selected. If you are not sure, do not hesitate too long and choose "9" (Not clear where they refer to).

1. Immigrants [go to **Rights**]
2. People living in another nation-state (e.g. Americans) [go to **Rights**]
3. People from another nation/group within the nation-state (e.g. Flemish against people from Wallonia) [go to **Rights**]
4. People with a specific religion (e.g. Muslims) [go to **Rights**]
5. People of another culture [go to **Rights**]
6. People living in another region in the world (e.g. East Europeans) [go to **Rights**]
7. Ethnicity [go to **Rights**]
8. Other

9. Not clear where they refer to [go to **Rights**]

ExclusQl **Qualify form of exclusion**
If the authors refer to another form of exclusion, write down as explicitly as possible where they refer to.

3.B. Solutions Exclusionism

Rights **Limiting basic rights and/or liberties**
Do the authors argue that rights and/or liberties of specific groups can or should be limited?

Note: if specific groups are not *explicitly* mentioned, this argument could still be present. An example is the proposition to ban Burqas. Although this proposition concerns the entire population, it is clearly referring to Muslims. A counterexample is the proposition to ban headwear. It is not clear whether this proposition refers to a specific group.

If this argument is made, the <u>Exclus</u> argument is also made.

0. Argument not made [go to **Distance**]
1. Argument made on the national level (also if not explicit which level)
2. Argument made on the EU level
3. Argument made on both the national and the EU level

RightsF **Form of limited rights**
If the authors argue that basic constitutional rights and/or liberties of specific groups can or should be limited, do they refer to any of the following categories?

Note: More than one category can be selected. If you are not sure, do not hesitate too long and choose "9" (Not clear where they refer to).

1. equality before the law and prohibition of discrimination [go to **Distance**]
2. right to vote [go to **Distance**]
3. right to petition [go to **Distance**]
4. freedom of religion [go to **Distance**]
5. freedom of speech, freedom of the press, and freedom of gathering information [go to **Distance**]
6. freedom of association [go to **Distance**]
7. freedom of assembly [go to **Distance**]
8. Other
9. Not clear where they refer to [go to **Distance**]

RightsQl **Qualify form of limited rights**

If the authors refer explicitly to another form of limited rights, write down as explicit as possible where they refer to.

4. Politics (Other)

Distance **Distance between politics and people**
Do the author(s) argue EXPLICITLY that there exists a "distance", a "cleavage", or a "lack of trust" between politics and the people?

0. Argument not made
1. Argument made on the national level (also if not explicit which level)
2. Argument made on the EU level
3. Argument made on both the national and the EU level

NationA **National or cultural pride***
Do the author(s) argue that there their country, nation, culture, or costumes are better or rhetorically elevated? Examples are "our civilized western nation".

0. Argument not made
1. Argument made on the national level (also if not explicit which level)
2. Argument made on the EU level
3. Argument made on both the national and the EU level

NationB **National or cultural decline***
Do the author(s) argue that there their country, nation, culture, or costumes are in decline?

0. Argument not made
1. Argument made on the national level (also if not explicit which level)
2. Argument made on the EU level
3. Argument made on both the national and the EU level

NationF **Form or stated cause of national or cultural decline**
Note: More than one category can be selected. If you are not sure, do not hesitate too long and choose "9" (Not clear where they refer to).

1. Immigrants [go to **Rights**]
2. People living in another nation-state (e.g. Americans) [go to **Rights**]
3. People from another nation/group within the nation-state (e.g. Flemish against people from Wallonia) [go to **Rights**]
4. People with a specific religion (e.g. Muslims) [go to **Rights**]
5. People of another culture [go to **Rights**]
6. People living in another region in the world (e.g. East Europeans) [go to **Rights**]
7. Ethnicity [go to **Rights**]

8. European Union or representative/steadholder (e.g. Eurocrat; Brussels, European Parliament)
9. Other
10. Not clear where they refer to [go to **Rights**]

NationQl **Qualify form of national or cultural decline**
If the authors refer explicitly to another form of limited rights, write down as explicit as possible where they refer to.

Crisis **Invocation, reference, or proposes measures to tackle crisis/crises**
Author calls for emergency acts to tackle stated crisis,

0. Argument not made
1. Argument made on the national level (also if not explicit which level)
2. Argument made on the EU level
3. Argument made on both the national and the EU level

CrisisF **Form of referenced/invoked crisis**
Note: More than one category can be selected. If you are not sure, do not hesitate too long and choose "9" (Not clear where they refer to).

1. Political anti-elitism (e.g. politicians in general, political organizations, political parties, the "established" political order, "Brussels", "politics" in general) [go to **SysNeg**]
2. Economic anti-elitism (e.g. business elites, bank executives or capitalism in general) [go to **SysNeg**]
3. Cultural anti-elitism (e.g. intellectuals) [go to **SysNeg**]
4. Legal anti-elitism (e.g. judges) [go to **SysNeg**]
5. Anti-media (e.g. journalists) [go to **SysNeg**]
6. Other
7. Not clear where they refer to [go to **SysNeg**]

CrisisQl **Qualify form of refenced/invoked crisis/es**
If the authors refer explicitly to another form of limited rights, write down as explicit as possible where they refer to.

Code Book Abbreviations[156]

1. The People

- People 0 N/a; 1 Nat; 2 EU; 3 Both
- PeopleF 1 Voice; 2 Iden; 3 Pros & Econ; 4 Legal; 5 Comm; 6 Other; 7 N/clear
- PeopleQl *Note*

2A. Anti-Elitism

- AntEl1 0 N/a; 1 Nat; 2 EU; 3 Both
- AntElF 1 Pol; 2 Econ; 3 Cultural; 4 Legal; 5 Anti-Med; 6 Other; 7 N/clear
- AntElQl *Note*
- SysNeg 0 N/a; 1 Nat; 2 EU; 3 Both
- SysNegF 1 Gen; 2 Adim; 3 Inst; 4 Other; 5 N/clear
- SysNegQl *Note*
- DecisivA 0 N/a; 1 Nat; 2 EU; 3 Both
- ClarityA 0 N/a; 1 Nat; 2 EU; 3 Both
- Favour 0 N/a; 1 Nat; 2 EU; 3 Both

2B. Solutions Anti Elitism

- Engage 0 N/a; 1 Nat; 2 EU; 3 Both
- EngageF 1 Pol; 2 Econ; 3 Legal; 4 Other; 5 N/clear
- EngageQl *Note*
- DDemos 0 N/a; 1 Nat; 2 EU; 3 Both
- DDemosF 1 PM; 2 Pol/Ref; 3 Decent; 4 Other; 5 N/Clear
- DDemosX 1 St Gen; 2 Prov; 3 Mun; 4 Jud; 5 EU; 6 News; 7 Other; 8 N/Clear
- Leader 0 N/a; 1 Nat; 2 EU; 3 Both
- DecisivB 0 N/a; 1 Nat; 2 EU; 3 Both
- ClarityB 0 N/a; 1 Nat; 2 EU; 3 Both

3A. Exlusionism

- Exclus 0 N/a; 1 Nat; 2 EU; 3 Both
- ExclusF1 Imm; 2 Foreign Out; 3 Foreign In; 4 Religion; 5 Culture; 6 W Region; _____7 Ethnicity; 8 Other; 9 N/Clear
- ExclusQl *Note*

3B. Solution Exclusionism

- Rights 0 N/a; 1 Nat; 2 EU; 3 Both
- RightsF1 Eq Law; 2 Vote; 3 Petition; 4 Free Rel; 5 Free Sp; 6 Free Assoc; _____7 Free Assem; 8 Other; 9 N/Clear
- RightsQl *Note*

4. Politics (Other)

- Distance 0 N/a; 1 Nat; 2 EU; 3 Both
- NationA 0 N/a; 1 Nat; 2 EU; 3 Both
- NationB 0 N/a; 1 Nat; 2 EU; 3 Both
- NationF 1 Imm; 2 Foreign Out; 3 Foreign In; 4 Religion; 5 Culture; 6 W Region; _____7 Ethnicity; 8 EU; 9 Other; 10 N/Clear
- NationQl *Note*
- Crisis 0 N/a; 1 Nat; 2 EU; 3 Both
- CrisisF 1 Pol; 2 Econ; 3 Cultural; 4 Legal; 5 Anti-Med; 6 Other; 7 N/clear
- CrisisQl *Note*

156 Which was printed out and used as short-hand reference sheet.