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THE STATE OF THE RIGHT: THE NETHERLANDS

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SUMMARY

Its diversity is what most characterises the Dutch right: it spans Christian democrats (Christian Democratic Appeal, CDA) and liberals (People's Party for Freedom and Democracy, VVD), as well as populist parties, whose strength is quite unprecedented in Europe. Populist parties have increased their support significantly since the early 2000s. They have enjoyed real success, thanks in particular to Pim Fortuyn, whose provocative style boosted their popularity before his assassination in May 2002. The radical and populist right is now embodied by Geert Wilders's Party for Freedom (PVV). Founded in 2006, the PVV's orientation is more nationalistic and less liberal than that of the Pim Fortuyn List; it is vehement in its opposition to Islam and immigration. The Netherlands also has many smaller political movements, including agrarian, nationalist and far-right parties. All these parties have relays in the media, both in the press and on the internet, and their ideas are formalised and disseminated by a variety of think tanks and journals.

Despite this fragmentation, the Dutch right presents a united ideological front on many issues: with the exception of the Christian democrats, it is generally Eurosceptic and favours strengthening the nation, at a time when the country's openness to the world is perceived as a threat rather than an opportunity. Broadly speaking, the Dutch right supports strict policies on immigration and the presence of Islam in the Netherlands, reflecting the growing political influence of rightwing themes. In socio-economic terms, the right favours scaling back the state. But this convergence is not enough to hide the right's underlying fragmentation, and raises the question of its ability to overcome the tensions that plague the country.

THE STATE OF THE RIGHT: THE NETHERLANDS

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INTRODUCTION

Since October 2010, the Netherlands has been governed by a centre-right coalition comprising Christen-Democratisch Appèl (CDA, Christian Democratic Appeal) and the Volkspartij voor Vrijheid en Democratie (VVD, People's Party for Freedom and Democracy), representing the liberal right. The minority government counts on the support of Geert Wilders's populist Partij voor de Vrijheid (PVV, Party for Freedom). The situation is remarkable in two respects.

First, it is not dissimilar to the state of affairs that has prevailed in recent years in Denmark, where a centre-right coalition governs with the support of the Danish People's Party. A situation of this nature is truly unprecedented: no Dutch government had lacked a majority since 1945. During that period, minority governments only existed when a coalition was "deserted" by one of its partners, and the resultant body was known as a *rompkabinet* ("rump" government) or *overgangskabinet* (transitional government) rather than as a minority government.

The second remarkable feature of the current situation is that the VVD's victory in the June 2010 parliamentary elections was followed by the appointment of its leader, Mark Rutte, as prime minister. This was the first time since the end of the Second World War that the Netherlands had found itself with a prime minister who did not hail from the reli-

gious parties or the social democrats. But while it may be rare for the liberals to provide a head of government, the liberal movement has invariably played an important role in contemporary Dutch political history. The same goes for the Christian democrats.

For decades, the Netherlands has been governed from the centre, making it something of a constitutional monarchy of the centre. Broadly speaking, governments have been formed by stable coalitions of between two and four parties from the centre-right or the centre-left. Majorities have grown up around religious parties, with or without the social democrats, or around the social democrats, with the support of the liberal movement.

Coalitions and their life are central to Dutch parliamentary democracy. In the years following 1945, governments were dominated by the Katholieke Volkspartij (KVP, Catholic People's Party) and the Partij van de Arbeid (PvdA, Labour Party), comprising Labour and social democrats. The resultant governments were known as "red-Roman coalitions" (*rooms-rode coalities*). The 1958 parliamentary elections put an end to such coalitions. From 1959 to 1973, with a brief hiatus between 1965 and 1967, religious parties governed with the support of the liberals. Between 1977 and 1994, the Christian democrats (CDA), the party that emerged from the marriage between the Catholic party and two Protestant groups, were the dominant force. CDA was not exclusive, governing as readily with the liberals as with Labour.

In 1994, the liberal parties' overwhelming victory put a temporary end to religious hegemony. Until 2002, Wim Kok led two "purple coalitions" (*paarse coalitie* or simply *paars*), comprising liberal parties and Labour.

In 2002, after the rise of the new populist right, behind the Lijst Pim Fortuyn (LPF) banner, and the political crisis stemming from its leader's assassination on the eve of the parliamentary elections, the religious parties returned to the fore, holding power in Jan Peter Balkenende's four governments (2002-2010). CDA first formed a coalition with the populists and Pim Fortuyn's political successors. After the failure of this coalition, it managed to hold on to power with the support of social democrats and the liberals.

For decades, Dutch political life was characterised by a large measure of stability and consensus. Governing requires common ground to be found, and ideological, political and manifesto differences between left

and right to be overcome. Today, the notion of convergence and cooperation – the much-touted *poldermodel* (Polder model) that emphasises the ability of Dutch politics to achieve the consensus necessary to form coalitions – is giving way to what appears to be a new left-right divide. The outcome of the June 2010 parliamentary elections confirmed this trend: the vote resulted in a surge of the populist rightwing current and gave it a stronger position on the political scene. As such, the new coalition has given birth to a rightwing rather than a centre-right government. The moderate left, which has been in crisis since the demise of the “purple coalition” governments, finds itself unable to formulate credible alternative policies or programmes.

To date, only very few serious studies offering an overview of the political and ideological right in the Netherlands have been published. A good deal of general and journalistic writing, not to mention numerous academic monographs, has been devoted to particular parties or ideological trends, but very little analysis has been made of the right as a whole. The same goes for the emergence of the new radical right, which has caused such an upheaval in the Dutch political landscape in recent times.

This note covers the period spanning the post-war years to the present day, with specific emphasis on the last decade.

DEFINING THE RIGHT IN THE NETHERLANDS

There is no single term to describe the right in the Netherlands, where the notion actually encompasses a set of ideological and political positions that sometimes differ widely. These positions emerged with the birth of modern parliamentary democracy in the mid-19th century. Dutch parties generally classed on the right include supporters of currents as diverse as Christian democracy, liberalism and populism.

Depending on the circumstances and the times, there have been currents and undercurrents, some on the left, some on the right. Such currents sometimes coexist within one of the three main classic political groups in the Netherlands, namely the social democrats, the liberals and the Christian democrats, each of which has a right wing and a left

wing. A distinction is generally drawn within the liberal current between rightwing liberals (VVD) and the leftwing liberals of Democraten 66 (D66, Democrats 66).

Liberalism and religious politics dominate the right, both ideologically and politically. The Netherlands does not have a rightwing monarchist or Bonapartist tradition. The “providential” figure is for that reason largely absent from Dutch political life. Conservative, sovereigntist, (ultra-) nationalist, racist and xenophobic currents exist, but they are generally on the parliamentary and political sidelines.

Far from being a precise and unchanging term, the scope of the “right” has in fact shifted over the years. Without undertaking an essentialist analysis of the right for the entire period covering the 19th and 20th centuries, we must clarify the big change that took place after the Second World War. This is when the political meaning of the word “right” changed.

Until 1940, the left-right divide followed the split between religious and non-religious parties. This put the social democrats and the liberals on the left. The right was represented by Protestant and/or Catholic parties, bearing in mind that Catholics accounted for up to 40% of the population in the mid-20th century. Since the end of the 19th century, the religious parties had been central to the governing majority, the so-called “rightwing coalition”. The classic divide was first put forward by Abraham Kuyper, whose Anti-Revolutionaire Partij (ARP), the Netherlands’ first political party, founded in 1879, represented the anti-revolutionary and Protestant current. With few exceptions, government was dominated by the religious parties. The social democrats of the Sociaal Democratische Arbeiders Partij (SDAP), which accounted for roughly 20% of the electorate during the interwar period, had to wait until 1939 to enter government. Communism has always been marginal, ideologically, politically and culturally.

During the short post-war period, hope emerged that the Dutch political map would be redrawn. The idea was to reconcile former ideological antagonisms. The social democratic and liberal currents gave rise to new political parties aimed at attracting support beyond their classic electorate: Partij van de Arbeid (PvdA, Labour Party) and the VVD. The classic left-right divide was thought to be fading, with a split between conservatives and progressives taking its place. This explains the increasing prevalence of governments comprising both religious parties (right) and social democrats (left).

However, the famed stability of the Dutch parliamentary system was *trompe l'œil*. While it may not have experienced profound changes, the Dutch political system has experienced several upheavals. Some have involved the appearance of rightwing parties. This was the case in the 1930s, with the fascists of the Nationaal-Socialistische Beweging in Nederland (NSB). In the 1960s, the Boerenpartij (an agrarian party) won a handful of seats. In the 1980s, Centrum-Democraten (CD, Centre Democrats), a small far-right party, made its breakthrough. Last but by no means least, the new millennium has seen the emergence of new populist forces, the new radical right, represented by the Pim Fortuyn List (LPF), the Partij voor de Vrijheid (PVV, Party for Freedom) and Trots op Nederland (ToN, Proud of the Netherlands).

THE MAIN CURRENTS AND THEIR HISTORY

The liberal parties

Liberalism is a major ideological and political current in the Netherlands. In the mid-19th century, it dominated the political scene. As such, liberal Johan Rudolf Thorbecke was the artisan of the 1848 constitution, which ushered in modern liberal democracy as it exists in the Netherlands today. With the advent of religious and socialist currents in the second half of the 19th century, liberals were forced to structure themselves. Two trends emerged: conservative liberalism and social liberalism.

Liberal conservatives support a system where the state takes a hands-off approach to economic matters (classic *laissez-faire* economics) and only intervenes, in principle, in the areas of law and order, and defence. They advocate respect for tradition, monarchy and national sovereignty, and are generally reticent about reforming parliamentary democracy.

Social liberals want the state to promote and guarantee the rights and freedoms of citizens. In contrast with classic liberalism, they tend to advocate a system in which the state plays a vital role in the economy; as such, they support public intervention. Their ideas are a synthesis of social democratic and liberal policies. But unlike the socialists, they place the individual at the heart of politics. This current is also known as *vrijzinnig liberalisme*, which translates as progressive or leftwing liberalism.

In the second half of the 19th century, liberal conservatives supported the market economy and called for social order to be maintained, while the social liberals backed the introduction of social laws and the extension of voting rights, and sought to extend the liberal ideal to all segments of the population. They advocated an “active state for a fair society”. Faced with competition from the socialists on the one hand, and Protestants and Catholics on the other hand, the liberals began to structure themselves at this time.

In 1885, the conservative faction formed *Liberale Unie* (LU, Liberal Union); *Vrije Liberalen* (VL, Free Liberals) followed in 1894, and the *Liberale Partij* (LP, Liberal Party) in 1922. Leftwing liberals joined forces in the *Radical League* (after the Liberal Union split in 1892), before the emergence of the *Vrijzinnig Democratische Bond* (VDB, Democratic League) in 1901, the artisan of giving women the right to vote after the First World War.

In the second half of the 20th century, two new liberal parties appeared: VVD and D66. The differences between the two liberal currents intensified in the aftermath of the Second World War. First, the VDB merged with the *Sociaal Democratische Arbeiders Partij* (SDAP, Social Democratic Workers’ Party) and the small progressive *Christelijk Democratische-Unie* (CDU) to form a broadly based social democratic party, the *Partij van de Arbeid* (PvdA, Labour Party). Other liberals joined forces in another new party, the *Volkspartij voor Vrijheid en Democratie* (VVD, People’s Party for Freedom and Democracy). Between 1950 and 1970, the VVD managed to strike a balance between its left and right wings, but was unable to prevent the emergence of a new progressive liberal party, *Democraten 66* (D66 for short). In the 1970s and 80s, the conservative liberals increased their support within the VVD. But the battle between the two currents intensified in the years after 2001: on two occasions, rightwing MPs left the party. One such group followed Geert Wilders in 2004; another followed Rita Verdonk in 2007.

Recently, the VVD has enjoyed a revival under Mark Rutte, who led them to victory in the June 2010 parliamentary elections. Rutte’s manifesto was focused on immigration, law and order, restoring the economy and scaling back the welfare state. For the first time in post-war parliamentary history, a liberal party beat the two biggest classic centre parties, CDA (religious) and the PvdA (social democratic).

Democraten 66 was founded in 1966 (hence its name) by journalist Hans van Mierlo and Hans Gruijters, of the VVD. D66 distanced itself from its older liberal brother, and its support has varied widely throughout its history. It had 7 seats in the 1967 parliament and 24 in 1994; its score fell from 17 seats in 1981 to just 6 in 1982. A party of the liberal left (social liberals), its support peaked when it was part of two “purple coalitions” (1994-2002) with the VVD and the PvdA. But the rise of rightwing populism, Euroscepticism and criticism of multiculturalism virtually wiped out D66 in the 2006 parliamentary elections, when it took only three seats. However, under their new leader, Alexander Pechtold, and in their role as opposition to the populist current embodied by Geert Wilders, the social liberals increased their support in the June 2010 elections, winning ten seats.

The radical democratisation of society in general and the political system in particular are among the founding principles of D66. The party has long focused on the second objective, advocating the use of referendums, the abolition of the *Eerste Kamer* (Senate), the direct election of the prime minister and city mayors, and the introduction of a moderate system of districts. The party presents itself as a reasonable alternative. It also seeks to promote a better understanding of economic (*kenniseconomie*), environmental and social issues.

Its programme makes D66 the prolongation of the VDB of the early 20th century. Some of its members prefer to be known as liberal democrats. D66 is among the most strongly pro-European parties in the Netherlands. Like the VVD, it is a member of the Liberal International (an international federation of liberal and radical political parties) and the European Liberal Democrat and Reform Party (ELDR).

The VVD and D66 show the extent to which liberalism has been booming in the Netherlands in recent times. This trend is also reflected in the activity of think tanks and the emergence of new parties on the right (PVV and ToN) and the left. In 2006, Liberaal Democratische Partij (LibDem) was founded by Sammy van Tuyl van Serooskerken. The new party fielded candidates in the 2006 and 2010 parliamentary elections, but failed to win any seats. It is also noteworthy that Femke Halsema, the leader of GroenLinks (Green Left), began positioning her party as a social-liberal force in 2004.

The religious parties

Like liberalism, the religious current plays a preponderant role in Dutch politics. Today, it is embodied by Christen Democratisch Appèl (CDA, Christian Democratic Appeal), as well as by the so-called *Die klein rechts* (“the little right”), which is made up of a handful of Protestant parties, including CHU (Christian Historical Union) and SGP (a fundamentalist Protestant party).

CDA was formed in 1980 from the merger of three parties, namely the Anti-Revolutionaire Partij (ARP, Anti-Revolutionary Party, 1879), the KVP (Catholic People’s Party) and the CHU, a reformed Protestant party. The merger of Protestant and Catholic movements was part of a survival strategy for the Christian current after the 1960s, a period characterised by “depillarisation”¹ (*ontzuiling*) and the more pronounced secularisation of Dutch society. This was reflected in the gradual decline in the scores obtained by the CHU, the ARP and the KVP in parliamentary elections.

CDA managed to stabilise its electoral support and remain at the heart of political life. In the 1980s, it won as many as 54 seats (out of 150). Its central position between left and right gave it a place in all coalition governments, with the exception of two “purple coalitions” formed between the VVD, PvdA and D66 in 1994 and 2002. CDA can swing to the left as well as to the right, and its support was often critical in obtaining a parliamentary majority. As such, it provided several prime ministers, including Dries van Agt, Ruud Lubbers and Jan Peter Balkenende. For decades, CDA enjoyed stable electoral support among rural, Catholic (south and east of the country) and moderate Protestant voters.

Considered both Christian democratic and centrist, CDA is made up of Catholics as well as Protestants. In its programme, CDA states that Christian democratic values and the Bible are fundamental, man being the servant of God. The state must defend nature and society as a whole, and the fruits of creation belong to everyone equally. Justice, responsibility and solidarity are also among its values.

The Christian Democrats suffered a crushing defeat in 1994, but resurfaced in 2002, when Jan Peter Balkenende became prime minister. They took back the reins of power, only to lose heavily in the June

¹ End of pillarisation, a system that structures society on separate pillars, which organise themselves in accordance with their own rules but all comply with a few basic rules

2010 elections. Alongside the PvdA, CDA is considered one of the most experienced parties of government. During its history, it has felt a few conservative jolts. For instance, a CDA member, Dries van Agt, a former justice minister and prime minister, called in the 1970s for an “ethical reawakening” (*ethisch reveil*) and the refocusing of Dutch society on Christian values.

Alongside the Christian Democratic Party, there is also the (orthodox) Protestant current, embodied by two small parliamentary groups: SGP, founded in 1918, and ChristenUnie (CU). The latter was born of the 2004 merger between the Gereformeerd Politiek Verbond (GPV, 1948) and the Reformatorische Politieke Formatie (RPF, 1975). Together, SGP and CU tend to hold between five and eight seats in parliament. Their electorate is located in the Bible Belt, an area that crosses the country from southwest to northeast and is characterised by the density of its orthodox Protestant villages.

SGP is the most orthodox of these two small Protestant parties. While women may join, they may not run as candidates. UC advocates positions that are traditionally associated with rightwing ethics (opposition to euthanasia and gay marriage, support for authority and values) but is closer to the left on social and environmental issues. Its participation in the last government of Jan Peter Balkenende was a first.

The populist parties

The Dutch right has been thriving since the turn of the millennium. The most striking feature has been the appearance of the so-called “new radical right” (*nieuw rechts radicaal*). Its main components are the LPF (2002-2008) and Geert Wilders’s PVV (2006). There is also ToN (2007), the marginal party of former minister Rita Verdonk, and several smaller and more ephemeral parties: Eén NL (Marco Pastors, 2006), Lijst Vijf Fortuyn (Olaf Stuger, 2006) and Partij voor Nederland (Hilbrand Nawijn, 2006).

The first of these parties to achieve a breakthrough at the national level was Pim Fortuyn’s LPF. A sociologist and publicist, a dandy and populist liberal, Fortuyn first came to the fore in 2002, as leader of the new Leefbaar Nederland current (Liveable Netherlands). This party, which grew from local factions and emerged at the national level in

1999, supported the democratisation of political life and political participation, condemned bureaucracy and aimed to challenge asylum policy. After a dispute in early 2002, Fortuyn left the movement to found his own party. His striking language and provocative style led the LPF to victory in the 6 March 2002 local elections. In the following weeks, the LPF moved higher in the polls. But on the eve of the May 2002 parliamentary elections, Fortuyn was assassinated by an environmental activist. His party nevertheless won 26 seats (out of 150) and entered a coalition with the VVD and Jan Peter Balkenende's CDA.

During his career, Fortuyn was not a man for tangible and radical breaks with the past: his programme was based on the notion of gradual change. His political beliefs were summed up in three words: liberalism, populism and nationalism. Criticism of the welfare state was central to his liberalism, disdain for the political elite central to his populism and rejection of communalism and European integration to his nationalism. At the same time, Fortuyn was an advocate of libertarian ethical rights. In their name, he was violently opposed to Islamisation and immigration, and was prone to a sense of nostalgia with respect for the recent past (the 1950s rather than 1968). He saw himself as the adversary of a public sphere that he considered to be dominated by the media and the leftist intelligentsia.

The populist movement took on another dimension when Geert Wilders burst onto the political scene, founding the PVV in early 2006. In the June 2010 parliamentary elections, the PVV became the Netherlands' third-largest political force. It is difficult to characterise this current: far-right, fascist, nationalist, populist or neo-conservative. Wilders himself avoids all attempts to position his party. In the absence of scientific analysis, there is an abundance of terms.

The PVV is considered a rightwing movement because of its ethnic nationalism, which aligns it with Hans Janmaat and the ideas of Centrum-Democraten (CD) in the 1990s. The PVV advocates strong measures including a ban on building mosques or the introduction of a tax for wearers of Muslim headscarves (*kopvoddentaks*), but it refuses to withdraw the Dutch citizenship or civil rights of Dutch Muslims. As such, it does not support national preference, and its representatives do not expound racist views. The total absence of racial discrimination – one of the fundamental characteristics of the far right – in its programme effectively rules out classifying it with the far right. Politically

and culturally, Wilders is close to Israel, where he lived for more than two years, and to the United States.

The PVV is considered to be a nationalist party, but Geert Wilders prefers to cast himself as a “patriot”. Unlike the nationalists, he does not place the nation, established as a state, at the forefront of political and social values. While the PVV may represent a form of nationalism, its nationalism is liberal, and has nothing in common with the extremist and collective nationalism of fascism and National Socialism. Freedom (*Vrijheid*) is seen by Wilders in its negative – the individual must be free from the state – and sovereigntist – the Netherlands must be free from Europe – dimensions. It is not a very consistent reading of liberalism, since Wilders also advocates restricting freedom of expression and religion, which brings his party closer to the nationalist and populist current.

The PVV also shares some ideas with populist movements – the populist nationalist right (the Flemish Vlaams Belang), liberal populism (Leefbaar Nederland) and leftwing populism (SP). Wilders criticises the political and cultural elites, and multiculturalism, and sides with the middle and working classes, without stooping to use the collectivist and homogeneous concept of “people”, which he eschews in favour of the more liberal concept of “citizens”. The PVV also differs from classic populism in that the concept of direct democracy has only recently become a feature of its programme.

Wilders is above all a political strategist at the head of a motley rightwing movement. The development of his political thinking and ideology has seen three distinct phases: an initial conservative-liberal period, a second neo-conservative period, followed by today’s nationalist-populist period.

There is no doubt that the years he spent in Israel between 1980 and 1983 count among Wilders’s most critical formative experiences. As such, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the broader Middle East are very important for him, sometimes to the point of obsession. The period during which he worked in the Ziekenfondsraad (the central agency for health insurance organisations) and the Sociale Verzekeringsraad (the central agency for health insurance organisations), in the mid-1980s, fuelled his disdain for large bureaucratic structures and the misuse of social insurance benefits, primarily the WAO, the workers’ disability regime.

In 1990, Wilders entered politics, as a member of the VVD. He initially focused on social and economic issues. VVD leader Frits Bolkestein became his mentor. Wilders espoused Bolkestein’s neo-liberal economic

views, his realism in foreign policy and his social and cultural conservatism. He championed social security reform (especially with respect to WAO); well before 9/11, he warned against the danger of Islam to the West.

Subsequently, between 2002 and 2006, Wilders sought to highlight his rejection of terrorism and Islamic extremism, two new themes that are now central to political life. He shifted towards neo-conservatism, a fashionable political current in the United States and the Netherlands, where it was inspired by Bart Jan Spruyt of the Edmund Burke Foundation (Edmund Burke Stichting). He became particularly critical of progressivism, citing its hegemony over the political class and public opinion, and heaping particular scorn on the leftwing media.

His criticism of the *poldermodel* welfare state, which he describes as ossified, and Dutch communitarianism, is also very severe. Lastly, Wilders also attacks the growing influence of Islam, which he has made his flogging horse (*Feindmarkierung*). While Wilders still seems to be torn between conservative and neo-conservative liberalism, several factors suggest that neo-conservative themes and values now dominate his thinking. After 2001, he became a staunch defender of the War on Terror and backed US policy. With party colleague Ayaan Hirsi Ali, he backed the idea of democratising the Middle East, sparking a political and intellectual split with Bolkestein, a partisan of *realpolitik*. He combined this issue with his rhetoric on law and order, and individual freedom. Wilders also attacked Islamist terrorists, extremist imams and petty delinquents from Morocco.

His calls for strict and specific measures with respect to certain social groups (Dutch Islamists) mark a shift away from the VVD's traditional constitutional liberalism. His criticism of the liberal Dutch elite became more virulent. He has accused them of denying the danger of Islam for Dutch society and culture. And he clearly radicalised his rhetoric in the 2002-2005 period, joining forces with Ayaan Hirsi Ali to call for a "liberal jihad" in 2004. His expressive style is sometimes aggressive (in expressions such as "Stop the Islamist tsunami!"). But his innovative methods, such as the release of a video clip entitled *Fitna*, or "Discord", guarantees media attention.

On immigration and Islam, Wilders goes further than either Bolkestein or Fortuyn, witness his proposal to ban the Koran (which he compares to *Mein Kampf*) or to introduce a tax on the Muslim headscarf. Wilders, more than either the LPF or the VVD, is adamant that Muslim immi-

grants in the Netherlands should assimilate fully. On the latter point, he stands apart from Bolkestein: while Wilders's mentor was the first to say that Islamic and Western values were incompatible, as early as 1990, he was more conciliatory on the question of the assimilation of immigrants, and always pushed for dialogue. Unlike Pim Fortuyn, who was first and foremost a neo-liberal, Wilders sees economic policy as secondary to the fight against the so-called Islamisation of the West.

Today, Wilders's thinking and political activities are focused on the desire to preserve the Dutch identity and his rejection of the growing Islamisation of society (in reality, a broader rejection of immigration). In August 2004, he left the VVD, which he deemed too far left, creating the PVV in 2006. Some neo-conservative issues were dropped in favour of a more nationalist-populist stance characterised primarily by a rigorous defence of national values, an outright refusal of immigration and the refusal of any surrender of sovereignty to international bodies. Furthermore, Wilders's conception of politics sets the corrupt elite against the virtuous people. He advocates the reform of society, the return of authority (state, police and judiciary) and opposes economic globalisation and cultural diversity. Influenced by the theories of British historian Bat Ye'or, namely the ideas she developed in her book *Eurabia: the Euro-Arab Axis*, Wilders has converted to full-blooded Islamophobia. The "hard" assimilation he advocated a few years ago has become a total rejection of Muslims – although this does not mean that he spouts overtly racist themes. His anti-immigration convictions are aimed only at some origins. Wilders is married to a Hungarian woman – interethnic marriages are quite common in the PVV. He does however complain about the presence of people of Caribbean origins (Dutch Antilles), as well as immigrants from recent EU members, such as Poles, Romanians and Bulgarians. Wilders focuses his rhetoric on the Netherlands and national identity, and he campaigned against Europe in the 2005 referendum. Turning his back on his early 2000s stance, Wilders now demands an end to the Dutch military presence in Afghanistan. He claims to speak for the people – ordinary Dutch citizens who have been abandoned by the elite and are threatened by globalisation and Islamisation. In 2010, the PVV started advocating direct democracy and the introduction of referendums as a political tool.

The recent shift has been most conspicuous on economic and social issues. Wilders and the PVV have dropped the neo-liberal line – either out of principle or for expediency – and have veered sharply to the left. They

support social security in all its aspects, including the minimum wage, and oppose attempts to ease labour law or increase the retirement age.

It would be over simplistic to classify Wilders and the PVV as populist nationalists or neo-cons. While Wilders may have personal links in the United States and Israel – the two nations he regards as friendly – including with far-right figures like Avigdor Lieberman, founder of *Yisrael Beiteinu* (Israel Is Our Home), and Ariele Eldad (*Hatikva* party leader), the PVV paradoxically holds libertarian views on certain ethical issues. It has come out in favour of abortion rights, euthanasia and embryo selection. The PVV also supports the empowerment of women and homosexuals. On these themes, Wilders has voluntarily distanced himself from currents that would happily make PVV nothing more than an extremist, racist and xenophobic protest party.

Other trends and rightwing parties

Apart from the three major political movements that characterise the Dutch right, there is a multitude of ideological currents with little or no political clout or electoral support on the right. This relative absence does not however mean that they lack influence. In fact, the reality is quite the opposite.

The conservative current

There is no true conservative party in the Netherlands. Conservatism has never commanded strong support in bourgeois, commercial and urban Dutch society. It does, however, have a strong position in the currents that have defended Calvinist Christian principles since the 19th century (Abraham Kuyper, founder of the Anti-Revolutionaire Partij) and in anti-liberal currents: Dries van Agt (CDA member) is best known for his call for an “ethical reawakening” in the early 1970s. In recent years, the neo-conservative current has continued to exist, without having been able to find a permanent place in the political landscape.

The conservative movement is also reflected in social democratic thinking. Democratisch Socialisten-70 (DS’70, the social democrats), a centre-right labour party, was founded in 1970 by a PvdA faction. It opposed Labour’s left turn on economic and foreign policy (such as its support for Chile’s President Allende). By contrast, DS’70 supported the anti-Communist policies of the United States and NATO, advocating a strong defence and the end to the immigration of Surinamese natio-

nals. DS'70 enjoyed strong but fleeting success: it took eight seats in the 1971 parliamentary elections and entered the governing coalition, but declined rapidly and was dissolved in 1983.

The nationalist current

The nationalist parties that emerged in the 20th century include the Nationaal-Socialistische Beweging in Nederland (NSB, National Socialist Movement in the Netherlands). Anti-parliamentary and authoritarian, it was founded by Anton Mussert in 1931. The NSB was originally inspired by fascism and, to a lesser extent, National Socialism. The ideas contained in Mussert's manifesto were as follows: strong state, organisation of society and the economy in accordance with corporatist ideals; reduction of freedom of the press; leadership cult. While no racist or anti-Semitic actions figured in its founding manifesto, the NSB became more radical in the second half of the 1930s. In April 1935, it notched up a great success, winning nearly 8% of the vote in regional elections.

While the NSB found support in all social categories, the middle classes made up the majority of its electorate. Its supporters cover all political and cultural tendencies, including, in the early years, assimilated Jews. Its success at the 1935 regional elections was not repeated at the 1937 parliamentary elections, the established parties and the Church (Catholic and Protestant) having joined forces to thwart the new party. The NSB's decline followed its radicalisation. On the eve of the German invasion in 1940, the NSB transformed itself into a racist and anti-Semitic party. It subsequently collaborated with the occupying Nazis and was ultimately banned in 1945.

In the early post-war decades, the nationalist, authoritarian and xenophobic right found itself politically marginalised, with two exceptions: the agrarian party in the 1960s and the far right (Centrum-Democraten) in the 1980s.

The agrarian current

While the agricultural world is represented in the Netherlands and has great importance in the country's economic and financial life, there is no agrarian party. Historically, the agricultural sector has been represented by CDA, which has traditionally provided the minister for agriculture. However, the 1960s saw the emergence of a rightwing agrarian movement, the anti-establishment Boerenpartij. Founded in 1958, the Boerenpartij gained parliamentary representation in 1963, and conti-

nued to hold a few seats until 1981. Its most famous leader was Hendrik Koekoek. Between 1967 and 1971, it enjoyed a boom, with its seat tally rising to seven, although it nevertheless remained in opposition. After 1981, it went into decline. In 1981, it was renamed *Rechtse Volkspartij* (Rightwing People’s Party), but failed at the general election, caught between a xenophobic party on its right and centre-right governments on its left. It folded.

The *Boerenpartij* was conservative, liberal, monarchist and orthodox Protestant. It has often been classified with far-right parties. However, while it may have defended national values, and some of its members may have hailed from the NSB, the *Boerenpartij* was neither racist nor extremist.

Throughout its existence, the party opposed economic regulations imposed on the agricultural sector by the state and the nascent Common Market. More generally, it defended freedom – economic, political and spiritual – as well as Christianity (Protestantism). This programme, which was as vague as it was far-reaching, explains the party’s breakthrough in 1967, a period of confusion and turmoil in the country.

The far-right current

While the far-right movement remained on the sidelines for decades, a far-right party did in fact enter parliament in early 1980: the *Centrum Partij* (CP, Centre Party). CP member Hans Janmaat held a seat in Parliament during the 1982-1986 parliament. Openly racist and xenophobic, the party’s rallying cry was “*eigen volk eerste*” (“our people first”). On several occasions, its leaders were prosecuted and convicted for their language, but the party was not outlawed. And while the CP only ever had a smattering of representation in parliament and on municipal councils, and its ideas only ever appealed to a small minority, it was well known and strongly opposed by the anti-fascist splinter groups of the far left. Janmaat also held a seat in Parliament from 1989 to 1998. The CP still takes 9% of the vote in municipal elections, especially in the new dormitory town of Almere.

The original force behind the CP, *Nederlandse Volks-Unie* (NVU, Dutch People’s Union), founded in 1971, is a small group with neo-Nazi and anti-capitalist tendencies. Its programme includes the reintroduction of the death penalty, the outlawing of immigration and the construction of mosques, and the closure of Jewish and Muslim ritual abattoirs; the introduction of courses extolling the Dutch nation in

schools; support for SMEs in the face of multinational corporations; the banning of drugs; an increase in social-welfare benefits; and, last but not least, the Netherlands' withdrawal from NATO. In recent years, the CP has resurfaced and taken part in a few local elections, with little success. However, it draws attention to itself from time to time by means of demonstrations, often banned by city mayors or strictly regulated by the police, which attract the attention of far-left movements and the media.

THE DUTCH RIGHT AND THE CHALLENGES OF THE 21ST CENTURY

The European Union

Europe was largely absent from the spring 2010 election campaign. Since the “no” at the 2005 referendum on Europe, declarations of support for European integration and the enlargement of the European Union have evaporated, while criticism of Europe and its institutions has grown. For one of the EU's founding members, a country that hosts many international institutions, including the International Court of Justice in The Hague, the 2005 ballot was a real game changer.

The Dutch right's positions on Europe are not unanimous.

On the one hand, the new radical right, and the PVV in particular, is fiercely opposed to the European Union and all that Europe supposedly represents. The radical right sees Europe as a foreign power and community, dubbing it “*die club van Brussel*” (“the band of Brussels”). The EU stands accused of encouraging the Islamisation of the Old Continent and plotting to end the Netherlands' independence. It expresses the fear that the Netherlands' importance within the EU will increasingly erode. The PVV aims to close the labour market to Poles, Bulgarians and Romanians. It would be happy if Europe were limited to the former European Economic Community (EEC). It believes it is necessary to restore Dutch sovereignty in the face of Brussels, especially on agriculture. With respect to Europe and immigration, the new radical right is on the same wavelength as the far left, represented by the Socialistische Partij (SP, Socialist Party of Maoist origin), another sovereigntist force.

The moderate right and the centre-right do not share the new radical right's views of Europe, and their policies fit into the existing EU fra-

mework. The liberals hope to make the EU more efficient and modern, and aim to achieve better control of the EU budget. Among the major rightwing parties, the Christian democrats are the most pro-European. They aim to achieve joint management of asylum policy at European level. They also see the Common Agricultural Policy as crucial, a significant proportion of their electoral support coming from farmers. The Christian democrats also back the Lisbon agenda, and believe that placing the education and training of European citizens at the heart of the European Strategy for 2020 will improve the Netherlands' international position in the fields of knowledge and innovation. They also want to strengthen the EU's control over the financial markets, the single market and EU policy on renewable energy. In general, and unlike the radical right, the Christian democrats see no contradiction between national identity and international cooperation, especially within Europe.

Rightwing organisations in the Netherlands share the view that meetings of the European Parliament in Strasbourg should be done away with and that Turkey should not be allowed to enter the EU. On the latter question, however their views do actually differ marginally: the PVV categorically rules out accession for Turkey, with the slogan “*EU: Turkije er in, er uit Nederland*” (EU: Turkey in, Netherlands out), whereas CDA and the VVD would accept Turkey's entry if it fulfils the Copenhagen criteria.

Globalisation

Broadly speaking, large rightwing parties are currently focused chiefly on domestic issues, and openness to the world is seen as more of a danger than a challenge.

The right agrees that aid to developing countries should be cut, that border controls should be strengthened and that the recruitment of foreign nationals should be regulated in order to protect domestic workers. The right also backs the idea of tighter control over immigration policy. Its aim now is to attract highly skilled workers and deny entry to disadvantaged immigrants or those with insufficient training.

The positions and rhetoric of rightwing parties differ on other issues related to globalisation. The radical right is the most adamant in its vision of foreign policy and the global balance. In terms of security, it would put the accent on law and order at home at the expense of mili-

tary engagement abroad. It has also called for the end of the Dutch military involvement in international missions, including Afghanistan, and the intensification of the fight against violence and terrorism at home. The PVV demands that international treaties signed by the Netherlands be reassessed. The moderate right has different views. CDA theorists say that “the Netherlands is not an island”. The Christian democrats propose continued involvement in the international community, on the basis of solidarity, justice and shared responsibility. The Liberals and Christian Democrats favour Dutch presence in international missions.

To better enable the Netherlands to deal with globalisation, the right agrees that investment in education and the knowledge economy will need to be increased. It recommends upgrading the teaching profession and raising the level of vocational schools.

Islam

Islam has had an important place in political and public debate in recent years. As an issue, it has been pretty much sewed up by the PVV, but rightwing Liberals have borrowed some aspects of the same rhetoric.

The PVV sees Islam more as an ideology than a religion. Wilders wants to see an immediate halt to the entry of immigrants from Islamic countries, the termination of subsidies to Muslim media and aid for building mosques. He has called for a ban on Muslim headscarves in the civil service. He has stressed the need to outlaw the burqa, has no qualms about dismissing the Koran and denounces the practice of female circumcision. The PVV also advocates the requirement for immigrants to sign assimilation contracts, and the introduction of quotas for asylum seekers (1,000 per year).

The radical right often refers to the “communitarian nightmare” and proposes tighter entry conditions for immigrants and limits on their access to social security benefits. In order to do away with the “general amnesty”, it also proposes the systematic expulsion of illegal immigrants and an end to dual nationality.

Setting itself apart from the PVV, the VVD stresses the importance of liberal values, and says that society is for all its members, irrespective of skin colour, religion or origin. The party is consistent in this respect with its view that the individual – the citizen – should be at the heart of society. The liberals believe it is important to stimulate the integration of

immigrants through work. They would like to see integration courses, currently organised by the State, entrusted to private providers.

The Christian Democrats defend the concepts of sustainable society and shared interest, which requires the preservation of social cohesion. Unlike the PVV, CDA continues to emphasise the importance of cultural and religious pluralism. Their view is that all religious communities must adhere to the principle of equality before the law. However, the party proposes a reform of the integration process, as well as active cultural participation and the strengthening of the Dutch identity, witness its proposed National History Museum.

The welfare state

All parties agree to the need to cut spending, and to reduce the number of civil servants and government departments. While the liberals want to cut red tape, the Christian democrats have called for a “dynamic state” and the PVV a radical overhaul of Dutch institutions, namely the abolition of the Senate and the reduction to 100 (instead of 150) of the number of MPs in the House of Representatives. The radical right also proposes the election of the prime minister and the senior judiciary by universal suffrage, whereas the liberals think it would be sufficient to extend this provision to mayors.

On health and education, the radical right proposes truly leftwing policies. It believes that investment in healthcare and the social services should be stepped up. The PVV also wants to end all payments of social welfare benefits to non-Dutch recipients (family allowances, for instance). There is also debate on the retirement age: should it be kept at 65 or raised?

The right has a long list of reforms on its agenda. All rightwing parties want to do away with large bureaucratic agencies, to promote the organisation of health and social services closer to users, to end the market mechanism that was introduced in healthcare in the 1990s, to ban severance bonuses in this sector, to increase the number of caregivers and to reduce the number of managers. In education, the right advocates a return to smaller, upgraded schools, all points where its views converge with those of the left.

Law and order

In recent years, the Dutch right across the board has adopted strong rhetoric on law and order.

The rightwing parties agree that crime should be punished more severely and that more money should be spent to increase the financial and human resources of the police. In case of social security fraud, benefit payments should be stopped immediately.

The radical right and the liberals advocate following the American system on the right to strike, which translates as “three strikes, maximum penalty” (for the VVD), and “zero tolerance” and “three strikes and you’re out!” (for the PVV). Moreover, they support increasing the maximum penalty for criminals, and advocate reforming the police. Finally, rhetoric against foreign criminals or immigrants is becoming tougher. The PVV wants to “expel the scum from the Netherlands”. CDA agrees with the radical right on this issue.

Under the fight against terrorism, individual rights have been undermined, particularly in terms of spying and preliminary investigations. It has been proposed that preventive body searches be authorised throughout the country; to date, tests have only been allowed at the local level.

Lastly, it has been suggested that compulsory penal service for young troublemakers be introduced (CDA), that re-education camps be established (PVP) and that procedures for immediate trial be developed.

MEDIA AND NETWORKS

Most rightwing parties have a political consultancy or research institute, and publish research journals. The VVD has the Telders Foundation (Teldersstichting) and the journal *Liberaal reveil*. The leftwing liberals have a scientific bureau, Stichting Kenniscentrum D66, and publish a journal known as *Idee*. CDA has set up the Wetenschappelijk Instituut voor het CDA and the journal *Christen-Democratische Verkenningen*. The CU works with the Mr. G. Groen van Prinsterer Foundation and publishes *Denkwijzer*, while SGP works with the Guido de Bres Foundation and publishes *Zicht*. The PVV is not at this time attached to any research institution or political journal.

Rightwing ideas are also expressed through a network of media, websites and think tanks. The rightwing media include newspapers such as *De Telegraaf*, the country’s largest national daily (populist right), and

Algemeen Dagblad (popular right), which has a national edition and an extensive network of regional editions. There are also the free newspapers, including *Spits* (distributed by *De Telegraaf*) and *Metro*, whose editorial style and journalistic ethics fit in with the populist movement. The same goes for some opinion-based newspapers, led by the flagship weekly *Elsevier*, centred on economic and political life. Pim Fortuyn for many years wrote a weekly column there, and neo-con Bart Jan Spruyt now also has a column. *HP/De Tijd*, originally a centre-left publication, swung to the left ten years ago.

Parallel to the conventional press, numerous websites and web communities have emerged. They include websites such as www.hetvrijevolk.com and www.hetvrijewoord.org (which is also a foundation). The latter site was created by young people, and draws on the ideas of Pim Fortuyn. Its president, Alexander van Hattem (1983), is involved in politics and represents the LPF at local level. It is difficult to measure the impact of these new media and platforms on public opinion.

Neo-conservatism has made great strides in the Netherlands since 2000. The Edmund Burke Stichting (Foundation Edmund Burke), a think tank, plays an important role. It was created by philosophers and political scientists Andreas Kinneging, Joshua Livestro and Bart Jan Spruyt. Originally close to the rightwing VVD, they now wish to differentiate themselves. Their aim is to provide the public sphere with a forum for thought and debate on conservatism, and to contribute to the emergence of a new conservative elite. The values they defend include the principle of law and order, namely that the role of the state should be rolled back to its basic functions (defence, security, maintenance of public order) and that the welfare state should be profoundly reformed. Other neo-conservative proposals include curtailing immigration and keeping a critical attitude vis-à-vis the European Union. Some founding members have expressed their support for Geert Wilders. The Foundation opened an office in The Hague in 2002, but had to close it in 2006 due to a lack of financial support. The Foundation nevertheless continues its activities, through debates, conferences and publications.

CONCLUSION

The Dutch right has enjoyed growing support since the start of the new millennium. It currently appears that, in its various components, it is offering better responses to the challenges of globalisation, mass immigration, European integration and the fight against terrorism.

The most spectacular feature of this development has been the surge in support for the new radical right, whose ideology combines populism, nationalism and neo-conservatism. The new right goes against the openness to the world that characterised Dutch politics for so long. Today's society is increasingly focused on itself. A second point to note is that rightwing populism has fostered a new "pillarisation", more socio-cultural than socioeconomic.

The emergence of new political groupings (LPF, PVV, ToN) and the decline of the traditional centre parties (Christian democrats and social democrats) show how Dutch politics is going through a phase of fragmentation. It remains to be seen whether the new rightwing coalition, comprising the rightwing liberal VVD and the Christian democrats of CDA (with the support of PVV), will hasten the collapse of the centre and whether, after several years of upheaval (from Pim Fortuyn to Geert Wilders, not forgetting Ayaan Hirsi Ali), the right will achieve political stability.

ABBREVIATIONS

CDA : Christen-Democratisch Appèl (Christian Democrat Appeal)

PvdA : Partij van de Arbeid (Labour Party; Labour, social democrat)

SP : Socialistische Partij (Socialist Party)

VVD : Volkspartij voor Vrijheid en Democratie (People's Party for Freedom and Democracy)

PVV : Partij voor de Vrijheid (Party for Liberty)

GL : GroenLinks (Green Left)

CU : ChristenUnie (Christian Union)

D66 : Democraten 66 (Démocrats 66)

SGP : Staatkundig Gereformeerde Partij (Calvinist Party)

PvdD : Partij voor de Dieren (Party for the Animals)

LPF : Lijst Pim Fortuyn (Pim Fortuyn List)

ToN : Trots op Nederland (Proud of the Netherlands)

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