

Ethnic outbidding and the emergence of DENK in the Netherlands

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1.0 Introduction

Irene Bloemraad (2013) has demonstrated that the Netherlands has the highest representation of minorities of the countries with a history of immigration (pp. 659-660). She argues that the discrepancy in immigrant representation between the Netherlands and other European countries is because the Netherlands has ‘proportional representation using a list system’, in which the whole country functions ‘as the single ‘district’, which are all features that might facilitate minority representation’ (Bloemraad, 2013, p. 659; Htun, 2004). Earlier research has also shown that minorities have a certain advantage in the Dutch electoral system as several political parties require or strive for a percentage of ethnic minorities on their candidate lists and have intra-party minority networks that ‘explicitly aim to influence candidate recruitment and selection’ (van der Zwan and Lubbers, 2016; Mügge, 2016, p. 521). Of these minority groups in the Netherlands it appears that especially immigrants of Turkish and Moroccan descent are well represented within several of the political parties (Bloemraad and Schönwälder, 2013; van der Zwan and Lubbers, 2016; Michon and Vermeulen, 2013). Immigrants of Turkish descent have an almost equal descriptive representation in the Dutch parliament (de Tweede Kamer). Descriptive representation means that there is an equal share of an ethnic minority group in a political institution as compared to society (van der Zwan and Lubbers, 2016). Turkish immigrants make up for 2,3 per cent of the Dutch population and 2 per cent of Turkish immigrants hold an elected seat in parliament (CBS, 2018). In light of this it is therefore curious that in 2015, despite their relatively high level of representation, Turkish immigrants have formed the political party DENK in the Netherlands. DENK is a party with several radical positions on integration and is increasingly seen as a pro-Erdogan party. The party was quite successful in its first election in 2017, winning 3 seats in the Dutch parliament. It raises the question why the Turkish minority in the

Netherlands, who were already to a large extent politically represented, felt the need to create their own, quite radical, political party?

One of the possible explanations for the emergence and radical positions of DENK is the radicalization of Turkey in the last few years. There are some Dutch politicians who have suggested that one of the founders of DENK, Tunahan Kuzu, functions merely as an extension of Erdogan's influence in the Netherlands. Kuzu has been open about his support for Erdogan and has refused to distance himself from any of the more radical comments Erdogan made over the years. If Erdogan had any role in the emergence of DENK it would be hard to prove. Moreover, this would raise the question that if Erdogan is able to stretch his influence into Europe why has Germany no Turkish parties on a national or regional level? Germany has 2,774,000 Turkish immigrants, they make up for 3,2 per cent of the German population compared to the almost 400,000 Turks in the Netherlands, which make up 2,3 per cent of the population (NBCnews, 2018; CBS, 2016). Furthermore, Erdogan's influence would only partially explain the electoral success of DENK. Erdogan is not as overwhelmingly popular among Turks in the Netherlands as many believe him to be. A poll by Kantar Public in 2016 found that 29 per cent of Dutch Turks stated that they supported Erdogan's policy, while 52 per cent stated they had little to no sympathy for Erdogan's politics (Kantar public, 2016). Another seemingly logical explanation for the emergence and electoral success of DENK could be the general demise of the Labour Party (PvdA). The PvdA used to have the support of most of the immigrants in the Netherlands (NOS, 2014). During the last national election, the party went from 38 seats in parliament to only 9. However, the PvdA has been losing voters for over two decades now. Some blame Wim Kok for the long-term demise of the party when he turned to a 'Third Way philosophy', a combination of a more liberal and social ideology (NRC, 2018). Others believe that the demise of the

PvdA was part of an international trend in which social-democratic parties lost influence in the whole of Western-Europe (NRC, 2018). Either way, if the demise of the PvdA already started in the early 90's then why did voters of Turkish and Moroccan descent only switch their vote en masse in 2017? Over the years, there were other parties that offered a socialistic ideology like the Green Party (Groenlinks). In fact, some immigrants left the PvdA already in 2010 and 2012 for D66 and Groenlinks (Parool, 2016). This might indicate that the general demise of the PvdA that had carried most of the immigrant vote created a gap for a party that could specifically defend the interest of immigrants in the Netherlands. The general demise of the PvdA may partially explain why DENK has emerged but it does not explain why DENK takes up such radical positions.

1.1 Who defends Muslim immigrants against the PVV?

The emergence of DENK and its radical positions can be explained by the theory of ethnic outbidding. The theory argues that 'democratic competition involving ethnic parties inevitably leads to ethnic outbidding where parties adopt even more extreme positions' (Zuber, 2015, p. 784). This thesis will attempt to demonstrate that the Party for Freedom (PVV) and DENK can be considered as ethnic parties, participating in a process of ethnic outbidding in the Netherlands. I will argue that the process of ethnic outbidding that led to the emergence of DENK started with the radicalization of the integration debate and the influences of Islam. The PVV has made Islam and the issue of integration central to its mobilizing strategy. Yet, the PVV was not first the party to be outspoken about the negative influences of Islam and to criticize the integration policy in the Netherlands. Pim Fortuyn was the first politician to publicly criticize the Islam, famously calling it a 'backward culture' in 2002 (Volkskrant, 2002). Though Fortuyn was killed 9 days before the national election in 2002, his party Lijst Pim Fortuyn received 17% of the votes (Parlement, 2002). It appeared that Fortuyn had demonstrated

that the issue of integration and the influences of Islam were part of a larger dissatisfaction among the Dutch. Wilders, following the footsteps of Fortuyn, continued to criticize the influences of Islam and the integration policy with a radical strategy from his own party the PVV. As a result, anti-immigrant sentiments, especially focussed on Muslim immigrants, reached new heights as it was invigorated by the PVV's extreme positions. This thesis will demonstrate that the emergence of DENK was a reaction to the PVV's radical stance in the political debate on integration and Islam. The PVV's popularity forced other parties to adopt the issues of integration and radicalization into their party platforms in order to prevent a loss of votes to the PVV, resembling a process of ethnic outbidding. A political gap was created when not a single party championed the specific interests of Muslim immigrants. In 2015, DENK emerged as a multi-ethnic party appealing to Muslim immigrants to defend their interests. DENK would then start its own process of ethnic outbidding by adopting radical positions to outbid parties like the PvdA, D66 and Groenlinks for their Muslim votes.

1.2 Research design

The first chapter will discuss the theory of ethnic outbidding. It will first explain the ethnic outbidding thesis as well as the current debate in the literature around the theory. It will then shortly demonstrate how the theory of ethnic outbidding can be applied to politics in the Netherlands.

The second chapter will attempt to demonstrate that the PVV can be considered an ethnic party that made an ethnic bid in the Netherlands. The PVV appealed to voters with an ethnic nationalist ideology that gave the debate on integration an ethnic dimension of competition. I will then demonstrate with a content analysis of the election programs of the PVV for the national elections between 2006 and 2017 that the election programs of the PVV have become more extreme, making the most radical 'ethnic bid' in 2017. Fur-

thermore, a content analyses of the party platforms of political parties in the Netherlands for the national elections between 2002 and 2017 will demonstrate that some parties have increasingly incorporated the issues of integration, radicalization and Islam in their election programs. It demonstrates a process of ethnic outbidding between the PVV and several other parties.

The third chapter will show through process tracing that the emergence of DENK was an indirect response to the radical positions on integration and Islam of the PVV. An analysis of some of the more controversial moves of DENK during its campaign show that the party has seen a radicalization of an all-inclusive immigrant to a pro-Erdogan party. The chapter will attempt to demonstrate that DENK is a multi-ethnic party that radicalized in order to pull Muslim immigrants away from other parties. Although the party is only 3 years old one can argue that it would be too premature to conclude whether they have forced parties towards more extreme positions as they have participated in only one national election. A content analysis of the election programs of parties with at least one elected seat in parliament from the 2012 and 2017 election years show that the outlines of the process of ethnic outbidding between DENK and other parties is already visible.

2.0 The Theory of Ethnic Outbidding

The theory of ethnic outbidding has been used both to explain extremism in ethnically divided societies and to measure its effect on democracy (Zuber and Szöcsnik, 2015, p. 784). The theory explains that ethnic parties will appeal almost exclusively to voters from within their ethnic bloc, or will aspire to, rather than to appeal to all voters. Once one ethnic group politicizes its needs and preferences other ethnic groups will feel the need to do the same. Ethnic parties within each ethnic bloc will then compete for the majority of that ethnic vote. The reason for the radical strategies by ethnic parties is that parties will seek to maximize their votes by adopting more extreme positions than their ethnic competitors (Horowitz, 1985, Part 3). As a consequence, the emergence of even a single ethnic party ‘infects’ the rest of the party system, leading to a spiral of extreme ethnic bids that destroy competitive politics altogether (Chandra, 2011, p. 235).

2.1 Radicalization as a strategic choice

A discussion on ethnic outbidding has developed in the literature that debates the inevitability of extremism in ethnic party systems. On one side of the debate are Alvin Rabushka and Kenneth Shepsle (1972) who argue that ‘moderation on the ethnic issue is a viable strategy only if ethnicity is not salient’ (p. 86). They argue that once an ethnic party system, a system primarily made up of ethnic parties, is fully mobilized the ethnic outbidding thesis predicts a contagion of extremist politics (Mitchell et al, 2009, p. 397). On the other side of the debate is the argument that ethnic outbidding is only an option but not a necessity (Mitchell et al, 2009). Kanchan Chandra (2005) demonstrates that ethnic identities can be fluid and multidimensional. Ethnic parties can not only appeal to voters based on one ethnic category but also on a set of categories (Chandra, 2005, p. 236). Rather than outbidding their opponents, ethnic parties appeal

to an alternative ethnic identity category. Christina Zuber (2011) is the first to apply the theory of ethnic outbidding to political systems that are not ethnically dominated. Zuber demonstrates that political parties in imperfect ethnically segmented markets are more inclined to choose a moderate stance when they have ‘office goals and see themselves as competing with both ethnic and non-ethnic parties’ (Zuber, 2011). Chandra and Zuber both explain ethnic outbidding as a process that starts with a strategic choice to adopt a more radical strategy (Zuber, 2012, p. 927). Yet, if ethnic parties will see a more radical strategy as the only way to maximize their votes, it can lead to a process of ethnic outbidding. Politics in the Netherlands appear to mirror such a process of ethnic outbidding. It seems that the PVV has made the strategic choice to adopt a radical strategy in order to maximize its share of votes. The ‘key characteristic of all cases that fall under the theory is that at least some parties appeal exclusively to an ethnic identity category and position themselves on an ethnic dimension of competition’ (Zuber, 2012, p. 940). This means that parties that are in the process of ethnic outbidding will give specific issues an ethnic dimension of competition with which they will try to outbid other parties for votes. Ethnic outbidding starts with one ethnic party making the first ‘ethnic bid’ by appealing exclusively to an ethnic identity category, which can then only be defeated by more extreme bids. The PVV has given the issues of integration and Islam ‘an ethnic dimension of competition’ by appealing exclusively to the ethnic identity category of ethnic nationalists. The following chapter will attempt to demonstrate how the PVV appeals to ethnic nationalists, making an ethnic bid in the Netherlands.

3.0 Ethnic Politics in the Netherlands

The previous chapter explained that the theory of ethnic outbidding predicts that once one ethnic group politicizes its needs and preferences and makes the first ethnic bid this will lead to the emergence of other ethnic parties. This chapter will first demonstrate that Geert Wilders of the Freedom Party (PVV) has made an ethnic bid in the Netherlands. Furthermore, according to the theory of ethnic outbidding, ethnic parties tend to demonstrate a trend towards more extreme positions. A content analysis of the election programs of the PVV for each national election since 2006 will establish a trend towards more extreme positions. Finally, a content analysis of the election programs of political parties demonstrate that through a process of ethnic outbidding the PVV has forced other parties to spend more time on the issues of integration, radicalization and Islam in their election programs.

3.1 Ethnic nationalism

The issues of mass immigration, Islamic terrorist attacks and integration have dominated the media since the 9/11 terrorist attack. Many countries in Europe have seen the emergence of far-right parties like Geert Wilders with the PVV in the Netherlands but also Jean-Marie Le Pen in France or the Alternative for Germany (AfD) who have made the issues of immigration and integration and the Islam central to their mobilizing strategy (BBC, 2018). These parties have often been described as populist parties that have a national focus in their appeal. It is true that there is a strong nationalistic appeal in all of the PVV's election programs that is demonstrated by his rejection of everyone who is not 'really' Dutch. Using words like 'our' Netherlands and 'our' culture show a strong appeal to nationalistic feelings (Election program PVV, 2006, Election program PVV, 2012, Election program PVV, 2017). Many of the right-wing populist parties in Europe,

like the PVV, share the core concept of a nationalistic appeal (Harvard Gazette, 2016). Nationalism can be ethnocentric in its focus and ‘ethnic-driven nationalism is often about a shared ancestry, religion, language and a common dissent’ (Harvard Gazette, 2016). Ethnic nationalism is an ideology that wants to ‘exclude various ethnic, religious and racial out-groups’ (Harvard Gazette, 2016). Ethnic nationalists conceive the nation as ‘a community of culture and history, with a bond of solidarity that resembles the familial bond’ and they try to politicize the concept of a ‘national culture’ while purifying ‘the community of ‘alien’ elements’ by which they feel threatened (Smith, 1994). According to Anthony Smith (1994), ethnic nationalism has ‘helped to create the climate of fear, suspicion and resentment that make it so much easier to erect barriers to entry into more fortunate, wealthier states; and these in turn influence popular reactions to economic migrants and Gastarbeiter who make up so many of the numbers of non-nationals in the states of Western and Central Europe’ (p. 187).

The ideology of ethnic nationalism seems to be the basis of the PVV’s campaigns and election programs. On the one hand, Wilders continuously uses a nationalist narrative by, for example, using the word ‘our’ to describe the Dutch culture in order to create a bond of solidarity and to politicize the concept of a national culture. On the other hand, Wilders has mobilized his campaign around the ‘de-Islamification’ of the Netherlands (Election program PVV, 2017). Wilders has portrayed Islam as a threat to the Dutch culture and security. The controversial short film *Fitna* that Wilders released in 2008 demonstrates how he labelled the Islam a threat. It starts with an image depicting Mohammed who is wearing a turban and a bomb. The first ten minutes the film shows quotes of the Koran combined with very graphic images of terrorist attacks that involved extreme Muslims all over the world. The last 6 minutes paint a picture of the influence of Islam on the Dutch culture by showing film-fragments and newspaper articles. *Fitna* made a clear difference between the ‘bad guys’, Muslims, and the ‘good guys’, the Dutch. It

functioned as a warning to what would or could happen to the Netherlands when immigrants from Islamic countries would continue to cross the border and when the influence of Islam would not be controlled (Volkskrant, 2008). Fitna has named the specific ethnic identity category of Muslim immigrants a threat to the Dutch culture. This has excluded an ethnic category of both being Muslim and immigrant from the appeal of the PVV. Ethnic nationalism also seeks to ‘purge the culture of its impure or foreign elements and thus render it whole again’ (Benhabib, 1950, p. 88). One example of Wilders’ attempt to ‘purge’ the Dutch culture of foreign elements was his headscarf-tax. In 2009, during the yearly debate on the budget for the following year, Wilders proposes a so-called ‘headscarf-tax’, which received no votes from the other parties. The tax would obligate women to apply for a permit to wear a headscarf that would cost 1000 euros a year. According to Wilders his intention was not to prohibit the use of headscarves but merely discouraging the use of one (Trouw, 2009). Other purifying attempts are Wilders’ proposals to ban the Koran, immediately destroy all Islamic schools and mosques and banning all Islamic actions or expressions that would ‘endanger’ the public order (Election Program PVV, 2017). Wilders has even named his purging ‘de-Islamification’ of the Netherlands. By first painting the Islam as a threat to the Dutch culture Wilders then offers a solution to this threat which is to ‘purge the Dutch culture of its impure foreign elements’, demonstrating its ideology of ethnic nationalism.

Kachan Chandra (2005) has defined ethnic parties as parties that ‘appeal to voters as the champion of the interests of one ethnic category or set of categories to the exclusion of others and makes such an appeal central to its mobilizing strategy. The key aspect of this definition is exclusion’ (p. 236). Appealing to the interests of ethnic nationalists by the branding of Muslim immigrants as dangerous to society is central to the PVV’s mobilizing strategy, it completely excludes Muslim immigrants from its appeal. By explicitly identifying the category that he is opposing Wilders simultaneously makes an explicit

and exclusive appeal to everyone who is not Muslim or immigrant. By appealing to ethnic nationalists to champion their interests and excluding Muslim immigrations from its appeal Wilders has made an ethnic bid in the Netherlands.

3.2 The PVV's move towards extremism

The ethnic outbidding theory predicts a contagion of extremist politics in which ethnic parties will develop more and more extreme positions. The next section will demonstrate the radical positions of the PVV on the issues of integration and the influences of Islam on society. A content analyses of the PVV's election programs for every national election between 2002 and 2017 shows how they have integrated more extreme positions over the years.

The PVV was founded in 2005 by Geert Wilders, who had left his former party the Liberal Party (the VVD) after a disagreement about whether Turkey should enter the European Union. Wilders, who had achieved a seat in parliament for the VVD, kept his seat and founded a so called 'one-man party' that was called Groep Wilders in which no other members were allowed. In 2006, Groep Wilders officially changed its name to the PVV (The Freedom Party) and competed in its first national election where he won 9 seats in parliament. Following in the footsteps of Fortuyn, Wilders was outspoken against Muslims and Islam. The PVV's first election program in 2006 seemed to revolve around the negative influence of the Islam and immigrants (especially from Islamic countries) on the Dutch culture. The 2006 election program focussed on three points: lower taxes, better schools and a tough approach to immigration and integration (Election program PVV, 2006). The section on immigration and integration was the most extensive and advocated some radical reforms. First, it argued to change the First Article of the constitution to include that the Jewish-Christian humanist culture would be considered as the dominant culture in the Netherlands. Second, it argued that an

anti-discrimination clause in the Constitution has reduced the freedom of speech that is necessary to make a just distinction between certain problems in society: ‘unequal cases should not be treated as equal’, referring to problems that are caused by Muslim immigrants (Election-program PVV, 2006). The program ascribes these ‘problems’ to Muslim immigrants, both moderate as well as radical Muslims, who might use violent measures to fight the unreligious. One other radical proposition that stood out was to send immigrants, specifically mentioning Moroccan immigrants, to a re-education camp for minor offenses like spitting, name calling or the breaking of windows (Election program PVV, 2006).

The election program for the 2010 national elections was a lot broader than the previous one and included a range of new issues among which were health care, environment and culture. The election program did not specifically state that any of the issues named had any priority, unlike the 2006 program had done. Yet, a content analyses shows that ‘Islam’ was mentioned over 40 times throughout the program. Out of the 13 issues discussed only 4, ‘safety’, ‘entrepreneurs’, ‘more roads’ and ‘animals, farms and fishermen’, did not mention the words ‘Islam’, ‘immigrant’ or ‘ethnicity’ (Election program PVV, 2010). On June 9th the PVV won 24 seats in parliament and became the third largest party in the Netherlands, behind the VVD and the PvdA (Parlement 2010). That same year the PVV also participated in the elections for the European Parliament (EP). Wilders won 4 seats but was not able to occupy seats in both the Dutch parliament and the EP because of the dual mandate rule (the office of the EP is incompatible with that of member of a national parliament) (Parool, 2014; European Parliament, 1989). As a one-man party Wilders had no one to represent him in the EP. So far, Wilders’ attempts to be allowed a double mandate has been rejected by the European Court. Since Wilders’ first election for the European Parliament, an anti-EU rhetoric dominated his next campaign in 2012, almost as much as the issues of Islam and the Dutch integration

policy. In fact, when the cabinet fell two years before the next election in 2012, Wilders' new election program was called 'Their Brussels, Our Netherlands' (Election program PVV, 2012). As a result, the anti-Islam or anti-immigrant rhetoric was not as central to the political platform of the PVV in 2012 as it had been in 2006 and 2010.



PVV, 2012, *Hún Brussel, óns Nederland*, campaign title, viewed January 2019, <<https://www.pvv.nl/images/stories/verkiezingen2012/VerkiezingsProgramma-PVV-2012-final-web.pdf>>.

The title of the election program, 'Their Brussels, Our Netherlands', showed that the party had adopted another issue to organize its campaign around. Yet, this did not mean that any mention of the Islam had disappeared. The introduction to the 2012 program argued that the number of immigrants had grown, stating that in practice that would mean: 'more Islam, more headscarves, higher crime-rate, higher dependence on welfare and ideas from the Middle Ages' in the Netherlands (Election program PVV, 2012). The sections on 'foreign', 'immigration' and 'safety' of the program introduced radical proposals. It slammed down on Muslims integrating into Dutch society by proposing to close all Islamic schools, ban headscarves, forbid to build any new mosques and ban the Koran (Election program PVV, 2012).

The election program for the national election in 2017 was precisely one page long and was named 'make the Netherlands ours again' specifying only 11 points on how to achieve that goal (Election program PVV, 2017). The first sentence stated that millions



NEDERLAND WEER VAN ONS!

Miljoenen Nederlanders hebben schoon genoeg van de islamisering van ons land.
Genoeg van de massa-immigratie en asiel, terreur, geweld en onveiligheid.

Hier is ons plan: in plaats van het financieren van de hele wereld en mensen die we hier niet willen, geven we het geld uit aan de gewone Nederlander.

Zo gaat de PVV dat doen:

1. Nederland de-islamiseren

- Nul asielzoekers erbij en geen immigranten meer uit islamitische landen: grenzen dicht
- Intrekken alle al verleende verblijfsvergunningen asiel voor bepaalde tijd, AZC's dicht
- Islamitische hoofddoekjes niet in publieke functies
- Verbod op overige islamitische uitingen die in strijd zijn met de openbare orde
- Preventief opsluiten radicale moslims
- Criminelen met een dubbele nationaliteit denaturaliseren en uitzetten
- Syriëgangers niet meer terug laten keren naar Nederland
- Alle moskeeën en islamitische scholen dicht, verbod koran

2. Nederland weer onafhankelijk. Dus uit de EU

3. Directe democratie: invoeren van het bindend referendum, burgers krijgen macht

4. Eigen risico zorg geheel afschaffen

5. Huren omlaag

6. AOW-leeftijd op 65 jaar, aanvullende pensioenen wél indexeren

7. Geen geld meer naar ontwikkelingshulp, windmolens, kunst, innovatie, omroep enz.

8. Terugdraaien bezuinigingen thuiszorg, ouderenzorg, méér handen aan het bed

9. Fors extra geld voor defensie en politie

10. Lagere inkomstenbelasting

11. Halvering motorrijtuigenbelasting

Financiële paragraaf per maatregel en totaal:

- | | |
|-----|------------|
| 1. | + 7.2 mrd |
| 2. | PM |
| 3. | PM |
| 4. | - 3.7 mrd |
| 5. | - 1.0 mrd |
| 6. | - 3.5 mrd |
| 7. | + 10.0 mrd |
| 8. | - 2.0 mrd |
| 9. | - 2.0 mrd |
| 10. | - 3.0 mrd |
| 11. | - 2.0 mrd |

Totaal: 0

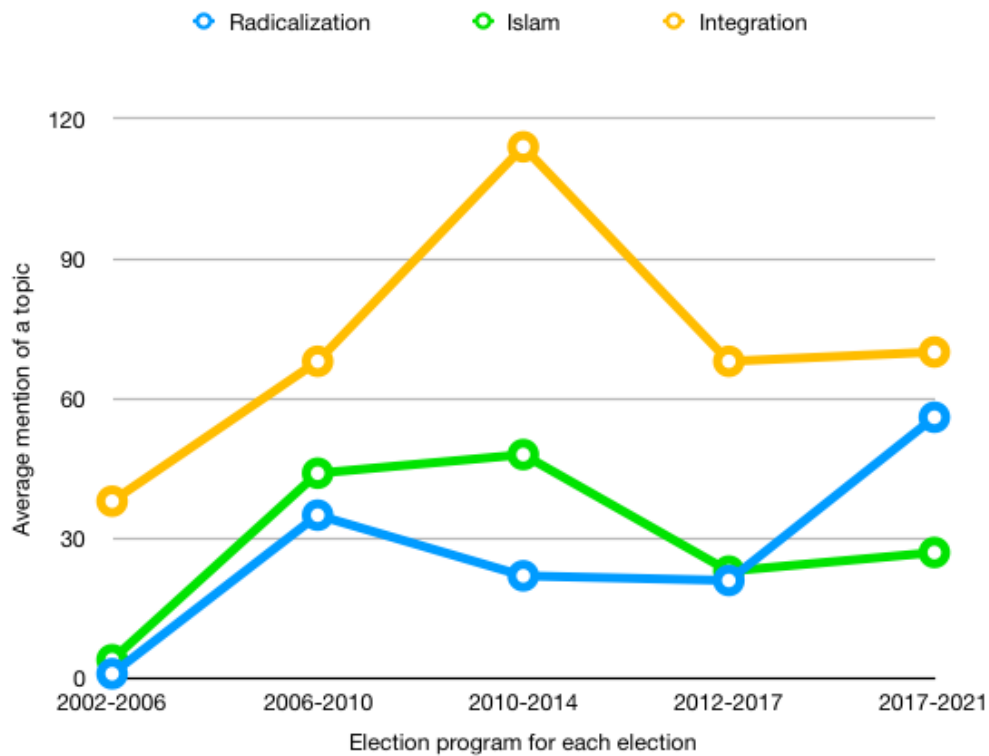
Reageer via email op: nederlandweervanons@pvv.nl

PVV, 2017, *election program*, accessed January 2019, < <https://pvv.nl/images/Conceptverkiezingsprogramma.pdf> <https://pvv.nl/images/Conceptverkiezingsprogramma.pdf> >.

3.3 The effects of ethnic outbidding on competing parties

The PVV has made an ethnic ‘bid’ in the Netherlands by appealing to ethnic nationalists, giving the issues of integration and Islam an ethnic dimension of competition. The ethnic outbidding thesis predicts that once a party has made the first ethnic bid a process of ethnic outbidding emerges in which competitors are pulled towards more extreme positions on similar issues (Chandra, 2011). The reason for the pull towards extreme positions is that if the party that makes the first ethnic ‘bid’ is successful it lures voters away from other parties. In order to prevent the loss of votes or to win them back other parties take on more extreme positions by making ‘counter-bids’. The PVV’s first election made clear that Wilders was a force to be reckoned with, winning 6% of the votes in 2006 (Parlement, 2006). A content analyses of the political parties in the Netherlands and their use of specific terminology concerning the issues of integration and the influence of Islam within their election programs can demonstrate if parties were pulled toward extreme positions. Figure 1 represents the average use of ‘radicalization’, ‘Islam’ and ‘integration’ within the election programs of every party during the national elections between 2002 and 2017. The political parties used for this analysis are parties that had at least one elected seat in parliament between every national election from 2002 to 2017. As the chapter demonstrated earlier, the election programs of the PVV are filled with references to the Islam and its negative influence on the Dutch society (Election program PVV, 2006). Radicalization, a topic usually associated with Islam, integration and Islam are common topics that Wilders addresses in his party platforms and are all used to address his goal of ‘de-Islamification’ of the Netherlands. Therefore, if there was a process of ethnic outbidding between the PVV and other parties, they should see an increase in their use of ‘Islam’, ‘radicalization’ and ‘integration’ as a consequence of Wilders bidding for their votes.

Figure 1: Process of ethnic outbidding for the PVV



Note: The figure shows the number of times the words ‘radicalization’, ‘Islam’ and ‘integration’ are mentioned within the election programs of parties that had at least one seat in parliament for the national elections between 2002 and 2017 in the Netherlands.

The first thing that stands out is that there was a significant increase for every topic for the first election the PVV participated in. Figure 1 demonstrates that several parties have incorporated the issues that Wilders uses to appeal to ethnic nationalists into their own political platforms for the 2006 election. The words ‘Islam’ and ‘integration’ see a decline for the 2012 election. That is consistent with the events surrounding the election of 2012, which was dominated by the European debt crisis. The European Union was a major theme within the election program of every party for the election of 2012.

Figure 1 reflects how important the parties consider the issues of integration, radicalization and Islam by the amount of times they name it in their election programs. Even though the lines of 'integration' and 'Islam' decline for the 2012 election the number of times the topics are mentioned never become lower than when they first increased for the 2006 election. This would mean that several parties have reacted to the PVV's radical stance on integration by incorporating the issues into their election program as a standard topic for every election since the 2006 election. There is again an increase for the word 'radicalization' and a slight increase for 'Islam' and 'integration' for the 2017 election. This corresponds with the radicalization of the PVV's party platform between 2012 and 2017. The content analysis of the PVV's 2017-2021 election program demonstrated that the PVV had made its most radical bid for the 2017 election. The increase of the topics between 2012 and 2017 seems to demonstrate that other parties have responded to it. It was that same year that DENK made its first appearance in a national election.

4.0 The Ethnic Bid of DENK

The previous chapter established that the PVV has made an ethnic bid that resulted in other parties incorporating the issues of integration, Islam and radicalization in their election programs. According to the theory of ethnic outbidding another ethnic party will rise that pulls other parties towards the other end of extreme positions on similar issues. This chapter will demonstrate that DENK, in an indirect reaction to the PVV's radical positions on integration, made its own ethnic bid by appealing to Muslim immigrants. First, the chapter will explain the emergence of DENK. A content analyses of DENK's manifesto and its election program for the 2017 national election will demonstrate that DENK has some radical positions on integration and discrimination. Furthermore, by looking at the DENK's most controversial moves during the campaign for the 2017 election in a chronological order a radicalization can be established from an all-inclusive immigrant party to a reputation of a pro-Erdogan party. The last part of the chapter will determine that DENK has been bidding for the votes of Islamic immigrants through a process of ethnic outbidding with the PvdA, Groenlinks and D66.

4.1 The emergence of DENK

The party DENK was founded in February of 2015. The founders, Tunahan Kuzu and Selcuk Öztürk, are former members of the PvdA. In November 2014, both men told an interviewer that they had no trust in Lodewijk Asscher, minister of Social Affairs and member of the PvdA, to champion the integration debate and integration policy on behalf of immigrants and their descendants (NU, 2014). When Kuzu and Öztürk refused to take back their statements they left the party. In February 2015, Kuzu and Öztürk announced that they would start a new party with the name DENK. As DENK's new party leader Kuzu told interviewees that the integration debate had hardened in the last

ten years and that certain citizens were left out of the Dutch democracy (NU, 2014). Kuzu wanted DENK to champion the interests of those that felt second class citizens as a result of Wilders radical stance in the integration debate (NU, 2014). None of the other parties were specifically championing the interests of Muslim immigrants. As Kuzu argued, even the PvdA, who had always received the majority of the immigrant vote, was not specifically defending Muslim immigrants against the PVV (NOS, 2014). This gave DENK the opportunity to portrait itself as the only defender of Muslim immigrants in the Netherlands.

Fouders DENK: Tunahan Kuzu (right) and Selcuk Öztürk (left).



Mons, 2016, *DENK*, photograph, viewed January 2019, <<http://www.mons.nu/home/sylvana-heeft-afgedaan/attachment/denk-tunahan-kuzu-selcuk-ozturk>>.

As members of the PvdA, Kuzu and Öztürk were voted into the national parliament with quite a number of votes: Kuzu with 23.000 and Öztürk with 10.000 votes (NU, 2014). For the following two years until the next election in 2017, both politicians kept their seat in parliament. This gave them a strategic advantage to be part of the opposi-

tion from the new political platform of their own party. As part of the parliament they were able to stay in the public eye for two years to promote DENK. Over these two years well-known Dutch with Moroccan and Turkish backgrounds became members of DENK. Among them were miss Netherlands Tatjana Maul, chairman of the partnership of the Moroccan Dutch in the Netherlands Farid Azarkan as well as tv and radio presenter Sylvana Simons from Suriname.

One of DENK's first political moves was to release a manifesto in which it profiled itself as a party that wanted to champion the interests of all immigrants, regardless of their background. The manifesto discussed 4 issues: integration, social welfare, education and justice. It pleaded for an equal society in which the Netherlands belongs to everyone, a statement that has become their slogan (Manifesto DENK, 2015). It advocates that people should be allowed to be proud of their background, whether they are born in Amsterdam or Agadir (Manifesto DENK, 2015). According to the manifesto, the time of integration is over and the time for acceptance is here. The new party seems to position itself as a left-wing party leaning towards an ideology of socialism on the issues of health care, education and entrepreneurship.

Some of the more radical proposals in the manifesto are institutional racism, the proposal to introduce a racism register and removing the Dutch words *allochtoon* (immigrant) and *autochtoon* (native) from policy practices. DENK wants to remove institutional racism by removing the names of streets and bridges that are named after historical figures that were known racists or played a role in the Dutch history of slavery. The racism register will register expressions of racism and make it impossible for those who have been registered to work for a government organization. The manifesto advocates stronger prosecution of racism in society throughout the whole manifest, emphasizing the issue of racism under the themes of justice and education. DENK also wants to prohibit the use of the Dutch word *allochtoon*. *Allochtoon* means someone who was born in another

country or who has at least one parent born in another country. The word is deeply integrated in all aspects of society in the Netherlands. The Central Bureau of Statistics registers every person as *allochtoon* or *autochtoon*. Even newspapers refer to *allochtoon* or *autochtoon* when describing someone's ethnicity, as it allows for a clear ethnic distinction between Dutch and non-Dutch. The image of the *allochtoon* identity is 'tainted by an endless stream of reports and news about 'integration problems'' (Zwart, 2008, p.312). DENK's manifesto describes it as a term that has brought unity among foreign born citizens but excludes them from being fully Dutch (Manifesto DENK, 2015). Ironically, the term *allochtoon* does mark out DENK's electorate. The *allochtonen* in the Netherlands are the 'second-class' citizens that Kuzu refers to and whose interests he wants to champion.

The election program of DENK, leading up to the 2017 national election, is more or less similar to their manifesto. The main difference is that it is a lot broader. It covers over 60 pages, specifying exactly what and how they want to achieve certain goals in each theme. The subject of equality and the denunciation of racism is a recurrent theme throughout the whole program. Another recurrent phrase in the election program and the campaign is that DENK wants to fight the 'political shift towards the right', a result of the 'hardening of the integration debate' (NOS, 2015). This can be seen as a referral to the PVV that has forced other parties to take on more extreme positions. The image below is from DENK's manifesto and demonstrates how DENK is trying to restore the political balance, which is tilting to the right caused by the PVV's more radical opinions.



Politiek manifest, 2015, Beweging DENK, Image, viewed on December 2018, < <https://www.bewegingdenk.nl/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/manifest-denk.pdf>>.

4.2 The radicalization of DENK

Besides having several radical positions on integration and discrimination DENK has radicalized towards a party that has gotten a reputation of being pro-Erdogan. The previous section demonstrated that the emergence of DENK was an indirect response to the PVV's radical positions on the issue of integration. DENK's manifesto and election program had stated that it wanted to champion the interest of all groups with different backgrounds. Yet, from 2016, Kuzu started to increasingly promote issues that were in the interest of Muslim immigrants. Looking at some of the more controversial actions of DENK's party leader Tunahan Kuzu in chronological order demonstrates how DENK has radicalized from its emergence in 2015 until the national election in 2017.

One of the first times Kuzu demonstrated an affiliation with Turkey was in July of 2016. Kuzu gave a speech at a rally that celebrated the failed coup in Turkey that had occurred the previous day. Kuzu was filmed at the demonstration surrounded by people that were making signs of the Turkish gray wolf movement, an extreme-right movement that is part of the Turkish diaspora (Avrotros, 2016).

In December of 2016, Sylvana Simons left the party. She stated two reasons for her departure: one, DENK had done little to assure her safety after receiving multiple threats (NOS, 2016). Two, Simons said that the party was not as open as it proclaimed to be. In order to satisfy the conservative supporters, there was little room for her to support women's emancipation and gay acceptance (NOS, 2016).

Furthermore, in March 2017, DENK would receive the nickname of Dutch newspapers as the 'long arm of Erdogan'. Erdogan called the Netherlands a 'country of fascists' and the government a 'remainder of Nazism' after the Dutch government refused to give the Turkish minister of Foreign Affairs, Mevlut Cavusoglu, the right to land his plane in the Netherlands (NRC, 2017). The minister was supposed to advocate a referendum among Dutch Turks with the right to vote that would change the constitution to give Erdogan more political power. During an explosion of indignant responses to Erdogan's reaction by Dutch politicians Kuzu remained quiet. Only after a number of days Kuzu finally twittered that he found the decision to refuse Mevlut Cavusoglu unwise arguing that it would strain the Dutch-Turkish relation even more (Elsevierweekblad, 2017). Afterwards, DENK would consistently be called the 'long arm of Erdogan' by many of the Dutch newspapers (Elsevierweekblad, 2017; NU, 2017; Telegraaf, 2017; Trouw, 2017). In November 2017, Can Dündar, a Turkish journalist who is persecuted in Turkey for writing about state secrets, was invited by a member of parliament to talk about his experience in Turkey in parliament. Kuzu was the only member that disagreed with the invitation of Dündar, he accused Dündar for involving the Netherlands in a Turkish

problem that would give people a new opportunity to speak ill of Turkey (NU, 2017). Kuzu even went as far to tell Dunder during the debate that the Netherlands had similar punishments for revealing state secrets, after which he was quickly interrupted by another member of parliament (Telegraaf, 2017).

The next year in March of 2018, the Dutch parliament scheduled a vote to officially recognize the Armenian genocide. A proposition that was supported by all members of parliament except for the 3 members of DENK, Kuzu, Öztürk and Azarkan. Kuzu went as far to demand on Turkish television that all the members of parliament of Turkish descent should account for their vote in favor of the recognition to the Turkish people (NRC, 2018). It confirmed the idea in the public opinion that DENK was a mere extension of Erdogan's influence.

4.3 DENK as a multi-ethnic party

DENK has radicalized from a party that started out to represent the interests of all immigrants to a party that profiled itself as a pro-Erdogan party, appealing specifically to Muslim immigrants of Turkish descent. The second chapter mentioned Chandra's definition of any ethnic party as one that champions the interest of one ethnic category to the exclusion of others (Chandra, 2005). In DENK's specific and exclusive appeal to Muslim immigrants from Turkey DENK has excluded many of the Dutch voters. Its exclusive appeal comes first of all from its affiliation with Erdogan. DENK also has several subtler appeals like their choice of leadership and candidates that send a so-called 'coded ethnic appeal' (Chandra, 2011). The first three candidates for DENK, Farid Azarkan, Selcuk Öztürk and its leader Tunahan Kuzu, are a member of parliament and are all three immigrants of Turkish descent (Volkskrant, 2018). It sends a strong signal that the three candidates that appear in the media the most are from a single ethnic identity category: Muslim immigrants from Turkey. Another appeal to Muslim immigrants of

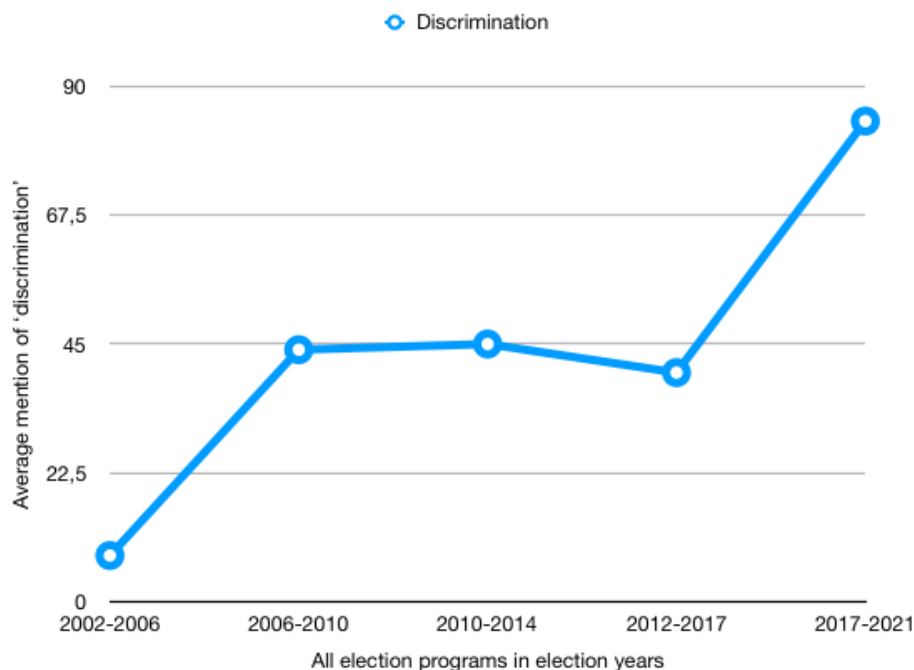
Turkish descent is the name DENK. 'The name of a party can convey information about whether it is associated with the interest of some group' (Chandra, 2011, p. 159). DENK means 'think' in Dutch as well as 'equality' in Turkish.

The reputation of being pro-Erdogan and the several 'coded appeals' to Turkish immigrants show that DENK has an appeal specifically aimed to Muslim immigrants from Turkey. This does not mean that DENK's appeal necessarily excludes immigrants with another background, but its appeal is exclusively to Muslim immigrants. DENK could therefore be considered a multi-ethnic party as it invokes ethnic identities while it 'does not exclude any group on the salient dimension(s) of identity' (Chandra, 2011, p. 157). A Muslim can be seen as an ethnic label, (in countries where Muslims are a section of the population) but also as a multi-ethnic label (when ethnicity is salient and being Muslim can consist of several distinct ethnically defined subgroups of the population- like the Turkish, Moroccan, Surinamese or Antillean in the Netherlands). DENK has received most of its votes from Muslim immigrants of which the largest group are immigrants of Turkish descent and the second largest group are Moroccan immigrants (Parool, 2018). A study of DENK-voters found that 100 per cent of all the Turkish and Moroccan voters call themselves Muslim (NOS, 2017). It appears that the majority of the Turkish and Moroccan ethnic categories support DENK to the exclusion of non-Muslim immigrants (NOS, 2017). A party can be defined as 'ethnic' when the majority of its support base comes from a relevant ethnic category (Chandra, 2011). While DENK can be seen as a multi-ethnic party today the group or groups a party speaks for can change over time (Chandra, 2011). Until the national election of 2018 DENK had not excluded any of the Muslim immigrants with a background other than from Turkey, as the large number of Moroccan votes had demonstrated during the election. However, if Kuzu continuous to emphasize its affiliation with Turkey he might alienate Moroccan voters and become an ethnic party for Muslim immigrants of Turkish descent.

4.4 DENK and ethnic outbidding

The first part of the chapter demonstrated that the emergence of DENK was an indirect response to the radical stance of the PVV on the integration debate. The second part demonstrated DENK has radicalized to become a pro-Erdogan party. It has made an ethnic bid in the Netherlands that appeals to Muslims immigrants. According to the theory of ethnic outbidding, ethnic parties seek to maximize their votes by adopting more extreme positions than their competitors (Horowitz, 1985). Following the ethnic outbidding thesis, DENK's radicalization and radical positions on integration and discrimination are a result of DENK's bidding for votes from parties that have immigrants in their support base like the PvdA, D66 and Groenlinks (Parool, 2018).

Figure 2: Use of the term 'Discrimination'



Note: The number of times the word 'discrimination' is mentioned within the election programs of political parties during national election years 2002 and 2017 in the Netherlands.

As DENK has only participated in one national election it might be too premature to conclude whether the PvdA, D66 and Groenlinks have responded to DENK's ethnic bid by taking on more radical positions on integration and discrimination. Yet, if we look at Figure 2 it shows that the outlines of a process of outbidding are visible. There is a steep increase in the use of the word 'discrimination' for the elections between 2012 and 2017. The issue of discrimination is key for any party that opposes the PVV and wants to win over the immigrants vote. The steep increase in the average use of 'discrimination' shows that parties are bidding for the vote of immigrant. Table 1 shows that it was mainly D66, Groenlinks and the PvdA that have significantly increased the number of times it mentioned discrimination, compared to the previous election in 2012. Though it might be too soon to tell, it appears that DENK has been able to start a process of ethnic outbidding with the PvdA, D66 and Groenlinks.

Table 1: Use of the term 'Discrimination'

	<u>2002-2006</u>	<u>2006-2010</u>	<u>2010-2014</u>	<u>2012-2017</u>	<u>2017-2021</u>
CDA	<u>0</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>5</u>
VVD	<u>1</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>7</u>
D66	<u>0</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>13</u>
GROENLINKS	<u>3</u>	<u>14</u>	<u>10</u>	<u>9</u>	<u>20</u>
SP	<u>0</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>7</u>	<u>9</u>	<u>5</u>
PvdA	<u>0</u>	<u>8</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>23</u>
CU	<u>3</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>8</u>	<u>6</u>	<u>6</u>
SGP	<u>1</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>6</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>5</u>
PvdD		<u>0</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>8</u>

Note: the number of times the word 'discrimination' is used in election programs of Dutch parties in the context of discriminating on the bases of religion, ethnicity and/or skin colour.

5.0 Conclusion

The PVV emerged in 2005 with radical positions on the issue of integration and the influences of Islam on Dutch society. This thesis has demonstrated that, following Chandra's definition of an ethnic party, the PVV can be considered an ethnic party. It represents the interests of ethnic nationalists while excluding the ethnic identity category of Muslim immigrants. The second chapter showed how other parties have increasingly incorporated the issue of religious radicalization associated with Islam and increased the use of the topic of integration and Islam in their election programs for the elections 2006-2010 and 2010-2014. Yet, as Kuzu argued, none of the parties were specifically defending the interests of Muslim immigrants against the radicalization of the debate on integration and Islam (NU, 2014). Not even the parties that carried many of the immigrant votes, like the PvdA, D66 and Groenlinks, in the 2012 election (Parool, 2016). When Tunahan Kuzu left the PvdA with Selcuk Öztürk, he mentioned specifically that the PvdA was not defending the interest of immigrants hard enough, which left a group of voters underrepresented (NOS, 2015). They wanted to create a party that would give that group a voice in the political debate on integration: Muslim immigrants. The final chapter demonstrated that DENK can be considered as a multi-ethnic party as it champions the interests of Muslim immigrants in the Netherlands. The theory of ethnic outbidding predicts that 'the emergence of even a single ethnic party 'infects' the rest of the system' (Chandra, 2011, p. 235). DENK emerged in an indirect reaction to the PVV's radical stance in the integration debate. DENK was meant to champion the interests of an ethnic identity category that was specifically excluded when the PVV politicized the needs and preferences of ethnic nationalists. The radical positions of DENK can be explained as way to pull voters away from parties who carried the Muslim immigrant votes in the previous election. Horowitz argued that in order to maximize their share of

votes ethnic parties will adopt more extreme positions than their competitors (Horowitz, 1985). It appears that DENK has been able to start outbidding the PvdA, D66 and Groenlinks for their votes as they have responded by increasingly discussing the issue of discrimination into their election program of 2017-2012, an issue that opposes the PVV's radical positions on integration and Islam. It will be interesting to see whether DENK will continue to radicalize and if it will become an ethnic party for specific Muslim immigrants from Turkey.

6.0 References

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