

The Marginal-Right

The Centre Movement's Anti-Immigration
Campaign in the Netherlands (1980-1998)

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Preface

I am honoured to finalise my master's in European History and Civilisation of the Europaeum Programme by submitting this thesis. This project could not have been realised without the support of the academic staff that has given me guidance along the way. My sincere gratitude goes out to my thesis supervisor, Professor Dr Marlou Schrover for providing feedback with such great care. I also want to thank the teachers of the Europaeum Programme for their time and effort: Dr Felicia Rosu, Dr Tracey Sowerby, Dr Bart van der Steen and Dr Nicolas Vaicbourdt. I admire the energy that they invest in every single student. I also want to thank Emeritus Professor Meindert Fennema for providing access to the Hans Janmaat Archive at the IISG in Amsterdam. Finally, my special appreciation and goes out to my mother for supporting me throughout my life.

This thesis was mostly written during the COVID-19 pandemic. The closure of archives in March 2020 made it impossible to retrieve a handful of sources that I had planned to view in April 2020. However, I believe that the material collected earlier, and the availability of online sources enabled me to write a coherent story. The situation during the pandemic was challenging at times but I have attempted to write this thesis to the best of my ability.

The Hague, 1 July 2020.

Chapter 1: Introduction

Today, immigration constitutes one of the most politicised topics in Western-European politics. Although concerns about the issue can be found across the political spectrum, right-wing populist parties are usually the most vocal anti-immigration actors. These parties have become one of the most disruptive forces in Western-European politics of the twenty-first century.¹ This has not always been the case: the rise of anti-immigration parties started in the 1980s, with very different degrees of success.² The Dutch *Centrumpartij* (Centre Party) and its follow-up the *Centrumdemocraten* (Centre Democrats) – both under the leadership of Hans Janmaat and collectively referred to as the *Centrumstroming* (Centre Movement) – had limited electoral support as they never managed to gain more than 3 out of 150 seats in Parliament. The Centre Movement emerged in 1980 and disintegrated at the end of the 1990s. This failure is quite surprising, as circumstances in the Netherlands were favourable for the emergence of an anti-establishment and anti-immigration party.³ After losing all seats in 1998, the Centre Democrats were succeeded by the much more successful *Lijst Pim Fortuyn* and *Partij Voor de Vrijheid* in the 2000s.⁴

The movement had to deal with a lot of resistance as it was politically excluded by a *cordon sanitaire* and widely considered as a racist⁵ and neo-fascist party.⁶ Its main political activity – anti-immigration politics – was considered as a political ‘taboo’ during most of its

¹ Many scholars have tried to explain the rise of anti-immigration populist parties in Western-Europe. Political scientist Timo Lochocki calls Front National and UKIP “perhaps the most influential political forces of the last decade” in ‘Introduction: How the Failed Political Messaging of Moderate Political Actors Strengthens Populist Radical Right Parties’, in *The Rise of Populism in Western Europe: A Media Analysis on Failed Political Messaging* (Springer International Publishing, 2018), 1, <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-62855-4>.

² Piero Ignazi, ‘The Crisis of Parties and the Rise of New Political Parties.’, *Party Politics* 2, no. 4 (1996): 560, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1354068896002004007>.

³ “in feite waren de omstandigheden voor nieuwe en populistische partijen in de jaren tachtig en negentig gunstiger dan ooit” in Paul Lucardie and Gerrit Voerman, *Populisten in de Polder* (Meppel: Boom, 2012), 33, https://www.rug.nl/research/portal/files/17048821/2012_Gerrit_Voerman_Lucardie_Populisten_in_de_polde_r.pdf.

⁴ Merijn Oudenampsen, ‘Explaining the Swing to the Right: The Dutch Debate on the Rise of Right-Wing Populism’, *Right-Wing Populism in Europe*, 2013, 191–208, <http://dx.doi.org/10.5040/9781472544940.ch-013>.

⁵ “De meeste bestrijders zagen de CP en CD in navolging van de Anne Frank Stichting echter als racistische partijen” in Jan de Vetten, *In de ban van goed en fout: de bestrijding van de Centrumpartij en de Centrumdemocraten (1980-1998)* (Amsterdam: Prometheus, 2016), 266, <https://openaccess.leidenuniv.nl/handle/1887/44139>; Joke Kniesmeyer, *De Crisis En de Nieuwe Zondebok. De Racistische Politiek van de Centrumpartij* (Voorburg: Protestantse Stichting Bibliotheekwezen, 1982).

⁶ Paul Taggart, ‘New Populist Parties in Western Europe’, *West European Politics* 18, no. 1 (January 1995): 45, <https://doi.org/10.1080/01402389508425056>.

parliamentary existence.⁷ The leader of the movement, Hans Janmaat, always claimed to be breaking that taboo, as he presented the continuous settlement of migrants in the Netherlands as a symptom of the disintegration of society. Striking is the similarity between his and current populist narratives of crisis that present ‘hyper-immigration’ as the cause of ‘cultural destruction’.⁸

The success or failure of these parties can be attributed to several factors. In the case of the Centre Movement, three important causes of its limited electoral success can be deduced from the available literature. First, the movement mainly attracted protest-votes due to the lack of a decent or ‘normal’ character that would attract voters based on ideological proximity.⁹ Second, political exclusion removed the need for political compromise or moderation of its agenda, perpetuating its radical character.¹⁰ Third, the party started to lose issue-ownership over immigration, as the issue became increasingly politicised and put forward by more reputable mainstream political actors.¹¹

Much of the recent literature on the Centre Movement focusses on *outside* conditions: the *bestrijding* (combating) of the movement that sometimes turned violent.¹² Older work on the party *itself* paid special attention to racist traits and expressions of its provocative political messaging.¹³ The internal functioning of the Centre Movement remains understudied, as more intricate strategies were developed within the movement, and applied throughout its parliamentary existence. This thesis contributes to the existing knowledge of the Centre Movement by revealing the strategies behind its attempts to mobilise support. The movement had to find ways to ‘sell’ its anti-immigration ideas and legitimise itself as a viable political actor. In order to understand this process, it is necessary to look at both the

⁷ Vetten, *In de ban van goed en fout*, 268.

⁸ Benjamin Moffitt, *The Global Rise of Populism* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2016), 73.

⁹ Wouter Van Der Brug, Meindert Fennema, and Jean Tillie, ‘Why Some Anti-Immigrant Parties Fail and Others Succeed: A Two-Step Model of Aggregate Electoral Support’, *Comparative Political Studies*, 2005, 565, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0010414004273928>.

¹⁰ Joost Van Spanje and Wouter Van Der Brug, ‘The Party as Pariah: The Exclusion of Anti-Immigration Parties and Its Effect on Their Ideological Positions’, *West European Politics* 30, no. 5 (November 2007): 1034, <https://doi.org/10.1080/01402380701617431>.

¹¹ Wouter Van Der Brug, Meindert Fennema, and Jean Tillie, ‘Anti-Immigrant Parties in Europe: Ideological or Protest Vote?’, *European Journal of Political Research* 37, no. 1 (2000): 95, <https://doi.org/10.1023/A:1007013503658>.

¹² Vetten, *In de ban van goed en fout*; Joost Niemöller, *De verschrikkelijke Janmaat: Nederland en de Centruumpartij* (Amsterdam: Uitgeverij van Praag, 2015).

¹³ Kniesmeyer, *De Crisis En de Nieuwe Zondebok*; Kees Brants and Willem Hogendoorn, *Van Vreemde Smetten Vrij. Opkomst van de Centruumpartij* (Bussum: De Haan, 1983); Jaap Van Donselaar, *Fout na de oorlog. Fascistische en racistische organisaties in Nederland, 1950-1990* (Amsterdam: B. Bakker, 1991).

internal communication of the party, as its *external* communication. The main questions that this research tries to answer are: What communication strategies did the Centre Movement develop in an attempt to mobilise support throughout its existence? And why were they unable to break out of the margins of politics? Of prime importance to this research will be the language of the ‘face’ of the Centre Movement: Hans Janmaat. As leader of both the Centre Party and the Centre Democrats, Hans Janmaat was pulling the strings of the movement’s organisation and enjoyed the most attention in the media.¹⁴ This thesis can provide a better understanding of how ‘marginal’ parties such as the Centre Movement operate. It reveals how the movement carefully constructed its messages by balancing provocation and moderation, and how the limited possibilities for growth were the result of its paradoxical nature as a protest movement.

Theoretical framework

On the ‘demand’ side of politics, Western societies provided fertile ground for the emergence of right-wing populist and anti-immigration parties around 1980.¹⁵ Although the Centre Movement could also be regarded as a populist party, due to its strong anti-establishment character, I will refer to the Centre Movement as an ‘Anti-Immigration Party’ (AIP). This is because the language and populist demands by Hans Janmaat were less prominent than his nationalism.¹⁶ Furthermore, the term AIP allows us to regard the Centre Movement as part of a larger wave of ideologically diverse parties, but that has opposition to immigration at their ideological core.¹⁷ While the political scientist Meindert Fennema demonstrated the utility of the term ‘anti-immigrant parties’, I will use the slightly adjusted ‘anti-immigration party’ like political scientists Joost van Spanje and Wouter van der Brug.¹⁸ Nevertheless, its populist character will be taken into account, as “populist anti-party sentiment” was a

¹⁴ “Despite the reasonably democratic formal structure, Janmaat has dominated the CD completely from the moment he joined the party.” In Cas Mudde and Joop Van Holsteyn, ‘The Netherlands: Explaining the Limited Success of the Extreme Right’, in *The Politics of the Extreme Right. From the Margins to the Mainstream*, ed. Paul Hainsworth (London, New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2000), 150, <https://doi.org/10.5040/9781474290975>.

¹⁵ Piero Ignazi, ‘The Silent Counter-Revolution. Hypotheses on the Emergence of Extreme Right-Wing Parties in Europe’, *European Journal of Political Research* 22, no. 1 (1992): 3–34, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1475-6765.1992.tb00303.x>.

¹⁶ Lucardie and Voerman, *Populisten in de Polder*, 190.

¹⁷ Meindert Fennema, ‘Some Conceptual Issues and Problems in the Comparison of Anti-Immigrant Parties in Western Europe’, *Party Politics*, June 2016, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1354068897003004002>.

¹⁸ Van Spanje and Van Der Brug, ‘The Party as Pariah’.

recurrent theme in the movement's language.¹⁹ The Centre Movement's 'populist' character will be understood as the continuous discursive dichotomisation of society into the "pure good people" versus anyone that threatens their "*volonté générale*", who can be understood as – but are not limited to – the "corrupt elite".²⁰ In order to understand how AIPs operate, it is necessary to understand why they emerged around 1980 in Western Europe and set out the necessary conditions for their persistent electoral success.

An important cause for the rise of AIPs are the value changes that developed in Western societies since the 1960s: Ronald Inglehart called this development the 'Silent Revolution'. According to him, Western societies would gradually become more post-materialist and progressive due to post-war economic growth.²¹ This theory has been further elaborated by Piero Ignazi, who argued that the Silent Revolution was accompanied by another, less visible, response, that he called the 'Silent Counter-Revolution': a part of society allegedly felt threatened by the rise of progressive values, and in response wanted to bring back tradition, impose restrictions on immigration, and increase order.²² Such demands would eventually materialise as anti-immigration parties and affect conservative parties in the 1980s.

Second, since the 1970s Europe saw increased voter mobility and a decline of party identification – closely related to the so-called Silent Revolution that destabilised party systems.²³ The rise of catch-all and cartel parties, characterised by closed bureaucratic organisation and loose party identities, led to a "crisis of legitimacy" where voters were prevented from having a say in political decision making.²⁴ Such an apparent 'crisis of legitimacy' has created specific demands that made "anti-system" parties more appealing, including anti-immigration parties.²⁵

¹⁹ Cas Mudde, *The Ideology of the Extreme Right* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000), 138, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt155j8h1>.

²⁰ Cas Mudde, 'The Populist Zeitgeist', *Government and Opposition* 39, no. 4 (2004): 543, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1477-7053.2004.00135.x>.

²¹ Ronald Inglehart, *The Silent Revolution: Changing Values and Political Styles Among Western Publics* (Princeton University Press, 1977), <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctt13x18ck>; Roger Eatwell and Matthew Goodwin, *National Populism. The Revolt Against Liberal Democracy* (London: Penguin Random House UK, 2018), 235.

²² Ignazi, 'The Crisis of Parties and the Rise of New Political Parties', 557.

²³ Ignazi, 'The Silent Counter-Revolution. Hypotheses on the Emergence of Extreme Right-Wing Parties in Europe', 4.

²⁴ Ignazi, 'The Crisis of Parties and the Rise of New Political Parties', 555.

²⁵ Ignazi, 558.

Third, economic crises in the 1970s led to a crisis of the welfare state: the rise of neoliberalist ideas to respond to this crisis, combined with the challenge of New Politics, led to a 'radicalisation' of conservative parties, resulting in neoconservatism.²⁶ In the 1980s this caused polarisation of the party system and saw conservative parties' agendas move to the right.²⁷ Because conservative parties abandoned extreme positions after being elected into power, AIPs were able to claim those positions, legitimised by conservatives.²⁸ Therefore, anti-immigration parties were then able to fill in this newly created political cleavage on the 'supply-side' of politics.

Fourth, and unsurprisingly, immigration as a political issue had to become *salient* in order for anti-immigration parties to emerge. To different degrees, Western-European countries saw demographic change as a result of high levels of immigration, which politicised the issue further through time – especially combined with the recession of 1980.²⁹ However, the cause of issue-saliency of immigration is difficult to assess, as explanations run in different ways. For example, countries that experienced similar economic shocks show very different degrees of success of their AIPs.³⁰ Furthermore, societies with high levels of ethnic heterogeneity do not necessarily apply policies that negatively affect migrants.³¹ Although the causes of saliency are not certain, the very presence of this issue-saliency is a necessary condition for the emergence of AIPs.³² Issue-saliency can partly be achieved by parties themselves, as political entrepreneurs are necessary for the mobilisation of support³³ by 'problematizing' the issue.³⁴ Then, societies where immigrants were *perceived* as a cause of

²⁶ Ignazi, 'The Silent Counter-Revolution. Hypotheses on the Emergence of Extreme Right-Wing Parties in Europe', 20.

²⁷ Ignazi, 20.

²⁸ Ignazi, 21.

²⁹ H.L.M. Obdeijn and Marlou Schrover, *Komen En Gaan. Immigratie En Emigratie in Nederland Vanaf 1550* (Amsterdam: Uitgeverij Bert Bakker, 2008), 302, <http://hdl.handle.net/1887/17762>.

³⁰ Van Der Brug, Fennema, and Tillie, 'Why Some Anti-Immigrant Parties Fail and Others Succeed', 567.

³¹ Tim Reeskens and Wim van Oorschot, 'Disentangling the "New Liberal Dilemma": On the Relation Between General Welfare Redistribution Preferences and Welfare Chauvinism', *International Journal of Comparative Sociology*, June 2012, 132, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0020715212451987>; Jeroen Van Der Waal, Willem De Koster, and Wim Van Oorschot, 'Three Worlds of Welfare Chauvinism? How Welfare Regimes Affect Support for Distributing Welfare to Immigrants in Europe', *Journal of Comparative Policy Analysis: Research and Practice* 15, no. 2 (April 2013): 178, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13876988.2013.785147>.

³² Vetten, *In de ban van goed en fout*, 51.

³³ Ignazi, 'The Crisis of Parties and the Rise of New Political Parties', 559; Waal, Koster, and Oorschot, 'Three Worlds of Welfare Chauvinism?', 178.

³⁴ Marlou Schrover and Willem Schinkel, 'Introduction: The Language of Inclusion and Exclusion in the Context of Immigration and Integration', *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 36, no. 7 (July 2013): 1126, <https://doi.org/10.1080/01419870.2013.783711>.

economic hardship or as a threat to the nation-state, provided fertile ground for the emergence of an AIP.

Then there are three conditions that can explain the different degrees of persistent success of AIPs in Europe: issue-ownership, ideological attractiveness and partisan collaboration. First, it is important that an AIP enjoys issue ownership, with as little competition as possible: the electoral success of an AIP will particularly be difficult if the “main-stream right-wing conservative party” increasingly adopts the immigration issue in its political agenda.³⁵ Research shows that the adoption of immigration issues by the main-stream right-wing conservative party is detrimental to the electoral success of AIPs due to their ideological proximity.³⁶

Second, in order to be electorally attractive to voters, an AIP needs to be considered as a ‘normal’ party. That is, it needs to have a clear ideological profile that attracts votes based on “ideological proximity and policy considerations”.³⁷ The alternative to an ideologically motivated vote is a protest vote: such votes can only be helpful for a party in the short term because they are exclusively intended to “scare the elite”.³⁸ The bigger a protest party becomes, the less desirable it will be to cast a vote for it.³⁹ A very narrow, anti-immigration ideology will make ideological proximity with voters more difficult, and hence affects a party’s attractiveness. Political scientist Paul Taggart observes the difficulty of such a narrow agenda: he subdivides ‘far-right parties’ into ‘New Populist’, and ‘neo-fascist’ parties, and links the marginal election results of neo-fascist parties to their narrow anti-immigration ideology, and the success of New Populist parties to their broader – hence more appealing – ideological profile.⁴⁰

Third, the actions of other parties will affect a party’s potential: if an AIP with extreme party positions is excluded politically, it will remain extremist.⁴¹ On the other hand, collaboration with other political parties forces an AIP to adopt more moderate policy

³⁵ Van Der Brug, Fennema, and Tillie, ‘Anti-Immigrant Parties in Europe’, 94.

³⁶ Wouter Van Der Brug and Meindert Fennema, ‘Protest or Mainstream? How the European Anti-Immigrant Parties Developed into Two Separate Groups by 1999’, *European Journal of Political Research* 42, no. 1 (2003): 70–71, <https://doi.org/10.1111/1475-6765.00074>.

³⁷ Van Der Brug and Fennema, 59.

³⁸ Van Der Brug and Fennema, 57–58.

³⁹ Van Der Brug, Fennema, and Tillie, ‘Why Some Anti-Immigrant Parties Fail and Others Succeed’, 542.

⁴⁰ Taggart, ‘New Populist Parties in Western Europe’, 48.

⁴¹ Van Spanje and Van Der Brug, ‘The Party as Pariah’, 1037.

positions.⁴² So, an AIP needs to 'own' the issue of immigration in order to have electoral success. If an AIP is already 'too extreme' (i.e. a narrow anti-immigration ideology), it will fail to gain electoral potential and may mostly attract (short-lived) protest votes. Political exclusion will perpetuate such an extreme position and can continue the marginality of such a party. These conditions heavily limit the possibilities for growth of an AIP within a parliamentary system. The political influence of a 'protest AIP' will be limited to signalling to mainstream parties that some voters are deeply dissatisfied with current policies. Then, in the most favourable scenario, a politically excluded protest AIP influences the policies of mainstream actors due to its inability to escape the margins of the opposition.

Historiography

The first publications on the Centre Movement are relatively hostile and reflect a sense of concern in Dutch society. In 1982, Joke Kniesmeijer, a prominent author of the Anne Frank Foundation – an important actor against anti-Semitism and racism – published a booklet titled *The Crisis and the New Scapegoat: The Racist Politics of the Centre Party*, and argued that the party was definitely racist, but not fascist due to the absence of anti-democratic goals, although it was difficult to be sure, because the 'civil' face of the party, could conceal a more radical reality.⁴³

A similar argument was made in a book published in 1983: *Free from Foreign Taint: The Rise of the Centre Party*. Political scientist Kees Brants and anthropologist Willem Hoogendoorn were quite alarmed about the supposed impact of the movement on Dutch politics: "With the entry of the Centre Party in the lower house, the boundary of socially acceptable answers might have shifted."⁴⁴ The authors believe that votes for the Centre Party can be considered as racially-motivated, that mainly come from the impoverished neighbourhoods in the major four cities, where workers saw themselves increasingly compete over housing and jobs with migrants.⁴⁵

The anthropologist Jaap van Donselaar wrote about both the Centre Party and the Centre Democrats in 1991. Similar to Kniesmeijer, Van Donselaar noticed similarities between

⁴² Van Spanje and Van Der Brug, 1037.

⁴³ Kniesmeyer, *De Crisis En de Nieuwe Zondebok*, 18.

⁴⁴ Brants and Hogendoorn, *Van Vreemde Smetten Vrij*, 112.

⁴⁵ Brants and Hogendoorn, 42-44.

the language and fascist tendencies of the NVU and the Centre Movement. Van Donselaar, therefore, suspected the Centre Democrats of having a hidden neo-fascist 'face'. The Centre Movement would try to appear civil on the "frontstage", but it would act a lot more radical internally on its "backstage".⁴⁶ As mentioned above, in 1995 political scientist Paul Taggart took a similar standpoint and defined the Centre Democrats as a "neo-fascist" party, due to its narrow anti-immigration ideology.⁴⁷

In 1998, political scientists Cas Mudde and Joop van Holsteyn studied the 'extreme-right' Centre Movement. According to them, the Centre Party differed from the Centre Democrats, as the latter developed into a single-issue party, based on an analysis of party programmes.⁴⁸ Two years later, Mudde makes a similar conclusion in an analysis in his book *The Ideology of the Extreme Right*. Here, he argues that the ideology of the Centre Democrats mainly revolves around "the idea that people should live in a mono-cultural state which is not crowded by too many inhabitants."⁴⁹

Political scientist Meindert Fennema prefers to define the Centre Party and Centre Democrats as "anti-immigrant parties".⁵⁰ Extreme right parties do not always fit neatly on a left-right scale, and neither does the Centre Movement, which considered itself "as 'neither left nor right'".⁵¹ In 2000, 2003 and 2005, political scientists Wouter Van Der Brug, Meindert Fennema and Jean Tillie,⁵² looked at the electoral failure of 'anti-immigrant parties' and came to the same conclusion about the Centre Democrats: they attributed the failure to the lack of an attractive ideological profile, based on the great deal of protest votes it attracted in the European election of 1994⁵³ and 1999.⁵⁴

The above-mentioned Wouter Van Der Brug also published with political scientist Joost Van Spanje: they argue that the parties were excluded from politics because they were

⁴⁶ Van Donselaar, *Fout na de oorlog*.

⁴⁷ Taggart, 'New Populist Parties in Western Europe', 45.

⁴⁸ J. van Holsteyn and C. Mudde, 'Extreem-rechts in Nederland', 1998, 46, [https://www.rug.nl/research/portal/publications/extreemrechts-in-nederland\(77084d95-9fae-4d41-abcc-2885b0c1a06d\)/export.html](https://www.rug.nl/research/portal/publications/extreemrechts-in-nederland(77084d95-9fae-4d41-abcc-2885b0c1a06d)/export.html).

⁴⁹ Mudde, *The Ideology of the Extreme Right*, 141.

⁵⁰ Fennema, 'Some Conceptual Issues and Problems in the Comparison of Anti-Immigrant Parties in Western Europe', 472.

⁵¹ Fennema, 479.

⁵² Tillie was not a co-author in 2003

⁵³ Van Der Brug, Fennema, and Tillie, 'Anti-Immigrant Parties in Europe'; Van Der Brug and Fennema, 'Protest or Mainstream?'

⁵⁴ Van Der Brug, Fennema, and Tillie, 'Why Some Anti-Immigrant Parties Fail and Others Succeed'.

perceived as undemocratic by other parties.⁵⁵ Furthermore, this political exclusion caused the Centre Democrats to remain extreme, as lack of the need for political compromises kept it 'frozen' in its extreme position.⁵⁶

Recently two books were dedicated to the Centre Movement. The first book *De Verschrikkelijke Janmaat* by journalist Joost Niemöller released in 2015, emphasises the unfair treatment of the movement as it was heavily under fire – the best example being a violent attack on the movement in 1986.⁵⁷ The book generally does not approach the subject in a scientific way, but it is valuable for its detailed archival reconstruction of the Centre Movement's history. As opposed to the strong criticism by most other writers about the Centre Movement, Niemöller claims that Hans Janmaat was not necessarily *verschrikkelijk* (terrible) as he and his movement had no chance to be successful politically due to unfair and biased treatment by the media, anti-fascist groups, political parties and the judicial system.⁵⁸ The back of the book describes the mentality in Dutch politics around that time as 'embarrassing'.

A year later, historian Jan de Vetten promoted with his dissertation *Under the spell of 'right' and 'wrong' – Combating the Centrumpartij and the Centrumdemocraten (1980-1998)*. De Vetten argues that the party was firmly contested, also outside of the Parliament in the form of negative press, lawsuits, demonstrations and sometimes even violent actions.⁵⁹ During the Centre Movement's presence in parliament, immigration became increasingly politicised, especially in the 1990s by the liberal-conservative (VVD) leader Frits Bolkestein.⁶⁰ While De Vetten provides evidence that the party was often treated in almost undemocratic ways, he is reluctant to condemn those actions. Furthermore, De Vetten does not take any notice of the publication by Joost Niemöller, thereby missing some opportunities to provide a more nuanced reconstruction of events.

Taking into account the aforementioned knowledge on anti-immigration parties and the available literature on the Centre Movement, it is understandable that the movement failed to get out of the margins. According to the literature, it was regarded as a racist, or

⁵⁵ Van Spanje and Van Der Brug, 'The Party as Pariah', 1030.

⁵⁶ Van Spanje and Van Der Brug, 1037.

⁵⁷ Anti-fascists attacked a meeting in Kedichem between the Centre Party and the Centre Democrats in Mudde, 'The Populist Zeitgeist', 123–24.

⁵⁸ Niemöller, *De verschrikkelijke Janmaat*.

⁵⁹ Vetten, *In de ban van goed en fout*.

⁶⁰ Vetten, 86.

even neo-fascist party, that attracted mostly protest votes, making its ideological attractiveness questionable. Second, the movement had to deal with increased electoral competition over its single issue in the 1990s. And third, the party was firmly combated both inside and outside of parliament, presumably causing it to remain extreme and a political 'pariah'. Despite the wealth of literature on the Centre Movement, it is unclear how the Centre Movement tried to respond to this constant pressure. Taking a closer look at the movement's internal communication can provide a better understanding of how the Centre Movement tried to operate from its marginal position.

Methodology and sources

In order to make the immigration standpoint appealing, the Centre movement had to 'problematise' it: a crucial strategy of such problematisation is 'expanding', described by the historian Marlou Schrover and sociologist Willem Schinkel as a political strategy to inflate one issue by 'linking' it with other issues in society.⁶¹ This is done through 'frames', which "are series of claims, topics or themes, strung together in a more or less coherent way, whereby some features of reality are highlighted and others obscured so as to tell a consistent story about problems, causes, moral implications and remedies."⁶²

In addition to this, it was important for the movement to present itself as a 'normal party' as it was constantly receiving 'racist' and 'fascist' accusations. Anti-elitist claims can be employed for this, in order to delegitimise other (political) actors and to present oneself as the 'only' viable alternative to solve the countries' problems. These aspects will be analysed in both external and internal communication. By doing this, this thesis can explore how similar strategies were employed during the Centre Movement's existence but adapted to specific contexts.

Similar to the political scientist Cas Mudde, I will analyse both 'externally oriented' communication and 'internal oriented' communication.⁶³ While Cas Mudde tried to uncover the 'ideology' of the Centre Democrats, I will expand his research by lengthening the period of analysis to include the early Centre Party and by analysing different sources that can provide a more detailed perspective on the internal elaboration of strategies. Communication

⁶¹ Schrover and Schinkel, 'Introduction', 1129.

⁶² Schrover and Schinkel, 1129.

⁶³ Mudde, *The Ideology of the Extreme Right*, 21.

within the movement can reveal what considerations, discussions and ideas preceded their actions.

External communication is produced by the movement itself or is a conscious attempt to directly communicate information to the wider public. Party programmes have been taken into account from the Centre Party (General Election of 1982 and the European Parliament of 1984) and Centre Democrats (General Elections of in 1989, 1994 and 1998).⁶⁴ But because these fine-tuned examples of external communication are limited in nature, more diverse sources were necessary. Such insights have been provided by sources from the *Binnenlandse Veiligheidsdienst* (Homeland Security, BVD). The *Argus Foundation* managed to obtain these documents through legal proceedings with Dutch authorities.⁶⁵ The BVD has infiltrated and followed the Centre Movement for at least nine years (1980-1989). In addition to meeting minutes, these documents contain valuable external communication such as local party propaganda, newspaper clippings and draft election programmes. Newspaper articles collected by the BVD have mainly been supplemented with newspaper articles in the online archive of Delpher.⁶⁶ Finally, parliamentary behaviour can provide an additional ‘level’ of external communication. Due to the astronomic size of parliamentary minutes available online, this thesis has been limited to a selection of 59 pages of parliamentary minutes that are included in the ‘Janmaat archive’ at the International Institute of Social History (IISG) in Amsterdam. These documents start in 1992 and reveal how Janmaat directly communicated with his political opponents.

In terms of *internal* communication, I will use the meeting minutes created by agents of the BVD and the party magazine *CD-Actueel*. The meeting notes were gathered by the BVD from the start of the Centre Party in 1980, through to the Centre Democrats in 1989. The notes describe both local and *hoofdbestuur* (main board) meetings. Local political gatherings can hardly be regarded as separate from the higher-level meetings because it was mainly Hans Janmaat pulling the strings within the entire organisation.⁶⁷ Although these notes

⁶⁴ Due to the outbreak of the coronavirus, it is currently not possible to obtain the party programmes for the European elections of the Centre Democrats. This thesis is limited to available electronic documents provided by the Rijksuniversiteit Groningen [hereafter abbreviated as: RUG] in *Repositories Documentation Centre Dutch Political Parties* [hereafter abbreviated as: *RDCDPP*].

⁶⁵ Stichting Argus, ‘Inlichtingendiensten’, accessed 23 June 2020, <https://www.stichtingargus.nl/bvd/index.htm>.

⁶⁶ De Koninklijke Bibliotheek, ‘Delpher’, accessed 23 June 2020, <https://www.delpher.nl/>.

⁶⁷ Mudde and Van Holsteyn, ‘The Netherlands’, 150.

provide a valuable look inside the party, the names of speakers are often redacted as part of the declassification process. Furthermore, these documents are not a neutral reflection of inter-party dynamics, as the notes were biased. Janmaat even accused the BVD of trying to sabotage the party from the inside out.⁶⁸ Nevertheless, these sources can provide a unique view by a third party of the internal party discussions.

The Centre Movement has produced several magazines. In the first place there is *CD-Actueel*, distributed among members from 1988, until late 1993. Second, there was *CD-info*. According to political scientist Cas Mudde, *CD-info* was “more sketchy and up to date than *CD-Actueel*, as well as more sloppy in language and typing errors”.⁶⁹ Mudde argues that *CD-info* mainly differed “in goal and substance: Only *CD-info* carries information on internal party matters”.⁷⁰ Despite this claim by Mudde, he considers party magazines in general as “internally oriented”.⁷¹ Therefore, *CD-Actueel* can still provide a view of the ideas *within* the party. The Centre Democrats themselves support the claim that that the magazine is a reflection of ideas *within* the party. The introduction of the first copy of *CD-Actueel* reads: “The aim of our party magazine is to reflect the ideas that live in our party.”⁷² This magazine has also been consulted at the ‘Janmaat archive’ of the IISG in Amsterdam. The combination of both external and internal communication by the Centre Movement from 1980 to 1998, can provide insights into the intricate strategies behind its communication with the electorate, in an attempt to mobilise support.

Structure

Before the analysis takes place on primary sources, I briefly discuss the period that is relevant for the understanding of the topic: the history of migration in the Netherlands and migration politics between 1945 and 2000. This background chapter looks at the societal impact of migration after the Second World War and the emergence of the ‘multicultural society’. Furthermore, it describes the changing nature of Dutch immigration politics and the increased politicisation and problematisation of migration. These were the conditions that the Centre Movement was responding to.

⁶⁸ Vetten, *In de ban van goed en fout*, 169.

⁶⁹ Mudde, *The Ideology of the Extreme Right*, 130.

⁷⁰ Mudde, 130.

⁷¹ Mudde, 129.

⁷² IISG Amsterdam, ZK 15044, CD-Actueel 1987 nr.1, 1.

The analysis of primary sources will be divided into three chapters, based on key moments that have influenced the movement's organisation and character. First, I look at the Centre Party, starting in 1980 when the party was founded, until party leader Hans Janmaat was discharged in October 1984. The next chapter looks at the Centre Democrats, the party that was founded by Hans Janmaat – while still holding on to his single seat in parliament – directly after his expulsion from the Centre Party. Janmaat allegedly supported a more 'moderate' course in the party.⁷³ The 'original' Centre Party (later revived as CP'86) and the Centre Democrats now competed with each other locally and on the national level, despite several attempts to come to a merger. Both parties failed in the general election of 1986, but the Centre Democrats succeeded to get one seat in 1989. This is where the final chapter begins, at a time when the Centre Democrats seem to be much more successful, both nationally and locally, than CP'86. Gradually, the Centre Democrats manage to get more local seats and climb rapidly in the polls: at the end of 1993 they reached 5 per cent, the equivalent of eight seats in Parliament.⁷⁴ Despite the optimistic indications, the party, 'only' managed to get three parliamentary seats in the general election of 1994, before rapidly disintegrating. Finally, a conclusion will discuss the results of the analysis and reflect on the wider implications of the observations.

⁷³ Vetten, *In de ban van goed en fout*, 172.

⁷⁴ Vetten, 78.

Chapter 2: Post-War Migration and Immigration Politics in the Netherlands (1945-2000)

In order to understand the climate that the Centre Movement was operating in, and the conditions it was responding to, this chapter will provide a brief history of post-World War II immigration, the evolution of immigration politics in the Netherlands and the emergence of anti-immigration parties. After the Second World War, the Netherlands did not consider itself an immigration country; emigration was encouraged.⁷⁵ After the Dutch East Indies became independent Indonesia, 400.000 'repatriates' came to the Netherlands which was suffering from a housing shortage.⁷⁶ Soon, however, the Dutch economy started growing rapidly, and by 1960 the Netherlands – like many other Western-European countries – was suffering from a shortage of workers in labour-intensive industries.

After depleting European sources of labour, such as Italy and Spain, the Dutch government aided businesses by signing recruitment agreements in the 1960s with countries such as Morocco and Turkey.⁷⁷ In the same years, other groups migrated to the Netherlands, namely from the former colony of Suriname and Dutch territories in the Caribbean. The 'guest workers' from Morocco and Turkey were regarded as a temporary solution to deal with economic fluctuations.⁷⁸

The Dutch government mostly took a *laissez-faire* approach to these developments, leaving businesses free to control the recruitment process and even allowed clandestine immigration – the so-called *spontanen*.⁷⁹ Their name 'guest workers', illustrated the wider assumption that these workers would eventually return to their countries of origin. Their labour was welcome, but their settlement was undesirable.

The Dutch government and businesses provided various types of support for migrants in the Netherlands, such as subsidised housing and by creating jobs for expatriates.⁸⁰

⁷⁵ Obdeijn and Schrover, *Komen En Gaan*, 265.

⁷⁶ Obdeijn and Schrover, 241–42.

⁷⁷ Stephen Castles, 'The Guest-Worker in Western Europe — An Obituary', *International Migration Review* 20, no. 4 (December 1986): 765, <https://doi.org/10.1177/019791838602000402>.

⁷⁸ Castles, 765.

⁷⁹ Jan Lucassen and Leo Lucassen, *Vijf eeuwen migratie. Een verhaal van winnaars en verliezers* (Amsterdam: Atlas Contact, 2018), 136.

⁸⁰ Obdeijn and Schrover, *Komen En Gaan*, 239, 247.

Sometimes, businesses provided seemingly better contracts to guest workers, who were provided with housing, travel compensations and extra days off.⁸¹ Such initiatives were sometimes met with resistance and feelings of unequal treatment by the native Dutch population.

While the 'expatriates' enjoyed relatively little trouble to become part of Dutch society, the Surinamese migrants and the non-European guest workers had more trouble. This was strongly affected by the time of their settlement: In 1955 there was a labour shortage while the 1970s were characterised by economic recession and high unemployment.⁸² Around 1974, the recruitment of foreign workers ended.⁸³ In the meantime, most Italian and Spanish guest workers had repatriated due to better conditions at home, and free movement of workers within the EEC (European Economic Community) made future return relatively easy.⁸⁴ On the other hand, more restrictive immigration policies made a future return for Turks and Moroccans impossible, who started to use the possibility of family unification instead.⁸⁵ Like the guest workers, Surinamese migrants settled in a time with few employment possibilities and for whom restrictive immigration policies also started to apply.⁸⁶ Unemployment at the time was the highest since the Second World War: between 1979 and 1983 it tripled to 10,2 per cent.⁸⁷

This combination of high unemployment and mass-immigration fuelled anti-immigration sentiments.⁸⁸ While migrants were first not considered as a great threat, the start of economic crises fuelled the sense that migrants were taking advantage of the wealth in the Netherlands.⁸⁹ Furthermore, the visibility of Turkish and Moroccan migrants in society started to increase in the 1980s when families came over.⁹⁰ Some geopolitical events such as the Rushdie-affair in 1989 and the Gulf War greatly changed views on migrants and Islam.⁹¹

⁸¹ Obdeijn and Schrover, 266.

⁸² Obdeijn and Schrover, 263.

⁸³ Obdeijn and Schrover, 268.

⁸⁴ Lucassen and Lucassen, *Vijf eeuwen migratie*, 166.

⁸⁵ Lucassen and Lucassen, 143.

⁸⁶ Obdeijn and Schrover, *Komen En Gaan*, 255.

⁸⁷ CBS, 'Werkloosheid jaren dertig hoogste ooit', Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek, accessed 20 June 2020, <https://www.cbs.nl/nl-nl/nieuws/2009/12/werkloosheid-jaren-dertig-hoogste-ooit>.

⁸⁸ Lucassen and Lucassen, *Vijf eeuwen migratie*, 180.

⁸⁹ Obdeijn and Schrover, *Komen En Gaan*, 302.

⁹⁰ Obdeijn and Schrover, 302.

⁹¹ Obdeijn and Schrover, 303.

While the number of refugees started increasing in the 1970s, the real growth in numbers started in the 1990s.⁹² The Netherlands was often unable to handle the many requests, causing long and costly procedures of increasing numbers of asylum seekers – who were unable to work due to their status. This led to more resistance from the Dutch society towards migrants.⁹³ In the 1990s, the Netherlands was the second-most popular destination for refugees in Europe.⁹⁴

The evolution of immigration politics

The Netherlands saw its demographic composition change quickly throughout a couple decades. In this changing climate, the response of the Dutch government went through different policy phases. The first years of post-war labour-migration from Mediterranean countries were characterised by the absence of any structural approach to their integration in Dutch society and a high degree of delegation of responsibilities to newly established migrant foundations.⁹⁵ The 1960s and 1970s were dominated by the “return idea”: the conviction that non-Western migrants in the Netherlands would return home, and the needlessness of integrating them in Dutch society.⁹⁶ To prevent permanent settlement, the government encouraged cultural preservation.⁹⁷ For example, newly founded immigrant organisations received government subsidies for ‘cultural activities’.⁹⁸ This was part of multiculturalism, which emerged in the 1960s “as an ideology and as a policy for managing the cultural diversity that resulted from increased immigration to Western countries, or as a way to avoid coping with change.”⁹⁹ Immigration politics in the 1970s and 1980s depended

⁹² Obdeijn and Schrover, 323.

⁹³ Obdeijn and Schrover, 315.

⁹⁴ Obdeijn and Schrover, 328.

⁹⁵ Lucassen and Lucassen, *Vijf eeuwen migratie*, 162.

⁹⁶ Nadia Bouras, ‘Shifting Perspectives on Transnationalism: Analysing Dutch Political Discourse on Moroccan Migrants’ Transnational Ties, 1960–2010’, *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 36, no. 7 (July 2013): 1224, <https://doi.org/10.1080/01419870.2013.785580>.

⁹⁷ Lucassen and Lucassen, *Vijf eeuwen migratie*, 195.

⁹⁸ Marlou Schrover, ‘Pillarization, Multiculturalism and Cultural Freezing. Dutch Migration History and the Enforcement of Essentialist Ideas’, *BMGN - Low Countries Historical Review* 125, no. 2–3 (2010): 345, <https://doi.org/10.18352/bmgn-lchr.7124>.

⁹⁹ Schrover, 333.

highly on scientific research for the formulation of integration policies, which suggests little politicisation and a high delegation of policymaking to scientists.¹⁰⁰

Although political actors all agreed that the permanent settlement of these 'guest workers' was undesirable, their approaches differed. The VVD encouraged the stay of guest workers in society, as this would be good for economic growth.¹⁰¹ Unions and the political left were more critical of immigration, as the saturation of the supply of workers limited the unions' negotiation power.¹⁰² The unions eventually agreed to temporary employment contracts.¹⁰³ This mainly affected left-wing voters, as migrants put pressure on limited housing in lower-class neighbourhoods of large and industrial cities.¹⁰⁴

The 1980s saw the widespread realisation that these migrants would permanently settle in the Netherlands. With the institutionalisation of the multicultural perspective, the preservation of cultural identities became seen as a steppingstone for integrating into a 'multicultural' Dutch society.¹⁰⁵ Multiculturalism can be regarded as a continuation of the Dutch pillarisation tradition, which meant that society was divided into different religious groups and subcultures, to allow different groups to live side by side.¹⁰⁶ Outspoken criticism towards immigration was close to a taboo: in the 1980s, political parties agreed that any partisan objection towards immigrants would provide legitimacy to racist parties.¹⁰⁷

It was only in the 1990s that mainstream parties started to take a visible and critical stance against the effects of migration on Dutch society. This was epitomised by an opinion piece from the conservative-liberal party leader Frits Bolkestein in 1991 of the VVD, who was critical of the illiberal aspects of Islamic culture.¹⁰⁸ The 1990s and 2000s saw an end to a multiculturalist approach, and the creation of an assimilation policy, as the preservation of one's own cultural identity, especially Islamic, became regarded as an obstacle for integration.¹⁰⁹ Influenced by alarming news reports about orthodox Islam in the Netherlands,

¹⁰⁰ Peter Scholten, 'Constructing Dutch Immigrant Policy: Research–Policy Relations and Immigrant Integration Policy-Making in the Netherlands', *The British Journal of Politics & International Relations* 13, no. 1 (2011): 76, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-856X.2010.00440.x>.

¹⁰¹ Lucassen and Lucassen, *Vijf eeuwen migratie*, 130.

¹⁰² Obdeijn and Schrover, *Komen En Gaan*, 266.

¹⁰³ Obdeijn and Schrover, 266.

¹⁰⁴ Lucassen and Lucassen, *Vijf eeuwen migratie*, 146–47.

¹⁰⁵ Bouras, 'Shifting Perspectives on Transnationalism', 1225.

¹⁰⁶ Schrover, 'Pillarization, Multiculturalism and Cultural Freezing', 332–33.

¹⁰⁷ Lucassen and Lucassen, *Vijf eeuwen migratie*, 181.

¹⁰⁸ Lucassen and Lucassen, 210–11.

¹⁰⁹ Bouras, 'Shifting Perspectives on Transnationalism', 1227.

the agendas of the political establishment moved to the right, as they adopted more critical views on immigration and Islam.¹¹⁰

So, in contrast to the 1970s and 1980s; in the 1990s the depoliticised and scientific policy phase was replaced by one with strong politicisation and “the selective use of scientific expertise”.¹¹¹ This evolution was strongly influenced by perceived cultural problems in Dutch society and politics, which were not reflected by scientific research, leading to the emergence of the assimilationist policy.¹¹² Similar to developments in the rest of Western Europe, between 1960 and 2000 “immigration has moved from ‘low politics’ to ‘high politics’”.¹¹³

Anti-Immigration Parties in the Netherlands

The 1980s saw the emergence of right-wing populist parties in European democracies – with different degrees of success. The first Dutch extreme-right party, the *Nederlandse Volks-Unie* (NVU) was established in 1971, but its “aggressive” anti-immigration campaigns attracted neo-Nazis and led to a marginal existence.¹¹⁴ The NVU was classified as a criminal organisation in 1978.¹¹⁵ The historian Henry Brookman and some former NVU members started the *Nationale Centrum Partij* in December 1979, which only existed briefly: after an attack on Moroccan guest workers without a legal status who found refuge in a church in Amsterdam, the party was disbanded the next day.¹¹⁶ The party rebranded itself as the *Centrumpartij* (Centre Party). The party failed to get into parliament with the election of 1981, but in the early elections of 1982, for the first time since the Second World War, “a party that was generally considered to be right-wing extremist” managed to win a parliamentary seat.¹¹⁷

Getting a foothold in parliament was challenging but holding onto it and retaining interparty stability has proven to be almost impossible for both the Centre Movement and

¹¹⁰ Marlou Schrover, ‘Feminationalisme en hoe vrouwen belangrijk worden in het maatschappelijk debat over migratie en integratie.’, *TSEG/ Low Countries Journal of Social and Economic History* 17, no. 1 (6 June 2020): 117, <https://doi.org/10.18352/tseg.1124>.

¹¹¹ Scholten, ‘Constructing Dutch Immigrant Policy’, 88.

¹¹² Scholten, 87.

¹¹³ Thomas Faist, ‘How to Define a Foreigner? The Symbolic Politics of Immigration in German Partisan Discourse, 1978–1992’, *West European Politics* 17, no. 2 (April 1994): 51, <https://doi.org/10.1080/01402389408425014>.

¹¹⁴ Mudde and Van Holsteyn, ‘The Netherlands’, 156.

¹¹⁵ The classification ‘criminal organisation’ was reversed by the Dutch Supreme Court the next year. In Mudde, *The Ideology of the Extreme Right*, 119.

¹¹⁶ Mudde, 120.

¹¹⁷ Mudde, 120.

other new parties on the political stage. Telling examples are the first anti-elitist party the *Boerenpartij* (Farmer's Party) from 1963 to 1981, the right-wing split-off *DS'70* from the Labour Party from 1971-1981, and the *Algemeen Ouderen Verbond* (General Elderly Alliance) from 1994 to 1998. Despite some surprising election-results in their prime time – the Farmers Party seven seats, *DS'70* eight seats and the AOV six seats – they all suffered from internal disagreements, which led to a quick disintegration of the parties.¹¹⁸ The same 'curse' seems to apply to the Centre Movement, which suffered a similar fate.

The Centre Party's political manifesto of 1982 provides insight into the ideology and goals of the party. Political scientist Cas Mudde describes the first manifesto and response of society as follows:

It contained ten points which were a remarkable combination of right-wing (law and order), left-wing (protection of social benefits), and green (protection of the environment and animals) standpoints [...]. It was the tenth point, however, that would be the centre of attention in the following years: 'The Netherlands is not an immigration country, so put a stop to the stream of foreigners.' This, together with the political history of some of its early members, was the main reason that the media portrayed the CP from the outset and consistently as an extreme right party, despite the party's fierce rejection of any accusations of racism and fascism.¹¹⁹

As soon as the Centre Party entered parliament, it was ignored and widely considered as a radical movement. In the meantime, the party encountered internal disagreements about its ideological course and struggles for power.¹²⁰ The founder of the party, Henry Brookman, had to step to the background of the party due to his job at the *Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam*.¹²¹ In 1981, the Centre Party elected the relatively unknown and inexperienced politician Hans Janmaat as their party leader. Janmaat had earlier been active for the *Katholieke Volkspartij* and *DS'70*, where he failed to gain a high position due to his defiant attitude.¹²² Janmaat

¹¹⁸ Parlement.com, 'Boerenpartij', accessed 23 June 2020, <https://www.parlement.com/id/vh8lnhrpfxts/boerenpartij>; Parlement.com, 'Democratisch-Socialisten 1970 (DS'70)', accessed 23 June 2020, https://www.parlement.com/id/vh8lnhrp8wth/democratisch_socialisten_1970_ds_70; Parlement.com, 'Algemeen Ouderen Verbond (AOV)', accessed 23 June 2020, https://www.parlement.com/id/vh8lnhrptxwu/algemeen_ouderen_verbond_aov.

¹¹⁹ Mudde, *The Ideology of the Extreme Right*, 120.

¹²⁰ Vetten, *In de ban van goed en fout*, 36.

¹²¹ Niemöller, *De verschrikkelijke Janmaat*, 53.

¹²² Niemöller, 225–27.

opposed a more radical and militaristic direction of the party. On the other hand, the ‘radical’ wing opposed Hans Janmaat’s single-issue direction for the party, with too much emphasis on immigration.¹²³ Aggravating conflict, Janmaat discredited his colleagues in the press and was accused of financial mismanagement and even illegitimate use of party funds, which led to his expulsion from the party.¹²⁴ Janmaat held on to his seat and started a new party, the Centre Democrats (CD). In the meantime, the original Centre Party was declared bankrupt and revived as *CP’86*. Both parties failed to get a parliamentary seat in the 1986 election, but Janmaat’s Centre Democrats managed to return in parliament with one seat, after early elections in 1989. The Centre Democrats started to attract wider support in 1993 when they managed to gain 77 seats in municipal elections.¹²⁵

The positive electoral results of the Centre Democrats in the 1990s were possible due to a complex mixture of factors that caused “latent dissatisfaction” in society.¹²⁶ Of crucial importance for the Centre Democrats were the societal changes, primarily in big cities, due to the increasing visibility of immigrant-cultures.¹²⁷ Furthermore, the seeming convergence of political parties in the early 1990s, made it harder to distinguish ideological differences.¹²⁸ The polls were increasingly positive about the Centre Democrats and suggested that the party could get eight seats in parliament in the elections of 1994.¹²⁹

But like other young parties, this euphoria was quickly replaced by a downfall: there were several convictions for CD members for racist statements.¹³⁰ The party ‘only’ managed to obtain three seats in 1994. The same year, undercover journalists infiltrated the party and recorded shocking racist and anti-Semitic conversations behind closed doors.¹³¹ The most shocking scandal was the recording of a local CD-representative in Amsterdam Yge Graman, who claimed to have set fire to a rehab-clinic for Surinamese drug addicts, for which he later was sentenced to prison.¹³² The party quickly disintegrated as many representatives on the municipal level left. The party disappeared from parliament in 1998 when the party lost all of

¹²³ Vetten, *In de ban van goed en fout*, 172.

¹²⁴ Niemöller, *De verschrikkelijke Janmaat*, 304–5.

¹²⁵ Mudde and Van Holsteyn, ‘The Netherlands’, 148.

¹²⁶ Lucardie and Voerman, *Populisten in de Polder*, 34.

¹²⁷ Lucardie and Voerman, 34.

¹²⁸ Lucardie and Voerman, 34.

¹²⁹ Vetten, *In de ban van goed en fout*, 78.

¹³⁰ Mudde and Van Holsteyn, ‘The Netherlands’, 149.

¹³¹ Vetten, *In de ban van goed en fout*, 195.

¹³² Niemöller, *De verschrikkelijke Janmaat*, 324.

its seats. The 'face' of the extreme-right in the Netherlands, Hans Janmaat, was soon replaced by the much more successful sociologist Pim Fortuyn towards the 2000s. In contrast to the Centre Movement, Pim Fortuyn's party (LPF) *did* attract voters based on ideological proximity as opposed to mere dissatisfied protest voters.¹³³ Then, the Centre Movement never enjoyed the same reputation as its successors which affected its ability to mobilise strong and persistent support.

¹³³ Van Der Brug, Fennema, and Tillie, 'Why Some Anti-Immigrant Parties Fail and Others Succeed', 565–66.

Chapter 3: The Centre Party (1980-1984)

From the outset, it is clear the Centre Party was operating in a hostile environment. The first registered BVD-documentation of a meeting by the Centre Party, that should have taken place on the 23rd of May 1980 in Utrecht, was disturbed. The Centre Party had announced the meeting publicly in a local newspaper, but this had attracted the attention of around 100 protestors, among whom members of the Communist Party of the Netherlands (CPN), which prevented the meeting from taking place.¹³⁴ The documentation of the BVD reveals that the Centre Party wanted to continue to hold their meetings publicly, as they kept announcing them in newspapers. These meetings were repeatedly disturbed by demonstrators.

A telling announcement was published in the newspaper the *Haagsche Courant* on November 27, 1980, titled “The Netherlands is too full!!!”, with the question: “Can we in our country, with free speech and freedom of assembly, organise a meeting? You will get the answer at the public meeting of the board of The Hague when Drs Janmaat will discuss the political situation.”¹³⁵ The announcement was made to divert opponents, as the actual meeting took place in a different location than mentioned: opponents gathered at the announced ‘Hotel Babylon’, and destroyed some windows there, while the ‘real’ meeting took place at ‘Hotel Bel Air’.¹³⁶

The provocative way that the CP ‘invites’ opponents to their meetings seemed to be an attempt to obtain an ‘underdog’ position through publicity. At a meeting in Amsterdam in February 1980, disturbances of an upcoming meeting are expected: An unknown participant points out: “an important journalist from *Algemeen Dagblad* will report positively at the possible disturbance of the meeting.”¹³⁷ In a report, the BVD also noticed how the party seemed to be “looking for problems” by distributing provocative advertisements and stickers while acting surprised about the invited response from opponents.¹³⁸ The party makes

¹³⁴ Stichting Argus [hereafter abbreviated as: Argus], *BVD-Archief* [hereafter abbreviated as: *BVD*], cp-01-01, Minutes of the Centre Party’s meeting in Utrecht on 23 May 1980, 25.

¹³⁵ Argus, *BVD*, cp-01-01, Advertisement from the Centre Party in the *Haagsche Courant* from 27 November 1980, 36.

¹³⁶ Argus, *BVD*, cp-01-01, Minutes of the Centre Party’s meeting in The Hague on 17 November 1980, 31-33.

¹³⁷ Argus, *BVD*, cp-01-02, Minutes of the Centre Party’s local board meeting in Amsterdam on 12 October 1981, 37-38.

¹³⁸ Argus, *BVD*, cp-01-01, Quarterly report of the BVD of the 1st quarter of 1981, 53.

attempts to present itself as a ‘civil’ party. On the *internal* level, however, the party premeditated actions that invite opposition from opponents in order to attract publicity.

Ordedienst

In response to the continuous disturbances of meetings by the Centre Party, discussions start to emerge about founding an *ordedienst* (order service). In January 1981, members discussed the possibility of founding such a service with youngsters. Such proposals were met with strong opposition.¹³⁹ At a later main board meeting in March 1981, the party does not want to formally establish an order service but is in favour of having young people at meetings amongst the attendees.¹⁴⁰ In December that same year in Arnhem, attending young people claim that they have established a *knokploeg* (roughly translates to ‘assault group’, or ‘mob’). According to the meeting minutes, this assault group is now part of the CP, will be trained by a sports teacher (also a member of the party) and will be deployable nationwide.¹⁴¹

It remains unclear to what extent this group was actually deployed: At a board meeting in February 1982, the prominent party member Nico Konst believed that public meetings should continue and that the Centre Party needed a *zaalwacht* (hall guard).¹⁴² Later on, the service seems to become a reality, as attendees propose a “defensive character” for the service, and equipping them with military boots.¹⁴³ The first report of their presence by the BVD is registered on April 9, 1982, consisting of 10 men between 20 and 30 years of age, dressed in blue suits.¹⁴⁴ The radical and militarised image of such a security service starts to concern some members of the party: on the 10th of May 1982, one attendee at a meeting wants to abolish the service, as it puts the CP “on the same line as the NVU”, while Janmaat is still in favour of such a group due to continuous assaults by opponents.¹⁴⁵

The service quickly proves to threaten the image of the party: A large fight breaks out in Leiden in September 6, 1982, two days before the general election between the ‘service’, described by the BVD as “consisting of 30 to 40 skinheads”, and opponents.¹⁴⁶ On December

¹³⁹ Argus, *BVD*, cp-01-01, Minutes of the Centre Party’s meeting in Amsterdam on 18 January 1981, 39.

¹⁴⁰ Argus, *BVD*, cp-01-01, Minutes of the Centre Party’s main board meeting in The Hague on 6 March 1981, 48.

¹⁴¹ Argus, *BVD*, cp-01-02, Minutes of the Centre Party’s meeting in Arnhem on 3 December 1981, 13.

¹⁴² Argus, *BVD*, cp-01-02, Minutes of the Centre Party’s main board meeting in The Hague on 19 February 1982, 50.

¹⁴³ Argus, *BVD*, cp-01-02, Minutes of the Centre Party’s meeting in Janmaat’s house on 13 March 1982, 54.

¹⁴⁴ Argus, *BVD*, cp-01-02, Minutes of the Centre Party’s local board in Amsterdam on 30 April 1982, 61.

¹⁴⁵ Argus, *BVD*, cp-01-03, Minutes of the Centre Party’s local board meeting in Rotterdam on 16 May 1982, 3.

¹⁴⁶ Argus, *BVD*, cp-01-03, Minutes of the Centre Party’s public meeting in Leiden on 6 September 1982, 41-43.

15, 1982, the BVD similarly reports the presence of “several skinheads” at a meeting in Rotterdam,¹⁴⁷ and “plus-minus 100 ‘Skinheads’” at a meeting two days later in Amsterdam at the Krasnapolsky hotel.¹⁴⁸

On 23 December 1982, bad publicity about the party is welcomed by party members after the escalations, as any form of publicity is considered beneficial.¹⁴⁹ By 1984, however, the BVD reports signs of “absence of homogeneity” within the party’s leadership: the cause of this is a disagreement between the supposed “moderate” and “extreme-right” currents.¹⁵⁰ Not only opposition to the *ordedienst* creates conflict: Janmaat is accused of financial mismanagement.¹⁵¹ The national newspaper *NRC* announced that a more militaristic current of the party is in favour of an *ordedienst*.¹⁵² The parliamentary staff (led by Janmaat) sends out a letter to the main board of the party on the 27th of August 1984, distancing itself from the radicalisation within the party as described in the press.¹⁵³ Allegations of Janmaat’s financial mismanagement and accusations to other party members in the press lead Janmaat to be discharged from the Centre Party in October 1984.¹⁵⁴

The *internal* discussions about the party’s ‘order service’ reveal how actions of the party were strongly influenced by worries about its *external* image. Members were worried that the service would provide legitimacy to opponents’ accusations of racism and fascism. This has caused disagreements about the right course of action and has contributed to the eventual rupture in the Centre Party: the militaristic character of such a service was so threatening to the party’s image, that Hans Janmaat even decided to ‘betray’ his fellow party members to save his reputation – as earlier meeting minutes reveal that Janmaat himself was in favour of the order service.

¹⁴⁷ Argus, *BVD*, cp-01-04, Minutes of the Centre Party’s closed meeting in Rotterdam on 15 December 1982, 28.

¹⁴⁸ Argus, *BVD*, cp-01-04, Minutes of the Centre Party’s meeting in Amsterdam on 17 December 1982, 32.

¹⁴⁹ Argus, *BVD*, cp-01-04, Minutes of the Centre Party’s meeting in the house of a member [name redacted by the BVD] on 23 December 1982, 44.

¹⁵⁰ Argus, *BVD*, cp-02-06, Quarterly report by the BVD of the 1st quarter of 1984, 31.

¹⁵¹ Argus, *BVD*, cp-03-01 Minutes of the Centre Party’s main board meeting in the Hague on 4 May 1984, 10.

¹⁵² Argus, *BVD*, cp-03-02, Minutes of the intelligence services weekly ‘Aurora’ meeting of 5 June 1984, 32.

¹⁵³ Argus, *BVD*, cp-03-05, Written statement of the Centre Party’s parliamentary staff directed at the party’s main board on 27 August 1984, 24.

¹⁵⁴ Argus, *BVD*, cp-04-01, Minutes of the intelligence services weekly ‘Aurora’ meeting of 16 October 1984, 16.

A 'normal' party?

Not only is the *ordedienst* controversial, the party actively tried to distance itself from all other forms of radicalism. At the congress in Utrecht, the party decided to not use a four-leaf clover as the party's symbol, as "this evokes extreme-right sentiments".¹⁵⁵ On August 27 1982, the party bans several members due to their side activities for controversial organisations, which could too easily lead to fascist allegations; at the same meeting, a person who kept dressing in black is also banned.¹⁵⁶ In order to deal with accusations of racism, a letter shared with party members provides careful answers to difficult questions by the press.¹⁵⁷ One member at a meeting says that the CP needs to find a way to lose the "fascist label".¹⁵⁸

Despite being aware of their bad image, and the attempts to distance themselves from radical figures and organisations, the Centre Party and its members are still seen as engaging in strange behaviour and associating themselves with questionable figures. The BVD continuously reports foul language at the party's meetings: it is described as "language that would scare the 'normal' citizen"¹⁵⁹ and as "very racist".¹⁶⁰ Furthermore, the party continues to attract radical figures: the 'skinheads' that protected the CP in their meeting in Amsterdam on December 1982, also distributed their own propaganda. A BVD-report shows stickers with the text "Blacks Acquitted Whites Committed – Fight for white rights".¹⁶¹ In June 1983, people who were distributing flyers for the CP in Arnhem were also caught with violently discriminating pamphlets against Turks. The pamphlet demanded Turks to leave the city before August and threatened that their property would be seized, their children shot, their women raped, and the men hanged.¹⁶² After house searches by the police, the distributors turned out to be active CP members.¹⁶³ Janmaat also makes problematic claims in the

¹⁵⁵ Argus, *BVD*, cp-01-02, Minutes of a large Centre Party's meeting in the convention centre *Jaarbeurs* in Utrecht with 200-300 participants on 19 March 1982, 56.

¹⁵⁶ Argus, *BVD*, cp-01-03, Minutes of the Centre Party's meeting in the house of Janmaat on 27 August 1982, 38.

¹⁵⁷ Argus, *BVD*, cp-01-02, Guidelines for Centre Party members on how to respond to questions by journalists, 65.

¹⁵⁸ Argus, *BVD*, cp-02-05, Minutes of the Centre Party's local board meeting in Amsterdam on 20 December 1983, 25.

¹⁵⁹ Argus, *BVD*, cp-01-03, Minutes of the Centre Party's closed meeting in Rotterdam on 28 September 1982, 54.

¹⁶⁰ Argus, *BVD*, cp-02-04, Minutes of the Centre Party's meeting in Delft on 13 September 1983, 2.

¹⁶¹ Argus, *BVD*, cp-01-04, Minutes of the Centre Party's meeting in Amsterdam on 17 December 1982, 36.

¹⁶² Argus, *BVD*, cp-02-02, Pamphlet reading "To all the Turks of Arnhem" distributed in June 1983, 40.

¹⁶³ Argus, *BVD*, cp-02-02, BVD report on the arrest of Centre Party members in Arnhem for distributing 'vey discriminating' pamphlets in Arnhem in June 1983, 40.

meetings, such as that “all Turks need to bugger off if they don’t like it here”¹⁶⁴ and that abortions should be allowed, as it can halt the population growth of minorities.¹⁶⁵ In one of the meetings, participants discussed a court decision that prohibited one of the CP pamphlets. Janmaat disagreed with the decision and the party decided to take a tougher stance in the future, as the pamphlets will be put in “harder language”.¹⁶⁶

Political scientist Mudde had already stressed the Centre Party’s “fierce rejection of any accusations of racism and fascism”,¹⁶⁷ and these reported incidents and activities suggest that the CP was distancing itself ‘just enough’ from radical figures to save their image. However, the claims that the Centre Party was very racist and radical miss the crucial fact that the Centre Movement was very aware of this reputation, and that they also held back. On the other hand, claims from authors such as Joost Niemöller about the seemingly unjustified hostilities towards the party are difficult to recognise, given the legitimate concerns about the radical character and behaviour of some members and associates. These observations show that the Centre Party had a seemingly necessary relationship with radical figures.

The ‘pure good people’ versus the elite and Others:

The Centre Party has a clear anti-elitist character from the beginning. Delegitimising other political actors is a recurring strategy. The CP paints an image of combatting certain enemies: In a locally spread pamphlet, the CP rejects pacifists – the “ultra-left” – with their ideas to get out of NATO, while the Soviets are building up their arms: “defending a safe Netherlands turns out to be a taboo, as well as the problem of the pouring in of foreigners”.¹⁶⁸ This way, the CP connects the ‘ultra-left’ with immigration.

Very telling about the party’s ideas is a report written by party member Danny Segers. It is unclear if this report was distributed publicly but it was collected by the BVD. The title reads: “State-dangerous leftist groups take power without war”.¹⁶⁹ In the report, Segers analysed municipal programmes of three left-wing parties (PSP, CPN and PPR) and concludes that the antifascists should be regarded as the true fascists that are aiming for a dictatorship

¹⁶⁴ Argus, BVD, cp-02-03, Minutes of the Centre Party’s meeting in Amersfoort on 2 September 1983, 40.

¹⁶⁵ Argus, BVD, cp-02-06, Minutes of the Centre Party’s main board meeting in The Hague on 6 April 1984, 45.

¹⁶⁶ Argus, BVD, cp-01-03, Minutes of the Centre Party’s meeting in Amsterdam on 25 June 1982, 25.

¹⁶⁷ Mudde, *The Ideology of the Extreme Right*, 120.

¹⁶⁸ Argus, BVD, cp-01-02, An early pamphlet by the Centre Party before they were in parliament, 52.

¹⁶⁹ Argus, BVD, cp-02-02, An analysis of left-wing party programmes for The Hague’s municipal elections of 1982 by Centre Party member Danny Segers titled ‘State-dangerous leftist groups take power without war’, 1.

and an undemocratic society. The report is filled with fear over the pacifying goals, that would facilitate terror and anarchy on the streets. The report ends with a warning for these “red fascists” who want to destroy society – “the enemy is among us”.¹⁷⁰ Similar language towards the left is used in a flyer, distributed in Arnhem, that warns against “red-fascism”.¹⁷¹ In a pamphlet for local elections in Rotterdam (16 May 1984) the CP similarly targets its left opponents: the Labour Party (PvdA) is accused of spreading prostitution all over the city because it had prohibited the concentration of prostitution in a neighbourhood.¹⁷²

For the party, it is all about publicity. At a dinner to celebrate the CP’s first seat in parliament, Hans Janmaat shared his provocative strategy. According to Janmaat, publicity is the most important strategy for the party to grow: “Janmaat will seduce other MPs to throw curses at the CP”.¹⁷³ The CP also sues its opponents, including the Communist Party of the Netherlands (CPN)¹⁷⁴ and the Anne Frank Foundation, which Janmaat claims should attract “enough publicity”.¹⁷⁵

On the *external* level, the Centre Party was actively blaming left-wing parties and anti-fascist organisations for problems in Dutch society and the threat that they pose for the country’s safety – this is clearly reflected in the distributed pamphlets. This way, warnings about the CP were redirected back to their source, and the enemies of the CP were accused of preserving a taboo. Immigration and pacifism were expanded to a wider view that left political elites are illegitimate. *Internal* discussions revealed that the party’s aversive attitude was not simply a symptom of its frustration but part of a more intricate strategy to provoke political elites into misbehaviour and to attract more publicity. The party’s seeming ‘amateurism’ and Janmaat’s proactive attitude were not necessarily a sign of its nonchalance but were often premeditated actions designed to delegitimise opponents.

Immigration

Then there is the CP’s most important issue: immigration. The CP had to find ways to problematise immigration and to convert this controversial topic into an appealing point for

¹⁷⁰ Ibid, 11.

¹⁷¹ Argus, BVD, cp-02-02, Pamphlet of the Centre Party distributed in Arnhem dating from 1983, 48.

¹⁷² Argus, BVD, cp-03-01, Pamphlet of the Centre Party for local elections in Rotterdam of 16 May 1984, 7.

¹⁷³ Argus, BVD, cp-01-03, Minutes of the Centre Party’s dinner after Janmaat’s first day in parliament in The Hague on 5 October 1982, 47.

¹⁷⁴ Argus, BVD, cp-01-01, Minutes of the Centre Party’s meeting in Amsterdam on 18 January 1981, 39.

¹⁷⁵ Argus, BVD, cp-01-02, Minutes of the Centre Party’s main board meeting in Amsterdam on 7 May 1982, 69.

voters. The CP employed two strategies in an attempt to mobilise voters around immigration issues. First, local issues are expanded to the view that immigration and moral decay is a wider problem that haunts the nation. Second, it presented itself as a 'normal' party that just wanted to break a taboo.

The strategy of expanding local issues is explicitly discussed in a meeting in Arnhem in December 1981. In response to the failure to gain a parliamentary seat in 1981, Nico Konst said that it happens often that a party cannot break through nationally, but that acting locally like the Socialist Party (SP) can benefit the CP: "Support local interest in order to win the hearts of the local population for the party."¹⁷⁶ At the same meeting, a pamphlet is discussed that is meant to attract party members in Nijmegen: It refers to a local youth centre called "Doornroosje", where supposedly narcotics are being sold and used.¹⁷⁷ Additionally, the pamphlet criticises "Café de Plak" where a monthly "paedophile-evening" is organised.¹⁷⁸ Similarly, at a later meeting, members are requested to join neighbourhood committees "in order to interest people for the CP."¹⁷⁹

Another locally distributed pamphlet in Amsterdam for the Municipal elections of June 1982 tells readers that new buildings will be constructed for the settlement of "a group that desires a completely different way of life without asking mobile-home occupants and residents if they wanted this."¹⁸⁰ The new inhabitants would not be charged a ground lease, which allegedly caused legal inequality. Such language against foreigners continued towards Muslims in the Netherlands: A pamphlet distributed in Arnhem criticises ritual slaughter in the "Rijnstraat/Ketelstraat".¹⁸¹ In party propaganda, newspaper clippings are organised in a specific way to suggest a link between immigration and crime. For example, headings such as "More minorities" and "Taxi driver knocked down with brick" are printed next to each other.¹⁸²

¹⁷⁶ Argus, *BVD*, cp-01-02, Minutes of the Centre Party's meeting in Arnhem on 3 December 1981, 13.

¹⁷⁷ Argus, *BVD*, cp-01-02, Pamphlet by the Centre Party made for the 'Citizens of Nijmegen' in 1981, 17.

¹⁷⁸ Ibid.

¹⁷⁹ Argus, *BVD*, cp-02-06, Minutes of the Centre Party's local board meeting in Amsterdam on 24 February 1984, 14.

¹⁸⁰ Argus, *BVD*, cp-01-02, Pamphlet made for the municipal elections in Amsterdam of June 1982, 67.

¹⁸¹ Argus, *BVD*, cp-02-01, Pamphlet made for the 'Citizens of Arnhem', 21.

¹⁸² Argus, *BVD*, cp-01-05, Copies of distributed pamphlets at the Centre Party meeting in Nijmegen on 18 March 1983, 42-43.

The issue of Islam got more attention *internally*. At a meeting, Janmaat warned for the fertility rate of Muslims: “In 18 years Islam will rule over Amsterdam”.¹⁸³ In a draft version for the European Elections of 1984, collected by the BVD, “combating of Islamisation of our cities” is one of the party positions.¹⁸⁴ However, It cannot be found in the final version for the European Elections.¹⁸⁵ This threat of overpopulation is also cleverly wrapped in a local way for a local election in Rotterdam in 1984: “In Rotterdam, you can see and smell that in an industrialised country, overpopulation leads to acid rain, soil contamination and traffic chaos.”¹⁸⁶

The party emphasised its benign intentions and its adherence to democracy to justify its anti-immigration stance. A newspaper interview with Nico Konst, collected by the BVD reads: “As opposed to the NVU, we do not strive for ‘the swimming back’ of Surinamese, anti-Semitism, racism, etcetera. The Centre Party has as its main goal, to democratically make negotiable the taboo around the foreigner problem.”¹⁸⁷ Similarly, in a pamphlet for the municipal elections in Rotterdam, the party justifies: “It would be crazy to prohibit our party, as we are the only party that dares to stand up for the own population (...) and to do something about that in a democratic way”.¹⁸⁸ In response to Joke Kniesmeijer’s accusations of racism in her critical booklet on the Centre Party (written for the Anne Frank Foundation), the party released a response in the party magazine *Centrumnieuws*. The Centre party believes that there is a profound ‘untruth’ in the booklet. The Centre Party is not racist, as both minorities and the Dutch are victims of national policies: “The national politics are the scapegoat, not the minorities.”¹⁸⁹ Through this response, the CP cleverly distanced itself from racist allegations, despite its problematic focus on immigration.

However, this focus on immigration started to become an issue *within* the party: at a meeting in May 1983, attendees discussed a television report on the Centre Party. The party’s main board wanted to give more attention to other issues, but “the foreigners still need to be

¹⁸³ Argus, BVD, cp-02-06, Minutes of the Centre Party’s local board meeting in Amsterdam on 24 February 1984, 14.

¹⁸⁴ Argus, BVD, cp-02-06, Draft manifesto of the Centre Party of the European elections of 1984, 19.

¹⁸⁵ RUG, RDCDPP, “CP (1984) Europees programma.”, accessed 24 June 2020, <http://dnpprepo.ub.rug.nl/70/>.

¹⁸⁶ Argus, BVD, cp-03-01, Pamphlet of the Centre Party for local elections in Rotterdam of 16 May 1984, 7.

¹⁸⁷ Argus, BVD, cp-01-02, Newspaper clipping of interview with Centre Party member Nico Konst in an undated edition of the Centre Party’s magazine *Middenweg*, 22.

¹⁸⁸ Argus, BVD, cp-01-03, Pamphlet by the Centre Party for the municipal elections in Rotterdam of 2 June 1982, 4.

¹⁸⁹ Argus, BVD, cp-01-05, Article in the 1st edition of 1983 of the party magazine *CentrumNieuws*, 12.

given the most attention.”¹⁹⁰ In February 1984, this discussion started again: next time when the CP is on television, more attention should be given to “terror, unsafety, etc.”¹⁹¹ Nico Konst had big ambitions for the party. In the foreword of the party magazine *CentrumNieuws* he wrote: “The coming year we need to prove that we are endlessly more than what the press calls ‘a group of dissatisfied people’, but the fourth political current that wants to pull this country out of the swamp.”¹⁹² The last registered meeting by the BVD, before Janmaat’s dischargement from the party, took place on 28 September 1984 and clearly shows the ideological disagreement between Janmaat and Konst: Janmaat attributed the party’s success to its ability to “break open” population politics.¹⁹³ According to Nico Konst, however, the party should become broader, with a better ideology to become the fourth political current, and “not a protest party”.¹⁹⁴

The impact on local communities was a recurrent focus of the Centre Party. *Externally*, the party used an expanding strategy to bring attention to local issues, which were implicitly linked to a wider sense of moral decay and the ‘threat’ of immigration in the Netherlands. In response to allegations of its racism, the Centre Party communicated its democratic and benign intentions. The party was also legitimising its own position as the only party that was addressing these issues. *Internally*, the party explicitly discussed its focus on local issues as a strategy to attract support. While the party was already discussing the issue of Islam internally, this issue did not fully surface in its external communication yet, perhaps due to the resistance that this would invite. Despite its seemingly discriminatory and provocative language, the party was careful not to go too far. By reflecting on the publicity that the party received, some party members concluded that there is too much focus on immigration. This prominence of the immigration issue caused disagreements within the party and together with other problematic behaviour of Hans Janmaat, he was expelled from the party.

¹⁹⁰ Argus, *BVD*, cp-02-01, Minutes of the Centre Party’s main board meeting in The Hague on 30 May 1983, 45.

¹⁹¹ Argus, *BVD*, cp-02-06, Minutes of the Centre Party’s main board meeting in the Hague on 10 February 1984, 4.

¹⁹² Argus, *BVD*, cp-02-05, Foreword about the ‘coming year’ 1984 by Centre Party member Nico Konst in the Centre Party magazine *CentrumNieuws*, 35.

¹⁹³ Argus, *BVD*, cp-03-05, Minutes of the Centre Party’s main board meeting in The Hague on 28 September 1984, 61.

¹⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

Chapter 4: The Early Years of the Centre Democrats (1984-1989)

After Janmaat is expelled from the Centre Party, he starts his own: The Centre Democrats, registered on November 7, 1984.¹⁹⁵ The following years are characterised by competition between the Centre Party and the new Centre Democrats of Janmaat, despite some attempts to come to a merger. Janmaat still holds onto the parliamentary seat but risked losing this in the election of 1986. A major challenge for the Centre Democrats was the seeming incompetence of the entire Centre Movement after the rupture within the Centre Party.

In order to gain members, which the CD now lacked, the party tried to communicate that it is *not* the CP. An early pamphlet, distributed in Delft, Rotterdam and Utrecht simply reads: “Centre Democrats support the member of parliament Hans Janmaat”.¹⁹⁶ This strategy is explicitly communicated in a meeting: Janmaat says that the prominence of his name on the pamphlet is only meant to communicate the relationship with the Centre Democrats.¹⁹⁷ In a letter that is provided together with an ‘information package’ for prospective members, the CD emphasises that it is a “totally new party” and not a “continuation of the C.P”.¹⁹⁸

Because the Centre Party still had the rights to airtime on television and radio, the CD started to distribute cassette tapes with recordings of Hans Janmaat in Parliament around The Hague to promote him.¹⁹⁹ At a meeting in May 1986, the tension between the parties became clear: Janmaat expected to lose his seat in the upcoming elections and therefore: “everything must be done to prevent Segers from getting into parliament.”²⁰⁰ The CD has frustrated the CP by registering the name Centre Party at the *Kiesraad* to disable them from using that name in future elections; the original Centre Party will have to use the name CP’86 – which Janmaat also opposed.²⁰¹ Both the CP and CD fail to obtain a seat in the general

¹⁹⁵ Argus, *BVD*, cp-04-01, Letter by Hans Janmaat to ‘all sympathisers of the Central Democratic thought’, 60.

¹⁹⁶ Argus, *BVD*, cp-04-04, BVD report on the pamphlet distribution campaigns of the Centre Democrats in Utrecht and Rotterdam on 4 and 5 May 1985 respectively, 18.

¹⁹⁷ Argus, *BVD*, cp-04-04, Minutes of the Centre Democrats’ main board meeting in Veenendaal on 13 May 1985, 34.

¹⁹⁸ Argus, *BVD*, cp-05-02, Letter provided with ‘information package’ of the Centre Democrats dating from around January 1986, 18.

¹⁹⁹ Argus, *BVD*, cp-05-01, Police report on the distribution of cassette tapes by the Centre Democrats in The Hague on 9 October 1985, 46.

²⁰⁰ Argus, *BVD*, cp-06-04, Minutes of the Centre Democrats’ meeting in The Hague on 16 May 1986, 15.

²⁰¹ *Ibid.*

election of 1986, and the original CP is declared bankrupt.²⁰² The newly established CP'86 and CD took part in the provincial elections of 1987, unsuccessfully. Nevertheless, the CD is optimistic: At a meeting in April 1987, the results are called "hopeful".²⁰³

Despite competition, there have been attempts at reconciliation or even come to a merger between the two parties. In a meeting in October 1985, Janmaat still regarded cooperation possible, and local connections should not be ruled out.²⁰⁴ A meeting in Kedichem in March 1986 between the Centre Party and Centre Democrats turned into a disaster, as the participants were attacked by anti-fascists. One member of the Centre Democrats, Will Schuurman, lost her leg, as the hotel where they met is set on fire and many had no choice but to jump down from the first floor.²⁰⁵ This final attempt to merge on the national level failed and damaged the morale of both parties. Nevertheless, the CD was successful on the local level: some local representatives of the CP decided to join Janmaat's CD. A meeting with local representatives of the CP in the Hague in August 1986, was characterised by unanimity, and the absence of any desire to work together with the original Centre Party.²⁰⁶

During these years of competition *within* the Centre Movement, the CD had trouble to be taken seriously. In an attempt to reverse the incompetent image after the split-off from the CP, the Centre Democrats communicated *externally* that they were *not* the Centre Party. Within the CD, this distancing from the CP is explicitly communicated in meetings. These observations suggest that the Centre Democrats were aware of their added weakness: the association with the original Centre Party and a questionable reputation as a viable political actor. This is in line with the party's earlier attempts at highlighting its own legitimacy by portraying its political opponents as illegitimate.

²⁰² Argus, *BVD*, cp-05-02, Newspaper clipping of 'Bankruptcy of CP requested' in *Het Parool* on 10 April 1986, 47.

²⁰³ Argus, *BVD*, cp-07-01, Minutes of the Centre Democrats' meeting in the house of a member [name redacted by the BVD] on 11 April 1987, 18.

²⁰⁴ Argus, *BVD*, cp-05-02, Minutes of the Centre Democrats' local boards of The Hague, Leiden, Rotterdam and Dordrecht in The Hague on 23 October 1985, 15.

²⁰⁵ Niemöller, *De verschrikkelijke Janmaat*, 21–23.

²⁰⁶ Argus, *BVD*, cp-06-04, Minutes of the Centre Democrats' local board meeting in The Hague on 25 July 1986, 25.

Similar Tactics

The anti-elitist trend continued under the Centre Democrats. The violent attack by anti-fascists in Kedichem of 1986, provided legitimacy to the Centre Movement's claims about left-wing violence. In their attempt to win a seat in the Provincial Elections of 1987, the CD had distributed a pamphlet that warned against left-wing "terrorism", who would be supported by government subsidies to combat against NATO to make "our borders undefendable against a potential enemy" and even set fire to Dutch businesses.²⁰⁷ The threat of left-wing movements was connected to an ineffective 'political elite'. According to the pamphlet, the PvdA would justify it, and the Christian Democrats (CDA) and VVD would be "too weak" to do anything about it.²⁰⁸

Expansion also continued, most strongly and vividly with foreigners, who were linked to the unsafety of Dutch society. This was done by planning commemorations of crimes where foreigners were the perpetrators. For example, in April 1988, the party asked for permission to lay a wreath at a café, where five years earlier a Turk shot and killed five Dutch people.²⁰⁹ Similarly, the CD wanted to demonstrate in Rotterdam in 1989 at a metro stop where three young women were stabbed to death by a Surinamese man.²¹⁰ Using local events for publicity was explicitly justified at a meeting. Janmaat explained: "Localising a situation remains important".²¹¹ However, the demonstrations by the Centre Movement were almost always forbidden.²¹² At a meeting, an unknown person noted that the commemoration in Rotterdam will not take place, as they will not let themselves get beat up "by a bunch of lefties".²¹³ This did not seem to be a problem for the party. The BVD notes "At least the announcement of the demonstration has provided enough publicity for the CD."²¹⁴ These observations *within*

²⁰⁷ Argus, *BVD*, cp-07-01, Pamphlet by the Centre Democrats titled 'In Memoriam the State of the Netherlands' for the provincial elections of 1987, 7-8.

²⁰⁸ *Ibid*, 8.

²⁰⁹ Argus, *BVD*, cp-07-01, Police report on the Centre Democrats' request to lay a wreath in Delft in January 1988, 43.

²¹⁰ Argus, *BVD*, cp-07-02, Minutes of the Centre Democrats' main board meeting in The Hague on 1 April 1989, 74.

²¹¹ Argus, *BVD*, cp-07-02, Minutes of the Centre Democrats' local board meeting in Utrecht on 8 December 1988, 54.

²¹² Vetten, *In de ban van goed en fout*, 261.

²¹³ Argus, *BVD*, cp-07-02, Minutes of the Centre Democrats' main board meeting in Utrecht on 13 May 1989, 81.

²¹⁴ *Ibid*.

the party suggest that provocative events were all part of the party's goal to attract as much publicity as possible and that members were bluffing.

Sometimes, expanding of immigration is done in less subtle ways. An example is the pamphlet text: "All guest workers and so-called refugees have to leave the country because their parasitic effect is detrimental to our economy and employment opportunities."²¹⁵ Another example is the increased attention to infectious diseases like HIV. Noted explicitly in their party programme of 1989, the CD demands that refugees be checked for "the presence of infectious diseases", thereby linking foreigners to a threat to public health.²¹⁶

Despite their seemingly radical language in some of their *external* communication, the Centre Democrats continued to distance themselves from extremism – not only visibly. In meetings, the party's leadership hoped that in the future no NVU members will be able to join the party.²¹⁷ Cooperation with the NPD (*Nationaldemokratische Partei Deutschlands*) was not deemed attractive, because "quite some extreme-right elements are in this group."²¹⁸ Furthermore, contact with the Front National is weakening, because they were also in contact with the Italian MSI. Janmaat found the MSI too extreme: "Janmaat believes that the MSI points up their right om too quickly."²¹⁹ These clear examples of *internal* discussions show that the party continued to be careful with whom they associated.

Policy and Language Shifts

In the meantime, however, it becomes clear that there were certain language shifts since Janmaat has left the CP. The CD was becoming increasingly occupied with the threat of Islam. A controversial document by Drs Vierling, for internal use titled: "Basic principles protection of Dutch citizenship" contains a reference to Islam: "Islam will be provided space as a religion, but combated where the Islam does not acknowledge the separation between church and

²¹⁵ Argus, *BVD*, cp-07-02, Pamphlet of the Centre Democrats dating from around December 1988, 20.

²¹⁶ RUG, *RDCDPP*, "CD (1989) Concept partij-programma", accessed 24 June 2020, <http://dnpprepo.ub.rug.nl/553/>.

²¹⁷ Argus, *BVD*, cp-07-01, Minutes of the Centre Democrats' meeting in the house of a member [name redacted by the BVD] on 11 April 1987, 19.

²¹⁸ Argus, *BVD*, cp-07-01, Minutes of the Centre Democrats' main board meeting in Rotterdam on 8 April 1988, 58.

²¹⁹ Argus, *BVD*, cp-07-02, Minutes of the Centre Democrats' meeting about the foundation of a youth movement in Schiphol on 11 August 1988, 13.

state.”²²⁰ The Centre Democrats are explicitly against “ritual slaughter” in their party programme of 1989, while this remained absent from earlier election programmes.²²¹ Furthermore, an increased pragmatic side of the CD started to emerge: It sees an opportunity to force poor Dutch people to educate foreigners in Dutch “living habits” for those foreigners that do not emigrate.²²² So, on the *external* level, the anti-immigration stance has become more visible, especially with regards to Islam. This is likely a result of the increased influence of Hans Janmaat. Journalist Joost Niemöller, for example, applauded Janmaat for being one of the first politicians to put Islam on the Dutch political agenda.²²³

Although the Centre Party was more favourable of European integration, the Centre Democrats seemed to take more of an anti-elitist stance towards the EC (European Community) and international agreements.²²⁴ In a pamphlet, anti-elitism is now also directed abroad: “The fishermen are almost ruined. Now it’s the farmer’s turn.”²²⁵ Production limits would lead to milk shortages and inferior imports, causing farmers to commit suicide. “The EC is not at all a financially beneficial case for the Dutch population. We are only paying for international politicians.”²²⁶ In a pamphlet distributed in Wassenaar in 1988, the CD warns that the Dutch government will “lose control over finances” due to the events of “1992”, likely to refer to the Maastricht treaty.²²⁷ Furthermore, it is asking the upper classes of Wassenaar to vote for the CD, against international pressure, and “for [our] own business life”.²²⁸ These pamphlets were specifically targeted at fishermen, farmers or the upper-middle class. In the official party programme of 1989, such Euro-sceptic claims remain absent.²²⁹ These *external* messages to potential voters show that the targeting of specific groups was not always consistent with the party’s official positions.

²²⁰ Argus, *BVD*, cp-04-04, Document for internal use by drs. Vierling titled ‘Basic principles protection of Dutch citizenship’, 4.

²²¹ RUG, *RDCDPP*, “CD (1989) Concept partij-programma”, accessed 24 June 2020, <http://dnpprepo.ub.rug.nl/553/>.

²²² *Ibid.*

²²³ Niemöller, *De verschrikkelijke Janmaat*, 72–74.

²²⁴ The European Community is qualified as the ‘most successful European organisation’ in RUG, *RDCDPP*, “CP (1984) Europees programma.”, accessed 24 June 2020, <http://dnpprepo.ub.rug.nl/70/>.

²²⁵ Argus, *BVD*, cp-07-02, Pamphlet of the Centre Democrats dating from around December 1988, 58.

²²⁶ *Ibid.*

²²⁷ Argus, *BVD*, cp-07-02, Pamphlet of the Centre Democrats for ‘inhabitants of the villa districts’ of Wassenaar on 5 December 1988, 57.

²²⁸ *Ibid.*

²²⁹ RUG, *RDCDPP*, “CD (1989) Concept partij-programma”, accessed 24 June 2020, <http://dnpprepo.ub.rug.nl/553/>.

Lastly, the Centre Democrats made big statements about their own importance, especially towards to general election of 1989 – in contrast to the more careful Centre Party in 1980-1984. This is possibly a consequence of the political career of Hans Janmaat, who by now had four years of parliamentary experience. For example, the CD had distributed pamphlets in the Hague in December 1988 that highlighted the alleged influence that Janmaat has had on immigration: “Many foreigners are already being chased away, and we consider that a consequence of the performances of mister Janmaat when he was in parliament.”²³⁰

Infiltration by the BVD

Striking about the end of the eighties and the Centre Democrats is that the party started to become aware that they were being infiltrated by the secret service. In October 1986, the CD decided to act more carefully, and to not date and number invitations and minutes of meetings, “in order to obscure the view of opponents.”²³¹ The pamphlet of the provincial elections of 1987 already reads that the party has been infiltrated by the BVD, allegedly as a response to Janmaat’s warnings about the erosion of democracy – due to leftist violence.²³² The CD accused the BVD of infiltration because it did not want the CD to cause unrest in society, and therefore created a “rupture” in the Centre Party.²³³ Meeting minutes from the BVD of April 1988 note: “According to Janmaat, the party is being infiltrated by the BVD. A person who was approached by the BVD, has directly gone to Janmaat and informed him about this interaction.”²³⁴ Janmaat announced that he wanted to receive as much publicity as possible about this occurrence.²³⁵ On a main board meeting in January 1989, Janmaat believed that the BVD is trying to infiltrate on a high level.²³⁶ Ironically, this claim by Janmaat is registered in the meeting minutes of the BVD. Finally, on the 16th of January 1989, Janmaat sent a letter to the Minister of Internal Affairs, requesting him to let the BVD seize their

²³⁰ Argus, *BVD*, cp-07-02, Pamphlet of the Centre Democrats dating from around December 1988, 20.

²³¹ Argus, *BVD*, cp-06-05, Minutes of the Centre Democrats’ main board meeting in the house of Willem Vreeswijk on 24 October 1986, 37.

²³² Argus, *BVD*, cp-07-01, Pamphlet by the Centre Democrats titled ‘In Memoriam the State of the Netherlands’ for the provincial elections of 1987, 7-8.

²³³ *Ibid.*

²³⁴ Argus, *BVD*, cp-07-01, Minutes of the Centre Democrats’ main board meeting in Rotterdam on 8 April 1988, 57.

²³⁵ *Ibid.*

²³⁶ Argus, *BVD*, cp-07-02, Minutes of the Centre Democrats’ main board meeting in Wassenaar on 14 January 1989, 48.

activities.²³⁷ This is one of the last registrations of BVD activity within the Centre Democrats; meeting minutes by the BVD are no longer available after 1989.

The *external* communication of the Centre Democrats illustrate how they used the infiltration by the BVD as a sign of their own importance, and they presented it as the cause for conflicts within the Centre Party. This way the malfunctioning of the party was blamed on other actors. *Within* the party, it becomes clear that the BVD was following the party. Janmaat believed that a good strategy was to use the infiltration as a publicity stunt. Shortly after these occurrences, the Centre Democrats entered a new era: Janmaat has managed to get a seat in parliament for the second time in 1989. CP'86 has failed.

²³⁷ Argus, *BVD*, cp-07-02, Letter to the Minister of Internal Affairs from Hans Janmaat on 16 January 1989, 62.

Chapter 5: The Rise and Fall of the Centre Democrats (1989-1998)

In the last decade or so, the Centre Democrats experienced a volatile period that started optimistically but soon turned into decline. The party did increasingly well in the polls and managed to get three seats in parliament in 1994. On the other hand, the party had to deal with a changing political climate with increased politicisation of the immigration issue, and its reputation was increasingly damaged in the press. This final chapter pays special attention to the party magazine *CD-Actueel*, where *ideas* within the party were shared. Because these magazines are available from 1987 there will be a handful of observations that overlap with the end of the previous chapter. Parliamentary minutes are understood as the party's external communication. Finally, due to the impact of media performances by Janmaat and shocking behaviour by party members in the 1990s, special attention will be paid to reports in the written press.

Similar ideas:

The party continued to present itself as a successful party. This inflated self-image seems to be amplified by increasingly positive signs in the polls between the year 1990 and 1994. In the forewords of *CD-Actueel*, the party continuously presents itself as a healthy party: the party tells readers that party membership is increasing steadily, and party funds are sufficient. Those with political power, "especially those on the PvdA-side" are allegedly afraid.²³⁸ In 1992, two years before the general election, the CD believed that it will receive 10 seats and an upcoming hung parliament.²³⁹ That year, it believed that the situation changed for the party: "The CD is being taken more seriously."²⁴⁰ Resistance to the party is portrayed as logical: "The fate of those who fight against the prevailing mentality in a certain era is usually not so rosy, even if it turns out that they were right afterwards."²⁴¹

The party's anti-elitism continued in broadly the same way, as it delegitimised anyone who was in power: The PvdA was still the main target of the CD, which was allegedly actively

²³⁸ IISG Amsterdam, *Archief Hans Janmaat* [hereafter abbreviated as: *Archief Janmaat*], inv.nr.126. *CD-Actueel* 1992 nr.1, 1.

²³⁹ IISG Amsterdam, *Archief Janmaat*, inv.nr.126. *CD-Actueel* 1992 nr.2, 6.

²⁴⁰ IISG Amsterdam, *Archief Janmaat*, inv.nr.126. *CD-Actueel* 1992 nr.2, 13.

²⁴¹ IISG Amsterdam, *Archief Janmaat*, inv.nr.126. *CD-Actueel* 1993 nr.1, 1.

destabilising society in cooperation with the CDA in order to make their socialist ideas more appealing.²⁴² A sign of this alleged destabilisation is the fact that the PvdA wanted to put down defence expenses due to the decreasing Soviet threat.²⁴³ The fall of the Soviet Union was regarded as evidence that socialism is a failure and has no place in Dutch politics.²⁴⁴ In this time of party convergence, the CD criticised that voters have “no alternative than the three main parties.”²⁴⁵ In the eyes of the CD, the government wanted to perpetuate problems in order to provide each other with jobs: “behind the scenes, it’s all about occupying posts and jobs, the policies remain the same.”²⁴⁶ The media was also condemned. Allegedly, like the Soviet Union, there is censorship in the Netherlands that prohibits journalists to mention the foreign descend of criminals²⁴⁷ and there is a tendency to play down numbers of immigration.²⁴⁸ The violent attack in Kedichem of 1986 was also taken as an example of biased media, as the public broadcaster NOS had captioned a picture of Janmaat incorrectly, who was accused of fleeing the scene.²⁴⁹

Despite attempts at profiling itself as a green party, the Centre Democrats criticised nearly all the environmental initiatives by its political opponents. They argued that the newly established *GroenLinks* and other parties that started to get involved in the environmental issues, were only using it for “their own popularity”.²⁵⁰ Furthermore, the main issue (CO₂) was portrayed as unnecessary: CO₂ is a benign gas, “necessary for the growth of plants”.²⁵¹ The CD wanted to see more attention for toxic spills in nature and believed that the global warming-argument was being abused in order to levy higher taxes.²⁵² The motor vehicle tax was allegedly used for the housing and maintenance of asylum seekers.²⁵³

The CD continued its strategy of linking local issues to immigration. For example, a fight between kids escalated to “a cultural conflict” as allegedly 300 people joined the fight in

²⁴² IISG Amsterdam, *Archief Janmaat*, inv.nr.124. CD-Actueel 1989 nr.4, 9.

²⁴³ IISG Amsterdam, *Archief Janmaat*, inv.nr.124. CD-Actueel 1989 nr.4, 24.

²⁴⁴ IISG Amsterdam, ZK 15044, CD-Actueel 1987 nr.2, 11.

²⁴⁵ IISG Amsterdam, ZK 15044, CD-Actueel 1987 nr.2, 12.

²⁴⁶ IISG Amsterdam, ZK 15044, CD-Actueel 1988 nr.1, 27.

²⁴⁷ IISG Amsterdam, *Archief Janmaat*, inv.nr.125. CD-Actueel 1991 nr.3, 15.

²⁴⁸ IISG Amsterdam, *Archief Janmaat*, inv.nr.126. CD-Actueel 1992 nr.1, 12.

²⁴⁹ IISG Amsterdam, ZK 15044, CD-Actueel 1987 nr.1, 15.

²⁵⁰ IISG Amsterdam, *Archief Janmaat*, inv.nr.124. CD-Actueel 1989 nr.4, 18.

²⁵¹ IISG Amsterdam, *Archief Janmaat*, inv.nr.124. CD-Actueel 1989 nr.4, 20.

²⁵² IISG Amsterdam, *Archief Janmaat*, inv.nr.126. CD-Actueel 1992 nr.2, 14.

²⁵³ IISG Amsterdam, *Archief Janmaat*, inv.nr.126. CD-Actueel 1992 nr.3, 16.

The Hague.²⁵⁴ In Amsterdam, Surinamese people had allegedly joined the police force with ease but turned out to be members of the “cocaine mafia”, showing that positive discrimination only leads to trouble.²⁵⁵ In Amsterdam, the construction of artificial islands in a canal is regarded as the consequence of overpopulation, leading to the landscape being “horrendously mutilated”.²⁵⁶

Language and policy shifts:

In addition to these similar ideas, there were clear shifts in the CD’s views on problems in society, influenced by the volatile transition into the 1990s: The fall of the wall, and the increasingly threatening image of Islam, changing governments policies towards immigration and the increasing politicisation of this issue both assist and challenge the Centre Democrats’ ability to stay electorally attractive.

With the switch of government policies focused on the integration of immigrants in Dutch society, the Centre Democrats became increasingly opposed to integration, as they did not want the presence of foreigners in the Netherlands in the first place. Integration was seen as a myth: for the Centre Democrats it is impossible to *integrate* people, as different cultures living side by side will always be a problem. Unlike World War Two, these “occupiers” will not come “with tanks or fighter jets, but as tourists or fortune seekers” and not for five years “but forever”.²⁵⁷ The issue of integration is continuously compared to international developments: “The integration of Muslims in the last two hundred years in Bosnia did not succeed”.²⁵⁸ And in the United States, the backlog in education has failed after 30 years.²⁵⁹

The Islam was increasingly a cause for concern: As early as 1986, an article titled “The threat of Islam” warns against Islamisation: in Iran “there are examples enough” as there is no space for Christianity or humanism.²⁶⁰ The civil war that erupted in Lebanon will allegedly also happen in the Netherlands if you would provide voting rights to foreigners.²⁶¹ The fact that “these people” did not apply family planning would allegedly lead to three times as many

²⁵⁴ IISG Amsterdam, *Archief Janmaat*, inv.nr.125. CD-Actueel 1991 nr.3, 1.

²⁵⁵ IISG Amsterdam, *Archief Janmaat*, inv.nr.126. CD-Actueel 1992 nr.1, 9.

²⁵⁶ IISG Amsterdam, *Archief Janmaat*, inv.nr.126. CD-Actueel 1993 nr.2, 19.

²⁵⁷ IISG Amsterdam, ZK 15044, CD-Actueel 1987 nr.2, 10.

²⁵⁸ IISG Amsterdam, *Archief Janmaat*, inv.nr.126. CD-Actueel 1992 nr.3, 8.

²⁵⁹ IISG Amsterdam, *Archief Janmaat*, inv.nr.126. CD-Actueel 1992 nr.2, 17.

²⁶⁰ IISG Amsterdam, ZK 15044, CD-Actueel 1987 nr.2, 26.

²⁶¹ IISG Amsterdam, ZK 15044, CD-Actueel 1987 nr.2, 26.

Muslims every sixteen years.²⁶² In their magazine, the CD discussed barbaric stories of Islamisation: “If you are still young, you might become a witness of how a thief will get its hand chopped off in public, preferably in front of a mosque.”²⁶³ These last two very critical articles of Islam were, unsurprisingly, released after the Rushdie-affair, which later is qualified as proof of the “lack of tolerance” of Islam.²⁶⁴ In problematising foreigners, the CD made direct references to wars: World War Two, the Yugoslav Wars and the civil war in Lebanon.

The whole problem, according to the CD was that other politicians *believe* in integration: they “cherish dangerous thoughts” because the “society is not makeable. It is destroyable.”²⁶⁵ This ‘myth’ was re-emphasised in a later edition: “That integration is a big problem is known to everyone. It even looks like an unsolvable problem.”²⁶⁶ The mixing of foreigners in Dutch society will make Dutch people go down into a “melting pot of races and peoples”.²⁶⁷ According to the CD, the multicultural society is unfixable, and the integration of ‘foreign elements’ is impossible. This way, the CD persistently opposed all solutions its opponents offer.

As opposed to the Centre party’s and early Centre Democrats’ focus on the ‘liveability’ of the Netherlands, the new Centre Democrats were more upset about the alleged discrimination of Dutch people. The election programme of the Centre Democrats of 1989 is riddled with accusations about the Government’s ‘anti-Dutch policies’.²⁶⁸ In the party magazines, this was also a recurrent theme: As early as 1987, an article complains that there is austerity on all levels of government spending, but not on foreign aid.²⁶⁹ Also, there is money for centres for asylum seekers, but barely any money for cultural activities abroad, like a Dutch-Flemish church in Spain.²⁷⁰ This link to asylum seekers came back a lot, unsurprisingly in a time when asylum seeker numbers go up. Asylum seekers were presented as highly untrustworthy and are called “economic refugees” or “fortune seekers”.²⁷¹

²⁶² IISG Amsterdam, *Archief Janmaat*, inv.nr.126. CD-Actueel 1992 nr.1, 12.

²⁶³ IISG Amsterdam, *Archief Janmaat*, inv.nr.126. CD-Actueel 1992 nr.2, 15.

²⁶⁴ IISG Amsterdam, *Archief Janmaat*, inv.nr.126. CD-Actueel 1993 nr.3, 20.

²⁶⁵ IISG Amsterdam, *Archief Janmaat*, inv.nr.126. CD-Actueel 1992 nr.4, 6.

²⁶⁶ IISG Amsterdam, *Archief Janmaat*, inv.nr.126. CD-Actueel 1993 nr.2, 20.

²⁶⁷ IISG Amsterdam, *Archief Janmaat*, inv.nr.126. CD-Actueel 1993 nr.2, 20.

²⁶⁸ RUG, *RDCDPP*, “CD (1989) Concept partij-programma”, accessed 24 June 2020, <http://dnpprepo.ub.rug.nl/553/>.

²⁶⁹ IISG Amsterdam, ZK 15044, CD-Actueel 1987 nr.1, 16.

²⁷⁰ IISG Amsterdam, *Archief Janmaat*, inv.nr.125. CD-Actueel 1991 nr.3, 4.

²⁷¹ IISG Amsterdam, *Archief Janmaat*, inv.nr.125. CD-Actueel 1991 nr.3, 6.

The limits of portraying refugees as undeserving were explored in some of their articles. An article from 1989 presents a truly bizarre story: A Turkish man had allegedly gone to Africa, had a baby there with a black woman, and was told by a guerrilla fighter to escape to the Netherlands as “befriended left-wing organisations would always stand up for foreigners, either criminal or not.”²⁷² Furthermore, refugees in general “do not agree with our political system and culture at all” especially the communists and Muslims.²⁷³ Providing them with welfare is not even humane, it would be more humane to create solutions in the country of origin.²⁷⁴ These ideas suggest that the Centre Democrats believed that there was no place for refugees in the Netherlands. They did not belong here and accommodating them was presented as an inhumane act.

The CD went far with their accusations of ‘discrimination of the Dutch’, and unjust favouring of foreigners everywhere. In 1987, the party complained that photos of the Dutch national team are overexposed to make dark players more visible and to make white players invisible.²⁷⁵ And allegedly, the PvdA wanted to abolish academic titles, to make undereducated foreigners feel better: “everything in favour of the intellectually less gifted. Who those are in our society is easily guessed: children and adults of other than Western cultures.”²⁷⁶

At some point, the party started to become more involved in the judicial side of politics. In its election programme of 1994, the CD wants to abolish article one, which prohibits discrimination.²⁷⁷ This would make it easier to reverse the ‘anti-Dutch policies’. In a party magazine of 1993, the CD proposed controversial new laws: It wanted to provide Dutch citizenship only at the second or third generation, based on the “degree of rootedness” because the protection of a people is a human right.²⁷⁸ In another party magazine later that year, the allocation of unemployment benefits is rejected, as these should depend on the number of generations a family lives in the Netherlands.²⁷⁹

²⁷² IISG Amsterdam, *Archief Janmaat*, inv.nr.124. CD-Actueel 1989 nr.4, 13.

²⁷³ IISG Amsterdam, *Archief Janmaat*, inv.nr.126. CD-Actueel 1992 nr.2, 7.

²⁷⁴ IISG Amsterdam, *Archief Janmaat*, inv.nr.126. CD-Actueel 1992 nr.2, 8.

²⁷⁵ IISG Amsterdam, ZK 15044, CD-Actueel 1987 nr.2, 14.

²⁷⁶ IISG Amsterdam, *Archief Janmaat*, inv.nr.126. CD-Actueel 1992 nr.3, 7.

²⁷⁷ RUG, *RDCDPP*, “CD (1994) *Oost West Thuis Best.*”, accessed 24 June 2020, <http://dnpprepo.ub.rug.nl/407/>.

²⁷⁸ IISG Amsterdam, *Archief Janmaat*, inv.nr.126. CD-Actueel 1993 nr.3, 14.

²⁷⁹ IISG Amsterdam, *Archief Janmaat*, inv.nr.126. CD-Actueel 1993 nr.4, 20.

Increased competition and politicisation of immigration

But increasingly, this era became difficult for the Centre Democrats. They had to deal with increased competition for their single issue. This can be read in several of their articles, where the party discusses the behaviour of other political parties, who were allegedly saying things that the CD would get prosecuted for. This is even presented as a sign of the increased influence of the CD.

In 1992, the VVD voiced their concerns with the increase of Islamic schools: “Maybe the CD would already have been sued if they made such statements.”²⁸⁰ The CD presented the VVD’s concerns as an adoption of CD-views because VVD-leader Frits Bolkestein made “a couple of remarks that are pretty much in line with the CD” in an article titled “increasing influence of the CD”.²⁸¹ In the same article, the CD notes that “even the PvdA makes statements, which if to be made by the CD, would be deemed racist.”²⁸² A true tipping point in Dutch politics can be identified at the end of 1993: “The CD has broken the taboo on discussing immigration policies” – but not thanks to the PvdA, as they have allegedly tried to thwart the CD where possible.²⁸³ This is shortly before CD’s biggest political victory of 3 seats.

Striking about the articles in *CD-Actueel* is that they play with ideas and explore the limits to create credible narratives about the party’s impact, the corruptness of politics and the media, and the dangers of immigration and Islam. This ‘playing field’ has a link with more *external communication*, as some of their claims later re-emerge in election programmes. It also shows that the CD constantly tried to encourage itself and its members, by highlighting its political influence. Such self-encouragement is not surprising if one takes into account the strong outside pressure on the party. This behaviour can be regarded as a response to their difficult and marginal position as a protest party.

The general election of 1994

The last years of the Centre Movement were characterised by its disintegration. Despite an increasingly bad reputation around the year 1994, the party managed to get into parliament with 3 seats. This electoral ‘victory’ of 1994 was also a sign of dissatisfaction in the cabinet.

²⁸⁰ IISG Amsterdam, *Archief Janmaat*, inv.nr.126. CD-Actueel 1992 nr.1, 19.

²⁸¹ IISG Amsterdam, *Archief Janmaat*, inv.nr.126. CD-Actueel 1992 nr.2, 6.

²⁸² IISG Amsterdam, *Archief Janmaat*, inv.nr.126. CD-Actueel 1992 nr.4, 9.

²⁸³ IISG Amsterdam, *Archief Janmaat*, inv.nr.126. CD-Actueel 1993 nr.4, 18.

The election of 1994 was characterized by a fragmentation of Dutch politics, as the lower chamber welcomed twelve parties, compared to nine in the previous election. The labour party PvdA and CDA together lost a staggering 32 seats.²⁸⁴ For the first time in decades, a cabinet was formed without a confessional party. The lack of political influence at the time was described in the infamous opinion piece by historian J.W. Oerlemans titled “*Een-partijstaat Nederland*”, criticising the Dutch political elite as an “oligarchy of professional politicians”.²⁸⁵ This general dissatisfaction provided a beneficial environment for a protest-party like the Centre Democrats.

However, the image of the Centre Democrats is increasingly damaged in the year 1994. In addition to the damage of undercover reports, judicial authorities initiated multiple lawsuits on discrimination-allegations. Hans Janmaat and his wife Wil Schuurmans were condemned to heavy fines only one day after the 1994 elections.²⁸⁶ Janmaat was also giving a bad reputation to himself. In January 1994 Janmaat had responded indifferently about the sudden death of the Minister of Internal Affairs Ien Dales (PvdA).²⁸⁷ At the time, Janmaat had told a journalist: “We will not shed a tear.”²⁸⁸ Not beneficial to the party’s reputation were the bizarre solutions that it started to offer. In their 1994 election-programme, the CD proposes to put refugees into “work camps” where the government can organise projects or to force them to fortify dykes.²⁸⁹

After the 1994 elections, a newspaper reported that all the bad publicity “did not make the extreme-right protest voters doubt.”²⁹⁰ In his victory speech, Janmaat even responded to the press: “Journalists were only stirring up hatred towards the CD. But even if they attack us on television, we won’t flinch. Because despite heavy political attacks, the voter believes in the CD. We have not been abandoned.”²⁹¹ Despite his optimism, everything quickly went downhill from here.

²⁸⁴ ‘PvdA nu grootste partij’, *Algemeen Dagblad* (4 May 1994).

²⁸⁵ J.W. Oerlemans, ‘Eén partijstaat Nederland’ *NRC Handelsblad* (14 February 1990).

²⁸⁶ ‘Boete voor Janmaat wegens discriminatie’, *Leeuwarder Courant* (4 May 1994).

²⁸⁷ Vetten, *In de ban van goed en fout*, 80.

²⁸⁸ ‘Alleen in mijn familie ben ik het middelpunt’ *Trouw* (8 May 1998), <https://www.trouw.nl/nieuws/alleen-in-mijn-familie-ben-ik-het-middelpunt~be5268f3/>.

²⁸⁹ RUG, *RDCDPP*, “CD (1994) *Oost West Thuis Best.*”, accessed 24 June 2020, <http://dnpprepo.ub.rug.nl/407/>.

²⁹⁰ ‘CD-stemmer niet onder indruk van tv-beelden’, *Limburgse Courant* (4 May 1994).

²⁹¹ ‘Janmaat als redder eigen volk gehuldigd’, *Leeuwarder Courant* (4 May 1994).

The last years in parliament

The parliamentary minutes of 1996 reveal that the party sometimes continues to reproduce earlier narratives from their party magazines. It continued on the same paths as observed in the analyses above and came with radical solutions. The anti-elitist character dominated Janmaat's performances: it does not matter if the CDA is in the cabinet or not, because "differences in policies the CD barely sees."²⁹² The governing parties were continuously presented as incompetent and illegitimate: "The CD has pointed out years ago that the cabinet is creating problems that it cannot solve."²⁹³ The solutions that the government offers were allegedly to the disadvantage of the native Dutch population: the anti-segregation policies to distribute minorities more evenly in cities would cause "an increased risk to become the victim of unstoppable criminality."²⁹⁴ Taking in more asylum seekers in the Netherlands would cause big groups of Dutch people to tumble into poverty and according to Janmaat this "borders on treason."²⁹⁵

The party's attacks on immigrants also continued in familiar ways: Asylum seekers are allegedly welcomed with false (or no) documents.²⁹⁶ And, repeating older claims in the party magazines about refugees, Janmaat argued that "terrorists on Sri Lanka, the Tamil Tigers, obtained Dutch foreign aid and used these funds for flights of stranded 'Tigers' to the Netherlands. The same applied to freedom fighters in Africa."²⁹⁷ For the Centre Democrats, there was only one solution that could stop the major problems facing the Netherlands: "a stop on the flow of newcomers. If that doesn't happen, there isn't much to solve."²⁹⁸

The language towards fellow politicians got much publicity in the press. The CD's radical solutions and provocative statements were in line with the internally discussed strategies in the years of BVD-infiltration. In 1995 Janmaat said that he does not find it right that a Greek-Dutch MP talks about naturalisation.²⁹⁹ In January 1997, Janmaat sent a letter to colleague Broos van Erp in parliament from the VVD who had liver cancer. Janmaat's letter

²⁹² IISG Amsterdam, *Archief Janmaat*, inv.nr.136. F30-1. 13 173, 16 oktober 1996.

²⁹³ IISG Amsterdam, *Archief Janmaat*, inv.nr.136. F34-1. 13 177. 16 oktober 1996.

²⁹⁴ IISG Amsterdam, *Archief Janmaat*, inv.nr.136. F33-1. 13 175. 16 oktober 1996.

²⁹⁵ IISG Amsterdam, *Archief Janmaat*, inv.nr.136. E9-1. 14 158. 17 oktober 1996.

²⁹⁶ IISG Amsterdam, *Archief Janmaat*, inv.nr.136. B11-1. 82 25. 15 mei 1996.

²⁹⁷ IISG Amsterdam, *Archief Janmaat*, inv.nr.136. B11-1. 82 25. 15 mei 1996.

²⁹⁸ IISG Amsterdam, *Archief Janmaat*, inv.nr.136. 1996 F34-1. 13 177. 16 oktober 1996.

²⁹⁹ 'Apostolou mag van CD niet praten over naturalisatie', *De Volkskrant* (23 februari 1995), accessed 24 June 2020, <https://www.volkskrant.nl/nieuws-achtergrond/apostolou-mag-van-cd-niet-praten-over-naturalisatie~b3614d2c/>.

got attention in the press and was condemned by the VVD. Allegedly, Janmaat was angry that he was not informed like other MP's about Van Erp's illness and wrote: "It should have been expected you would have transcended yourself in this sad situation. But this lesson you have not learned yet."³⁰⁰

The party took part in the general election of 1998 with a familiar party programme. However, there are some surprising additions: the Dutch government should "strive for reunification with Flanders and other Dutch-speaking areas."³⁰¹ Furthermore, the CD wanted to introduce the death penalty and allow guns for shopkeepers. The party is a little more careful regarding integration: The CD considers an "amalgamation" of different cultural elements possible, but there is one condition: minorities of different cultures can be part of that national culture if their "cultural elements are not in conflict with essential elements of the Dutch culture."³⁰² In the 1990s, the party's attractiveness was increasingly challenged by its lack of a 'normal' reputation due to the flood of negative publicity. More importantly, the stricter immigration and integration policies deeply challenged the Centre Democrats' single-issue character and partly removed the incentive to cast a protest vote. Ultimately, the party disappears in 1998. In one of the last interviews with Hans Janmaat, he said: "We have never noticed that anyone even listened to us for one second."³⁰³ The Centre Movement briefly thrived on protest votes. But after years of damage to its – already radical – reputation and increasing competition over its single issue, there was no more place for the Centre Movement in the Dutch Parliament after 1998.

³⁰⁰ 'Grove brief Janmaat aan ziek Kamerlid Broos van Erp', *Trouw* (16 January 1997), accessed 24 June 2020, <https://www.trouw.nl/nieuws/grove-brief-janmaat-aan-ziek-kamerlid-broos-van-erp~b5369a23/>.

³⁰¹ RUG, *RDCDPP*, "CD (1998) Trouw aan rood wit blauw", accessed 24 June 2020, <http://dnpprepo.ub.rug.nl/371/>.

³⁰² *Ibid.*

³⁰³ Vetten, *In de ban van goed en fout*, 105.

Conclusion

This thesis has attempted to come to a better understanding of the internal functioning of the Centre Movement and its attempts to mobilise support through communication strategies. Furthermore, it has sought to further clarify the movement's failure to break out of the margins in a time when conditions in the Netherlands were favourable for the emergence of an anti-immigration party.

The movement was controversial from the start and had to find ways to present itself as 'normal'. Internal discussions revealed that the movement was constantly distancing itself from radical figures that could damage its image. Another important tactic was to delegitimise its opponents and to highlight the movement's impact on Dutch politics. On the other hand, such attempts at saving its image were reversed by premeditated provocative statements and publicity stunts. The movement was populist, as it kept emphasising that it was not part of the elite, and that it could stand up for the disadvantaged native Dutch population. The radical figures that the movement associated with made it almost impossible to attain a 'normal' image. Furthermore, the movement was constantly looking for the limits of problematising immigration. An important strategy to mobilise support was the expanding of local issues to the alleged threat of immigration. Or by linking events abroad to the problems of the multicultural society and the 'myth' of integration. Key to these aspects is their balancing of moderation and provocation. They were not completely out of control, despite their radical reputation. On the other hand, they were not as innocent as some of the more recent literature on the Centre Movement suggests.

This shows that organisations, not limited to the AIPs might present reckless and provocative behaviour on the external level while being fully aware of their actions. The Centre Movement's strength came from its position outside of the 'establishment' as this attracted hundreds of thousands of protest voters. Despite great ambitions, especially in the early years of the movement, the internal discussions suggest that the Centre Movement was aware of its limited position as a protest party, hence its persistent and 'clumsy' provocative behaviour. This apparent nonchalance was often the result of carefully designed actions.

The success of AIPs is highly depended on three factors; issue-ownership, ideological attractiveness and partisan collaboration. It has become apparent that the Centre Movement

scored badly on these factors, as it merely attracted protest votes due to its narrow anti-immigration ideology. An increasingly bad image and political exclusion perpetuated its marginal existence. Even though there were ambitions to step away from its single issue in an attempt to become a 'normal' movement and break out of the margins of politics, this never happened. This is because of its paradoxical nature as a protest movement.

On the one hand, its radical character enabled the movement to receive protest votes. It could not become too radical, as this would discourage all potential voters. On the other hand, deradicalising would potentially cause protest voters to walk away. Political exclusion made deradicalisation even more unlikely, as this exclusion removed the incentive to come to political compromises. This means the Centre Movement was stuck in a position between radicalism and moderation. After the surprising results on the local and national level in the early 1990s, the party managed to fulfil its merit: 'scare' the elite. This temporary rise in support did not necessarily mean that voters agreed with the solutions the Centre Democrats offered. With the increasingly questionable reputation of the party, the simultaneous politicisation of immigration and tougher stance by more reputable political actors, the Centre Movement lost its *raison d'être*.

Similar to the 'radicalisation' of conservative parties in the 1970s, the relatively long presence of a radical AIP in the Dutch Parliament might have broadened the political spectrum and changed views on what can be considered as 'unacceptable' anti-immigration positions. The tougher stance on immigration by mainstream parties in the 1990s was more acceptable when compared to the radical and provocative position of the Centre Movement. This shows how AIPs such as the Centre Movement operate in the margins of politics. Their power is limited to their influence on policies of governing parties by attracting enough protest votes. Because the language and critical attitude towards immigration have been adopted by mainstream actors to an important extent, the existence of the Centre Movement might have been more influential on Dutch politics than much of the existing literature acknowledges.

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